

PROLETARIAN

VANGUARD

Voice of the Indian Revolution

Vol : 1

No. 2

July-August 1998

Rs. 10/-

BJP's Bomb And Its Fascist Agenda

BJP's nuclear bomb has back-fired. From empty bombast, to servile cringing before the imperialists; from frenzied anti-China rhetoric to cowardly pleadings for dialogue; from hysterical anti-Pak threats, to pathetic whimperings against the so-called ISI role in Kashmir; from claiming big-power status, to looking foolishly equal to a much smaller Pakistan in nuclear capability; from an arrogant foreign posture, to amateurish bungs in international relations; from fervently asserting the bilateral status of the Kashmir issue, to successfully internationalising it; and, from an attempt to whip up a 'national consensus, on the bomb, to reverting back to the 'Ram Mandir' agenda. Obviously the BJP is more apt at chanting mantras, conducting yagnas and rath yatras, smashing masjids and massacring muslims.... than running governments. Besides, the explosion has not been able to diffuse that other time-bomb (of its coalition partners), perilously ticking away under its seat, threatening to blow-up the government into pieces any moment.

But, what the bomb, to some extent, has achieved is furthering the BJP's fascist agenda. Through it, they have whipped up big nation chauvinism, furthered the Indian ruling class's expansionist policies against its South Asian

neighbours, and facilitated increasing fascist repression at home, by whipping up a 'nation in danger' psychosis. And, in order to promote these dangerous policies, within just two months of coming to power, it has destabilised the entire region, creating a war scenario throughout South Asia, and even beyond. An Indo-Pak war, has been brought close to a flash-point, in a hitherto (relatively) peaceful environment. An India-sponsored war would, of course, further facilitate the fascist mania at home, of an increasingly unstable ruling-class.

In addition, the BJP has utilised the rhetoric on the bomb, to cover-up and divert attention from its total capitulation to the US and other imperialists on the economic front. This, is precisely what Jaswant Singh would have been at pains to explain to his American bosses during his week-long sojourn in the USA. Moreover, the media hacks of the BJP, have, in fact, used the pretext of the bomb and sanctions, as a REASON for granting even greater concessions to the MNCs. The threat of sanctions, has been conveniently used to bury once and for all, even the pretence of 'Swadeshi'. This is just as the US wants — to use sanctions, or the mere threat of it, to beat third world countries to conform to its imperialist policies.

All the BJP bluster against the West and its chest-thumping hanuman posture, was not anti-imperialist but merely a pathetic cry to be given a special status as a regional power by the imperialists, or at least, by a section of them - a role similar to that granted to the Indian ruling-classes by Soviet Social imperialism in the 1970s and '80s. The BJP's dissent with America, was merely that it be awarded a role of regional policeman by the imperialists which the Americans are hesitant, at present to do. With imperialist alliances in a flux, the US imperialists are not yet willing to put all their eggs in a single basket in Asia, or even South Asia. But the BJP's

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dream is that if there can be an Israel in West Asia why not an India in South Asia ?

In this article we shall uncover the real content of BJP jingoism over the bomb; the history leading up to the nuclear explosions in the two countries, the economic impact of nuclearisation; the world's reactions to these explosions; the reactions of the various political parties in India; and the task before the people in facing the growing fascist threat and imperialist domination of the country.

Nuclear Explosions And BJP Jingoism

Five persons — Vajpayee, Advani, Jaswant Singh, Pramod Mahajan and Brijesh Mishra — took the decision to carry out the nuclear explosion. Of these megalomaniacs, two were, in fact, defeated in the last elections, and even by bourgeois standards had no moral authority to be party to such a major decision. On April 8, the go-ahead was given to the two chief scientists, Kalam and Chidambaram. Just two days before the explosion, on May 9, the defence minister, George Fernandes, was informed of the impending nuclear tests. On May 10, the three Chiefs of Staff and the foreign secretary were informed, and on the same evening the President. On May 11, with the PM announcing the nuclear tests, a massive campaign was launched to whip up national chauvinism by the sangh parivar. As part of this the government declared May 16, as a 'day of national pride.'

In a systematically orchestrated campaign, the grounds for the explosion had, in fact, been laid well in advance.... not directly by the BJP, but through its chief stooge and drum-beater, George Fernandes. Out of the blue, mixing fact with fiction, raking up decades-old events, etc. the defence minister began a tirade against China. Even though unaware of the BJP game-plan, he played the BJP card with exceptional enthusiasm. The anti-China prattle continued even through the 5-day goodwill visit of the Chinese chief of staff — the first ever. It finally culminated in Fernandes calling China, and not Pakistan (as has been the habit of India's rulers) as 'Enemy number one'. This was in line with the BJP's post-explosion propaganda, as without a focus on China they would have found it difficult to justify nuclear weapons merely on a Pak-centred threat (India having three-times Pakistan's conventional force).

No sooner had the explosions taken place that the sangh parivar undertook a nation-wide campaign, in an attempt to whip up a hysteria against an imagined threat-perception, with the BJP, supposedly, the country's saviours. The three top scientists, involved in the explosions, added to the mania by making disgustingly political and demagogic statements. **Simultaneously, the national 'euphoria' was sought to be channelised into**

Hindu nationalism, thereby converting the nuclear bomb into a Hindu bomb.

The over-enthusiastic VHP, oblivious to the dangers of spreading radio activity, even planned to carry sand from the Pokhran site to all parts of the country (contrary to the government's claims, villagers in the area have been affected by both the 1974 and present blasts). Later they decided to build a Shakti-peeth temple at the spot of the blasts, and finally settled for carrying holy water from all places of pilgrimage to Pokhran.

But the fanatical edge of the sangh parivar was not restricted to the VHP alone; it infected the very top echelons of the BJP and was led by none other than Advani himself. It was reflected in hysterical statements against Pakistan, and, to some extent, China. Advani warned Pakistan "to either roll back its proxy war in Kashmir or be confronted with a pro-active India that included 'hot pursuit' in case of intrusion." In other words, a call to Indian forces for aggression into Pakistan. On another occasion he exclaimed, "terrorism must be, and shall be crushed without false pity"..... sounds somewhat like Hitler ! Then again, he threatened (so-called) Pakistani activity in Kashmir, in the wake of India acquiring 'nuclear weapon state' status. This was followed by Madan Lal Khurana and Pramod Mahajan making vitriolic statements against Pakistan and China. Khurana, in typical village goonda-style, slapping his thighs, proclaimed : "If Pakistan wants to fight another war with us, they should tell us the time and place, and we are ready for it." The BJP vice-president, K.L. Sharma, said that the government was determined to "put an end to the Pakistani menace." And to all this, was added the ranting and ravings of Farooq Abdullah, a new-found BJP ally. He went so far as to state that "it is high time Pakistan vacated POK" and added, "I assure you that the time is not far off when it will be liberated."

With such hysterical and fanatic statements, the BJP sought to whip up big-nation chauvinism to a feverish pitch, amounting to an open call for aggression on Pakistan. On the other hand, it sought to justify the nuclear explosion on the basis of a threat perception to India's security, from a China-Pak axis, targeting China as 'enemy number one'.

But, all these reasons, for a nuclear test, were a big lie, as the BJP and its earlier avatar, the Jan Sangh, has always been for nuclearisation. At the time of the 1974 explosion, Advani had been ecstatic. In 1969, the then Jan Sangh prepared the outlines for an 'inexpensive' atom bomb that could attack the then socialist China. And, most important, even during the 13-day government in 1996, Vajpayee had given the green signal to the DRDO and DAE to begin preparations for nuclear tests. As far as China suddenly becoming 'enemy no.1', they forgot that, until lately, relations had never been that good

between the two countries.... with an 'Accord on Border Peace and Tranquillity' being signed in 1993 and an 'Accord on Confidence Building Measures' being signed in 1996.

So, the BJP's argument, that there was an immediate threat to India's national security, that warranted a nuclear explosion was an obvious excuse to cover up its militarist, expansionist and fascist agenda.

But we find that such aggressive policies, have always been an aspect of India's ruling classes... only the BJP has pushed it to an extreme. After all, the Bomb had not been built in a month, but had been carefully nurtured for decades by the Congress and even UF governments.

India, As Imperialist Outpost

The Indian ruling-classes have always sought to be the cats-paw of imperialist policies in Asia, initially, not only to contain the then socialist China, but also to dominate other countries of South Asia. What the Jan Sangh openly proclaimed, the Nehru government clandestinely implemented.

In the 1950s and 1960s the Nehru government not only helped America spy on China, instigate the Khamba rebellion in Tibet, but also, while pretending friendly with the Arabs, had signed a secret military pact with Israel in the mid-1960s. It was in furtherance of this role, that by 1964-65 itself India was provided technology for reprocessing spent fuel, and India's first Cirus reactor was supplied by Canada.

So we find that, for over two decades the Indian government acted as a tool for US policy in Asia and India's nuclear programme began as part of this. But with the growth of a rival superpower, Soviet Social imperialism, the Indian rulers turned to the new super power, as the Soviet imperialists backed the Indian ruling classes to the hilt as part of their geo-political (and economic) ambitions in Asia. The Indo-Soviet pact of 1971 tied India's military to Soviet policy and as part of its contention with the US, encouraged India's hegemonistic designs in South Asia (and also against China). It was with Soviet backing that India's nuclear programme was further developed and the first nuclear bomb exploded in 1974. The militarisation of India was further enhanced by initiating its missile programme in early 1983. With the Indian rulers turning to the Soviet imperialists, the US turned to Pakistan, to develop it as a counter-weight to Soviet designs in South Asia and Afghanistan.

But with the collapse of the Soviet Union, and with China turning capitalist, there has been great turmoil in international relationships and new alignments are developing. The Indian rulers have been currying favour with all imperialists, and particularly with the US, which

is the sole superpower left in the world. But the US, itself much weakened, has extensive economic ties with China and is not willing as yet to tie its geo-political ambitions in Asia with any one country. It is playing off one against the other, seeking greater domination wherever possible.

But the Indian ruling classes' hegemonistic designs in South Asia have continued irrespective of whether it was tied to US, Soviet or any other imperialist power. Throughout the last three decades its nuclear programme continued apace and in the last 15 years its missile programme has almost reached the end of its development cycle. Its five missile systems — the short-range, surface-to-air missile, Trishul; the medium range, surface-to-air missile Akash; the smokeless, high-energy anti-tank guided missile, Nag; the short-range, surface-to-surface, Prithvi; and the intermediate range ballistic missile, Agni — are nearly ready for deployment.

But with India's hegemonistic designs and with its aggressive nuclear and missile programmes, Pakistan was forced to develop its own. This militarisation of Pakistan was, ofcourse, encouraged by the US, which sought Pakistan as a new ally (having lost India) to counter Soviet influence in the region.

Pakistan's Nuclear Development

Contrary to BJP propaganda, the bulk of Pakistan's nuclear programme was acquired from the West and not from China. As the nuclear powers were not willing to provide the technology most of the programme was developed through discreet and illegal deals with European companies.

It was after India began its nuclear programme, and specifically after the 1974 Pokhran blast, that Pakistan became desperate for nuclear technology. A.Q. Khan, the father of Pakistan's nuclear programme, while working in a Dutch firm, in the early 1970s, smuggled into the country classified data to enrich uranium and designs from the European technology holder, Erenco. In the late 1970s Pakistan managed to acquire a vast quantity of nuclear material from a cluster of German companies. In 1978, 31 high frequency inverters were purchased from a British company. In the same year a Swiss company, supplied three plane-loads of UF-6 — the chief ingredient required to enrich uranium and make it weapons-grade. In mid-1980 a complete uranium plant was secretly supplied to Pakistan by a German company. In the late 1980s investigations revealed that another German company had been involved in Pakistan's uranium enrichment efforts between 1983 to 87, had supplied special containers for transport and storage of UF-6, and had trained six Pakistani scientists at its Nuclear Research Centre in Belgium.

In the world all countries have not only economic and political ties, but also military links — just as the

Indian government has with many countries — so to talk of a Pak-China axis as a reason for exploding a nuclear bomb is naive, if not foolish. It is quite obviously an ill-thought out pretext, for the BJP to detonate the nuclear bomb and pursue its hegemonistic policies in South Asia.

Having gone into this background, let us now turn to the impact that nuclearisation will have on the economies of the two countries.

Economic Impact

The impact is two-fold — first, the enormous cost of nuclearisation of the defence of the two countries; second, the effect of sanctions by the imperialists.

The Indian people (as also the Pak people) will have to pay an enormous price for nuclearisation. Weaponisation of the nuclear bomb will entail the development of a nuclear weapon-delivery system, involving : deployable long-range missiles of the Agni-class and beyond, fighter aircraft of the recently acquired Sukhoi-30 class, and nuclear-powered submarines, that stay under water for months and can launch missiles. Also India would have to develop what is known in defence parlance as C³I — Command, Control, Communications and Intelligence. It is a highly sophisticated system of radars, early warning systems and intelligence gathering. **The entire cost of this has been estimated to be roughly Rs. 30,000 crore over a decade, or Rs. 3,000 crore per year.** And this does not include the cost of building the bomb — a figure that gets hidden in the vast sums of money needed to run India's nuclear establishment with a range of laboratories and reactors. This gigantic expense will result in a further cut of welfare measures and development expenditure.

Regarding sanctions, the impact is two-fold : first, to use it to pry open the economies of the country even further, thereby leading to greater drain of the wealth of the country to the imperialists; and second, the impact on the already dependent economies, by the sudden cutting off of 'aid', loans, credit, etc.

In India the results have already been disastrous. The BJP government, panic-stricken at the very mention of the word 'SANCTION', immediately began appeasing MNCs and offering them big concessions. Hardly had the dust of the explosion settled, that the servile government prostrated themselves at the feet of their foreign bosses.....passing three huge fast-track power projects at exceptionally good terms to the MNCs; granting large number of mining licences and oil blocks to a host of MNCs, bartering away our natural resources; throwing open the highly lucrative housing sector, insurance and ports to foreign capital, thereby further mortgaging our country to the imperialists; promising to double foreign investment in the country, by giving even bigger concessions to the MNCs; reducing customs duty

on crude oil by 5%, thereby giving a bonanza of Rs. 1,500 crores a year to the oil MNCs; and total capitulation to Suzuki, in the Maruti deal, hoping thereby to appease the Japanese imperialists. All these decisions will yield enormous returns to foreign capital, draining the country's wealth, destroying indigenous development and further tightening the vice-like grip of imperialism over the economy of the country. This then, was the first impact of the threat of sanctions.

Next, even the minor sanctions implemented by some imperialist countries, have already led to a crash of the stock exchange with the index dropping 25% and the devaluation of the rupee by 6%. With the Indian economy being made totally dependent on foreign capital by the ruling classes, and with 'globalisation' resulting in an octopus-like grip on all aspects of finance and industrial development even a little arm-twisting by the imperialists can bring the so-called 'national' government to its knees. In fact, the present sanctions do not even cover FDI, FII etc and are mainly applicable to 'aid' and loans by the US, Japan and various multilateral agencies (World Bank, Aid India Consortium, ADB etc). Earlier though Europe was not part of the sanctions, later the extended G-8 meeting decided to postpone all aid/loans to both India and Pakistan. But even the stoppage of loans to India will amount to a gigantic sum of Rs. 25,000 crores (\$6 billion) which is sufficient to cripple the economy. In addition, many countries have already frozen or stopped any new 'aid' to the country. Though not applicable to FDI, FII etc, in the present unstable, war-like situation in the sub-continent, little is likely to flow in.... already it is the withdrawal of FII funds that has led to the crash in the stock-exchange and devaluation of the rupee. Such is the pathetic plight of India's comprador bourgeoisie.... who have now gone begging to Washington, Moscow, Paris, London, Tokyo.... Not only are top government officials and BJP bosses roaming the streets of foreign countries, but even the captains of industry (i.e. CII, FICCI, etc) have been mobilised by the BJP to plead their case abroad.

Such is the plight of India, worse is in store for Pakistan. With a foreign debt standing at \$36 billion, and foreign exchange reserves at a mere \$1.1 billion (barely one-month's commitments) and with over two-thirds of the budget devoted to debt servicing and defence, and even more dependent on foreign doles..... Pakistan's economy is in an even more fragile state, and so, even more prone to imperialist pressures.

Imperialist And World Reaction

Though divided on imposition of sanctions for their own selfish economic interests, the imperialists have been one in condemning the explosions, seeking to aggressively intervene in the dispute, demanding unconditional

signing of the CTBT, NPT and FMCT, and a stop to any nuclearisation of weapons. In this, of course, the US has been the most aggressive.

US imperialism, with a stock of 8,000 nuclear weapons, and having conducted 1,200 nuclear tests (not all of them underground) is most aggressively demanding that no country (except the existing nuclear-5) develop nuclear weapons. While being the most assertive in opposing tests by India and Pakistan and in imposing sanctions, it has fully justified its own nuclear stockpile. In fact, in a statement issued by the White House on August 11, 1995, Clinton went to far as to state, "I consider the maintenance of a safe and reliable nuclear stock to be a supreme national interest to the US." Even worse, in spite of passing the START-2 (Strategic Arms Limitation Talks) agreement some eight years back, to reduce nuclear weapons, neither America nor Russia have ratified the agreement. US duplicity and double standards are apparent, with one criteria for itself and another for others.

In spite of itself not reducing nuclear weapons, the USA has led the nuclear club of 5 (USA, France, Britain, Russia and China) in imposing highly discriminatory treaties, preventing any other country from developing nuclear capabilities, while maintaining and upgrading its own stock. The imperialists, particularly the US, first imposed the NPT (Nuclear non-proliferation treaty) in 1970, in order to prevent any other country from developing nuclear weapons, while allowing proliferation within the nuclear-5. Next, after America developed the ability at computer simulation, dispensing with any further need to conduct physical tests to upgrade its technology, it forced the CTBT (Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty) on other countries, thereby banning all nuclear tests. And now, after accumulating a large stock of 104 tonnes of fissile material (which will last it 50 years), America is now demanding the passing of the FMCT (Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty), which prohibits all countries from even production of fissile materials (i.e. enriched uranium, plutonium etc).

This hypocrisy and double standards of the nuclear club of five, specifically the US, is in order to perpetuate their military supremacy, and further imperialist domination of the world, and particularly the third world. And it is precisely such an approach that is reflected in their attitude to the India/Pakistan nuclear tests. After ravaging the third world countries, riding rough-shod over their national aspiration, destroying their culture, environment and welfare, looting their national resources and wealth, imposing fascist dictatorships on their people.... the imperialists are paranoid and terrified of so-called 'rogue-states' that may just unleash a couple of nuclear-tipped missiles on to it. Besides, with the growing contentions amongst the

imperialist powers for spheres of influence, proxy wars can lead to bigger conflagrations which could get out of hand with nuclear proliferation.

Coming to the present, the imperialist reactions have, to a large extent, been determined by their geo-political/military interests and their trade/investment interests though the imperialists as a whole are keen to prevent any nuclear proliferation whatsoever.

Immediately after India's nuclear tests, America imposed sanctions (as per the Glenn amendment law passed in 1994); Japan froze grants and suspended loan talks; Sweden, Denmark, Australia and New Zealand stopped all new aid; Germany froze aid to last year's level; Canada called off future aid talks, while Britain, France and Russia condemned the tests but did not support sanctions. Later, though, Britain toughened its stand. All this amounted to outright intervention in the internal affairs of a sovereign country.

In early June, the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (P-5), passed a resolution asking the two countries to immediately enter into dialogue to reduce tensions (particularly on Kashmir), sign the CTBT, roll-back their nuclear weaponisation programme and not to mount nuclear warheads on missiles. They even called on the UN Secretary General to intervene in the conflict and see that both India and Pakistan implement the above resolution. On January 12, at a special meeting of the foreign ministers of the Group-8 industrial powers, together with a number of invitees representing other countries (i.e. Argentina, Brazil, South Africa, Ukraine, Philippines and China) called specifically for discussing the South Asia crisis, the resolution went even beyond the P-5 communique, agreeing to postpone all loans to India and Pakistan. This meeting of 14 countries called on the two countries to enter into dialogue on the "disputed territory of Kashmir", to sign the CTBT and refrain from nuclear weaponisation. It even set up a 'task force' to push through the implementation of this resolution.

Such has been the aggressive posture by the imperialists against the nuclear explosions. **Their basic approach is to arm-twist the two countries into signing the CTBT as a condition for lifting the sanctions. Russia has gone to the extent of even agreeing to recognise India as a nuclear power, if it signs the CTBT. Of course, the imperialists are not fully united in their views, and even within America, a powerful section of the right-wing Republicans have supported the BJP's stand. In fact, republican speaker, Newt Gingrich, ex-president Jimmy Carter, and Henry Kissinger have openly supported the N-tests by India. France, in a bid to capitalise on American sanctions, immediately sent a senior official to India and Pakistan, and is particularly keen on shifting the huge Air India order for planes from Boeing to Airbus.**

Now, if we turn to the reactions of some of the other countries of the world, we find that the bulk of the Middle East countries have supported Pakistan's nuclear bomb. Infact, after Pakistan's nuclear test, the Iran foreign minister, was the first foreign official to visit Islamabad. He openly proclaimed that "muslims in the middle east feel confident now that an Islamic nation has the bomb." On the other hand, when India detonated the bomb, Iran said it was disappointed and called for India to sign the CTBT. Saudi Arabia, also with long-range missiles from China, is expected to have close cooperation with Pakistan.

While the Arab countries basically supported Pakistan, Israel's reaction was just the opposite - it was paranoid about Pakistan's nuclear test and has continued excessively close military cooperation with India. It compared Pak's 'Islamic bomb' to the Palestinian 'Jihad', describing the development as a threat of a new holocaust on the Jewish people. On the other hand, Israel has been working in close cooperation with the BJP government throughout this crisis period. Despite the nuclear tests Israel's military cooperation with India is continuing at three planes : the Mossad spy agency, the military intelligence organisation known as Aman, and the Ministry of Defence, which is selling Israeli arms to India. After the explosions, Aman provided India with fresh data about Pakistan gathered by Israel's Ofek satellite. In addition, India has given permission for Israeli intelligence experts to undertake missions on Indian territory. This excessively close cooperation between Israel and India is no doubt done with US agreement.

In the present world situation all the major imperialist powers see India as not only an important market, but also as an important geo-political/military base for operations in this region. The BJP-led ruling classes are wanting, in return, a special regional status as part of an imperialist alliance.... to further its hegemonistic and expansionist interests in South Asia. But this is not so easily achieved given China's huge market, Pakistan's historical links with America (specifically during India's one and a half decade alliance with the Soviet Union) and the enormous flux in relations between the world's leading powers, with imperialist blocs not yet consolidated. Meanwhile, the imperialists, and particularly the US, will utilise the Indo-Pak conflict, to intervene further in the sub-continent and enforce further capitulation of the ruling-classes of both countries.

The Bomb And Expansionism In South Asia

After the explosion of BJP's bomb and the aggressive expansionist approach of the coalition government, the entire atmosphere in South Asia has been vitiated.... creating a war-like scenario. The BJP leader's and Farooq

Abdulla's open calls for aggression on Pakistan; Fernandes and the BJP top leaders pin-pointing China as enemy number one; accusations against Myanmar being used as a base for Chinese operations against India; the AIADMK's call for a Bangladesh-style intervention in Sri Lanka to 'defend Tamils'; and even India's fencing of Nepal's border in the sensitive Kala pani area.... have all acted to tense the situation in the entire sub-continent. The rhetoric after the explosion reached such a shrill pitch, that it triggered panic throughout the region.

Though Pakistan has always been a major target of the Indian rulers, the anti-China rhetoric was specifically geared to winning over an influential section of the American administration, that are not keen on putting all their eggs in the China basket. Using American hostility to the Chinese-backed military government in Myanmar, and the powerful anti-China lobby within the USA, the BJP hoped to play the China card to build an America-India axis as a bait to counter China in Asia. Vajpayee, in fact, implied as much in his letter to Clinton written immediately after the explosion. In this letter, leaked to the New York Times, Vajpayee targeted China as the main reason for exploding the bomb. The letter went so far as to emphasise on "friendship and cooperation" with America, and a promise to "promote the cause of nuclear disarmament" jointly with Washington. Unfortunately for the BJP, the letter got a cold response from a Washington that has large economic interests in capitalist China. Though the official American administration could, in the future, consider India as a military counter-weight to China in Asia, it was not immediately interested in an anti-China axis. Not only was the Clinton administration cold to Vajpayee's suggestions, but it consciously provoked China against India, by leaking the letter to the press. And to add salt to injury, it further suggested China could mediate to help solve the Indo-Pak dispute. With this response from Washington, and the vehement reaction from China, the weak-kneed BJP (and of course their drum-beater, Fernandes) beat a hasty retreat.... and with that the anti-China episode, reached a clumsy end.

As far as the South Asian governments are concerned, all have reacted with a certain amount of panic to India's nuclear explosion and aggressive statements.

Pakistan immediately responded with six nuclear explosions, declared a state of Emergency and put its army on full alert. With increased border clashes from mid-May and the plan for location of Prithvi missiles near the Pak border, the danger of a full-scale outburst has got aggravated.

In Bangladesh, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina called on the armed forces to stand on full 'alert', increased the defense budget and stated that "if needed, the defence system should be further consolidated and our strategy

should be changed in a changed situation.”

Sri Lanka, while supporting both explosions, has angered the BJP government, by offering its good services, to re-establish Indo-Chinese ties.... saying, that it “regretted” that some Indian leaders have recently seen China as their “main enemy”. In fact, soon after India’s nuclear test, the Chinese foreign minister said that he would maintain close contact with his counterpart in Sri Lanka on resolving issues of “regional peace, security and stability”.

The Maldivian premier cancelled a four-day scheduled visit to India after the tests. While Nepal, landlocked between China and India, and itself a signatory to the CTBT and NPT, has maintained a nervous silence, not wishing to antagonise either.

The Indian and Pakistani nuclear tests have resulted in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Maldives raising a question-mark on the security ambience in South Asia. The main idea floated by Sri Lanka and the Maldives, besides Bangladesh to a lesser extent, is that the nuclear explosions have produced a fall-out of a pan-regional concern in South Asia. Unfortunately, the leaders of these countries fail to realise that Indian expansionism has always been part and parcel of the Indian comprador bourgeois’s policies..... some times luring the rulers of the neighbouring countries with the carrot, at other times, wielding the stick. Gujral offered the carrot, the BJP will wield the stick.... the intentions were the same, only the methods differ.

Science For Whom ?

But, what are they being congratulated for ? Creating weapons of mass destruction !! Weapons that cannot distinguish between combatants and civilians, killing indiscriminately. What is so great in creating a weapon that exterminates 1.5 lakh civilians through shock waves, incineration, vapourising fire storms and radiation, in the first minute of its explosion; another few lakhs later, maims and cripples thousands more and creates an entire generation of deformed children. Are they scientists or monsters ? For all their talk of safe underground tests, the bomb has already affected people in the neighbouring 20 villages in the Pokhran area. Villagers have been complaining of burning eyes, bleeding noses and respiratory problems. Not one of these scientists nor the government have gone to investigate their problems. So annoyed were the public that they boycotted the Prime Minister’s meeting when he visited the area. The people of Pokhran have been made sacrificial lambs at the altar of BJP’s fascist agenda.

Creating and developing weapons of mass destruction cannot be the task for scientists, with even an iota of social sense. Science, is a double-edged sword — it cannot be used for the extermination of mankind, and also for

its progress and advance. Particularly in a country like India, with its extreme poverty, backwardness, disease, starvation deaths, malnutrition.... there is a crying need that science be used to serve the people.

To take the bulk of our rural people out of poverty and centuries-old backwardness; to increase food production without environmental damage; to develop systems that prevent soil erosion, raise the water-table and effective afforestation; to effect proper hygiene in cities and villages, through drainage systems; to bring water to every village and all land under irrigation; to develop effective methods of flood control and cyclone-warning systems, etc, etc..... the demands before our scientists are immense, and a tragedy that they should waste their efforts on creating weapons of mass destruction.

Oppose The Bomb - Fight Back The Fascist Onslaught

Weapons, including modern weapons, should be utilised for defending the masses; fighting the reactionaries, fascists and imperialists; and for advancing real (people’s) democracy and socialism. In the world today, the reactionaries, and specifically the US imperialists, are armed to the teeth with all kinds of weapons (conventional, nuclear, biological), and are continuously upgrading their technology. This monstrous military might is utilised to suppress the people of their own country, dominate the third world either through their lackeys or through direct aggression, and contend with rival imperialist powers. These weapons are used to defend PROFIT, expand MARKETS, and ensure society is made ‘SAFE’ for its masters.

In such a situation, the pacifists disarm the people by opposing all weapons per se, propounding an all-encompassing peace and condemning all violence, whether just or unjust. Thereby they indirectly help sustain the status quo, facilitating the monopolisation of weapons in the hands of the reactionaries and the continuation of their violence on the people. **VANGUARD opposes the BJP bomb, not out of some slippery pacifist design, but because it will be used to attack the people of the neighbouring countries, and not to resist the imperialists.** The bomb is part of the BJP’s fascist agenda to whip up national /hindu chauvinism; to threaten, bully and aggress against other South Asian countries, and to be used as a tool with which to bargain with the imperialists to get support for their expansionist and hegemonist designs in the region. It must be opposed.

While the pacifists also oppose the bomb, they play into the US hands by calling for signing the CTBT. **VANGUARD vehemently opposes the signing of such unequal treaties which allow for the monopolisation of such weapons in the hands of the most dangerous**

enemies of mankind. 'Vanguard' demands total and comprehensive destruction of all nuclear weapons as the only safeguard against the danger of nuclear war. 'Vanguard' also recognises that as long as the imperialists exist the danger of war, including nuclear war, exists.... and that the goal of ending all wars of extermination can finally be achieved only by burying imperialism and building socialism.



A demonstration against nuclear tests led by Yashuki Takeda (one of the survivors of the Hiroshima bombing in 1945) in New Delhi on 16th June.

In the country today, the growing fascist policies of the government are, in fact, part and parcel of the imperialist-dictated economic policies of liberalisation, which is resulting in mass destitution of the lives of the majority, while creating a small class of excessively wealthy elite. For the imperialists to continue (and increase) their loot of the country, it is necessary to 'pacify' the masses, through a pliant and increasingly fascist government and ruling class. Advani, the Home Minister, has been faithfully carrying out these policies with aggressive determination. Backed by the bomb and the chauvinism whipped up around it : he has planned systematic attacks on the ongoing nationality movements, particularly in Kashmir; he has conducted a meeting of the CMs and top police officials of four states for a planned attack on the revolutionaries, particularly the CPI (ML) (People's War); he has instructed state governments to introduce their own TADA-type fascist legislations, thereby broadening the base of BJP's fascist policies; he has planned identity cards for every citizen of the country over the age of 14; and he is systematically upgrading the weapons and technology in the hands of the police and para military. Under the pretext of 'threat to the nation' defence expenditure has been hiked, the bulk of which is utilised, not to protect the borders, but to massacre the Indian people. Simultaneously through the HRD and information and broadcasting ministries, the BJP has, with great speed, begun introducing their hindu chauvinist ideology in the curriculum at all levels of education and in the media. The bomb has been used to give legitimacy to these fascist policies, which will help

make the country 'safe' for imperialism.

For all the imperialist noise on sanctions, private investment and trade, which effect MNC interests, have not been touched. The ban (or postponement) of loans, 'aid' and defence equipment/technology is being used to brow-beat the Indian rulers to further pry open the economy and, at least, sign the CTBT. In this arm-twisting they have already achieved partial success : with Jaswant Singh, on behalf of the PM, giving some secret assurances to the US, during his week's stay there; with the BJP government already acting according to imperialist dictates on the economic front and thereby proving its servile (not swadeshi) credentials; with Vajpayee having declared a moratorium on conducting further nuclear tests; and with a number of top BJP spokesperson's, including the PM, hinting at a readiness to abide by the CTBT, if not to even sign it.... of course, with some face saving device.

With such capitulation, the path is being cleared by the ruling BJP to get sanctions lifted and push the country further into the embrace of the imperialist octopus. Besides, with growing imperialist contradictions, Russia, ignoring the sanctions is all set to sell India its latest missile system. While pandering to all the imperialist powers, the Indian rulers will continue its endeavour to seek out a status of a regional power, as junior partner in some imperialist alliance. Of course, as imperialist alliances are still in a flux, so will this endeavour be, until the emergence of more coherent blocs.

Today, it suits the imperialists to sustain regional conflicts, such as the Indo-Pak dispute. As part of its divide and rule policy, it is a useful tool with which to prevent third world countries forming any alliance against their hegemony. In addition, promoting conflict amongst them, will further weaken them and facilitate greater imperialist control. It also gives them the pretext for physical intervention, either directly, or through the cover of the UN. Even wars amongst them are not discouraged (may be even provoked), as that acts to weaken both countries even further.... besides, war is excellent business for their giant military-industrial combine.

And so it is with the Indo-Pak conflict. The imperialists have no real interest in the people of Kashmir, or their genuine desire for self-determination, but utilise the issue to blow hot and cold and thereby keep Indo-Pak relations in a perpetual state of tension. Their call for dialogue is nothing but subterfuge for continuous provocation of both countries against each other, and an excuse for their direct intervention. Earlier, this conflict was aggravated by superpower rivalry in the region, today it is part of their geo-political plans for further domination of South Asia. And as imperialist contentions grow, this too will increasingly become part of that rivalry. It is not

in the interests of the people of Pakistan and India to continue this conflict, but it is the ruling classes of both countries that sustain it in order to divert attention from their own misrule. Thereby, both rulers willingly play to imperialist designs.

In India, the initial euphoria over the bomb is fast waning. According to a CMCR (Centre for Media & Culture Research) all-India survey, (reported on June 23), 73% of the people interviewed, "did not want the Indian defence forces to use nuclear weapons against any country." There have, in fact, been a series of demonstrations and meetings, throughout the country, against the bomb — over 30 in a minimum of 8 cities. Over 300 scientists have questioned the "achievement", and 75 scientists from all over the country issued a press statement from Chennai, opposing the tests. Even some former top army personnel have opposed the n-bomb, like : former Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral N. Ramdas, Lt. Gen. Gurbir Mansingh, Air Marshal J. Zaheer and Lt. Gen. V.R. Raghavan. Also to oppose the bomb, were former Atomic Energy Commission Chairman, M.R. Srinivasan, former Supreme Court Judge, V.R. Krishna Iyer and a number of noted artists and writers.

Today, all peace-loving, progressive, democratic and

patriotic people of South Asia, must oppose the nuclear bombs; must oppose war, and strive for peace between the neighbouring countries of South Asia, based on the five principles of peaceful co-existence; must oppose and fight imperialist dictated policies and designs in their own countries and within SAARC; must fight for democratic rights, opposing national chauvinism whipped up by the rulers of their own country; and must unite to fight Indian expansionism in the sub-continent.

In India, the people must rise against the politics of the bomb and the growing fascism of the ruling classes and particularly the BJP; must oppose all forms of big nation chauvinism and hindu chauvinism; must expose and fight back the terroristic and undemocratic policies of the state; must oppose economic reforms, 'liberalisation' and capitulation to imperialism.... and must unite with all democratic and patriotic (anti-imperialist) forces within the country, particularly the armed struggles of the revolutionaries and nationality movements, to smash the local reactionaries and their imperialist backers. Finally, the Indian people must also ally with the people's of South Asia, including the Pakistani people, to fight the war-mongering and expansionist policies of the Indian ruling classes. □

(Continuation of page 41)

The following proposals were placed by the Bhuriya Committee in its report :

1) The traditional self-governing institutions of the adivasis — Gram Sabhas — are run on a democratic basis and hence the Panchayati raj system in the adivasi areas should be developed based on them.

2) The fifth schedule is to be deemed as a broad and powerful overarching frame, serving as the fountain-head of essential and beneficial legislation. The Tribal Advisory Council should be strengthened to render assistance to the government in preparing policies to protect the tribal interests in accordance with the 5th Schedule.

3) Tribal District Councils as mentioned in the 6th Schedule should be formed in the Scheduled Areas under the 5th Schedule. The overall design of the sixth schedule could serve as a relevant reference frame for a district within the broader canvas of the 5th Schedule.

4) Clauses to be incorporated into the Indian Constitution guaranteeing the district councils the right to form self-governing institutions at the village level; granting legal status to traditional tribal institutions and customary laws; and empowering the Gram Sabha to exercise control over the forest, land, water and other resources falling within the village limits.

5) The intervention of the various administrative wings like the police, excise, forest officials etc. in adivasi areas to be done away with.

6) Borders of the district and states were not drawn

up by consulting the adivasis as a result of which the latter are divided into different districts. Hence the borders of districts to be redrawn to constitute adivasi districts.

The central government while accepting some of the recommendations made by the Bhuriya Committee, did not, however, accept the most important proposal of forming district councils in all adivasi areas, i.e. implementing the provisions of the 6th Schedule, regarding autonomy in the Scheduled Areas falling under the 5th Schedule. The question of forming autonomous district councils was left to the discussion of the state governments though the powers and rights of the Gram Sabha were incorporated into the Central Act.

The immediate and the most important demand (notwithstanding its severe limitations given the exploitative nature of the existing semi-feudal, semi-colonial system in India) is that the adivasis should fight for the establishment of Autonomous District Councils and regional councils in all the adivasi areas in the country. These councils should be empowered to make their own laws, run their own administration and economy, exercise total control over the land, forest, water and other resources in the district and the region concerned. No central and state laws should be made applicable in these tribal districts and regions. This is the first crucial step towards achieving tribal autonomy though complete and genuine autonomy will still be a far cry as such a thing is linked to the abolition of the social and economic inequalities that are the very basis of existing social system. □

Budget '98 :

Swadeshi in Words, Videshi in Deeds

The BJP's first ever budget is nothing but a continuation of the economic policies of the earlier Congress (I) and UF governments. It contains the standard mix of rapid opening-up to foreign capital; large concessions to big business; stepped-up attacks on the living conditions of the masses; and, what has now become standard budgetary subterfuge, of increasing welfare expenditure that never gets spent. There was no trace even of 'swadeshi'; in fact, the videshi content was even more pronounced than that of their predecessors.

But ofcourse, the budget did have its very particular BJP stamp. Big bombast was coupled with ridiculous bungling. Never before has a finance minister (FM) retracted on a budget proposal within just 24 hours, as did Yeshwant Sinha on the petrol price hike. In fact, the entire budget calculations are a mass, with, not only revenue from the petrol price-hike being reduced, but also reduction in revenue through, cancellation of the Rs. 1 per Kg, increase in urea prices, the halving of the 8% import duty increase, and 'rethinking' on the 8% excise duty increase on branded (those with labels) food.

Besides, for all the brave talk of facing-up to imperialist sanctions, the very budget itself has increased the country's dependence on foreign loans by raising the quantum from Rs. 8000 crores last year to Rs. 10,000 crores (\$2.5 bn) this year. Either, the FM, is utterly naive in ignoring the after-effects of the n-bomb, or else, has concealed information of sanctions being lifted, due to a secret deal struck between the BJP and the imperialists.

Now let us turn to the main contents of the budget.

Kick-starting the Economy, A non-starter

The main focus of the FM's budget speech, besides the swadeshi rhetoric, was a 'dynamic' plan to kick-start the economy caught in a deep recession since the last two years. With lack of demand for commodities, industry has been stagnating, and big business has been desperately demanding of the government to undertake extensive developmental projects in order to create a demand. Conveniently, they have forgotten their own privatisation mantra, of leaving the government to govern, and the economy to free enterprise. Now they call for intervention, even at the cost of cutting expenditure on people's welfare, creating inflation and increasing the deficit.

In the last financial year the 'economic reforms' has resulted in an even more severe recession than that of the earlier year. Industrial growth was a mere 4.5% of

G.D.P. in 1997-98 (compared to 7.1% in 96/97 and 12.1% in 95/96); export growth was even worse at 2.6% (compared to 5.3% in 96/97 and 21% in 95/96); and agricultural production, in fact, declined by 3.7%. The overall GDP growth was a mere 5% in 97/98, compared to 7.5% in the previous year; while the burgeoning fiscal deficit reached 6.1% compared to a target of 4.5%. And inspite of the dynamic budget, the stockmarket has crashed even further, the rupee continues its disastrous slide, and inflation has been built into the budget itself, thereby depressing demand further, by eating into the purchasing power of the people.

With a budget dependent on large borrowings for its receipts on the one hand, and huge non-developmental (non-plan) expenditure on the other, what growth can be expected?

In this budget, of the total receipts, 35% is dependent on borrowings and of the total expenditure 73% is non-developmental or unproductive. In this year's budget gross internal borrowings have been increased by a huge 60% from Rs.44,000 crores last year to Rs. 71,000 crores. Yet, this entire amount will not even cover the interest charges due. Similarly of the Rs. 10,000 crores budgeted to be received in external loans, Rs. 7,700 crores will go as interest. It is a debt trap into which the Indian economy is getting more and more deeply entangled.

If we turn to non-plan expenditure we find that of the roughly Rs. 2 lakh crores; interest charges alone amount to Rs. 75,000 crores; defence and defence-related expenditure takes another Rs. 48,000 crores; administrative expenditure of the government another Rs. 26,000 crores, subsidies Rs. 22,000 crores and the central police Rs. 6,000 crores. In this, interest, and defence charges have gone up by 14% over the previous year and expenditure on the department Atomic Energy/Space has gone up by a huge 65%.... no doubt, to meet the growing expenses on the n-bomb. Besides, the FM has said there is likely to be an additional defence expense during the year. In addition, the BJP, in order to pamper the bureaucratic apparatus, packed with RSS thugs, has increased the administrative expenditure by 8% over the interim budget figure passed just two months back.

As far as the so-called big increase in the plan expenditure goes, the bulk of it comes not from budgetary support to it, but through non-budgetary mobilisation of funds. For example, the FM expects the PSUs, most of which are making losses, to generate an increase in 32% of investible funds to finance the 35% budgeted increase in public investment in the infrastructure. In agriculture,

where the budget talks of a 58% increase in outlay, the actual budgetary increase for irrigation and flood control is just 16%; while agriculture and rural development has been allocated a mere 11.8% of the Central Plan, which is even less than that of last year. Here again the government expects banks, rural credit schemes, etc to help out; while at the same time accepting the recommendations of the Narasimham Committee to take action on banks with high NPAs (non-performing assets).....which is bound to discourage rural credit.

So it is evident that development expenditure is necessarily curtailed, in order to meet the growing demands of a rapacious state machinery. In this budget, the situation has got so bad that of the money generated on the capital account through borrowings, non-tax revenue etc., Rs. 50,000 crores (i.e. nearly half the total capital receipts) is being used to meet revenue expenditure — that is, day-to-day government expenditure. A healthy growing economy ought to have the opposite: surplus revenue account funds transferred to finance large public investments. Such budgetary necessities, is nothing but a prescription for bankruptcy.

So, as long as non-plan expenditure continues to swallow up the bulk of government funds, any recovery of the economy is necessarily left to the vagaries of the market forces and developmental expenditure will be nominal. Besides, as long as the purchasing power of the masses is kept low, and further depleted through large doses of indirect tax and inflation, the economy becomes more dependent on exports, which is governed by the vagaries of the global imperialist-determined markets.

Privatisation of the Economy

If at all this budget has a pronounced BJP stamp (or for that matter IMF - World Bank stamp) it is in this sphere, wherein drastic steps have been taken towards privatisation. For many years the imperialists have been demanding and pressurising the government to open out the lucrative insurance sector, dis-invest the large public sector, and open out our vast mineral wealth to these sharks. The BJP has meekly complied on all three counts in this budget.

On insurance, where even the Congress (I) and UF hesitated, the BJP has gone ahead and opened out the entire sector to private capital, allowing foreign capital through the back-door. The BJP, in an attempt to hide its capitulation to foreign capital, stated that the insurance sector is only opened up to private Indian companies. But, the companies act, defines an 'Indian Company' as any company (Indian or foreign) that is registered in India. Besides, 13 foreign insurance companies, awaiting such a decision, has long-since tied up with major India partners like Tatas, Birlas, Ranbaxy, Bombay Dying,

Mahindras and even ICICI and HDFC — all 'Indian' JVs, ready for investment in insurance.

On the question of opening out our vast mineral wealth to the imperialists, this budget has decided to delicense three key sectors — coal, lignite and petroleum products.

But the most far-reaching decision has been for the government to sell out 74% of its share in all PSUs (except strategic industries) and close all loss-making units. Immediately, it has decided to bring down the government's share in Indian Airlines to 49% within three years, and raise Rs. 5000 crores in the current year through disinvestment of the four most profitable PSUs — VSNL (Videsh Sanchar Nigam Ltd); IOC (Indian Oil Corporation), GAIL (Gas Authority of India Ltd), and Container Corporation (CONCOR). By the fact that the actual worth of these companies is far beyond Rs. 5000 crores, it is clear that the BJP intends to gift these companies to the Indian big bourgeoisie and the MNCs at throw-away prices.

On the question of closure of loss-making PSUs the BJP intends to throw out the workers, paying them off through the sale of the assets and land of these companies. What the trade unions have resisted in Bombay's textile mills, the BJP intends to push through throughout the country. Given that, of the 240 PSUs, 160 are loss-making and before the BIFR, this decision is nothing but a massive retrenchment programme, a ruthless attack on the working class.

Imperialists, Take All

In its maiden budget the BJP has capitulated to imperialists' interests on all fronts—export-import, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), Foreign Institutional Investment (FII) and non-resident Indians (NRIs). Let us see the budget's approach on each point.

The maximum media hype, portraying this as a swadeshi budget, was due to the 8% increase in customs duty on imports. This, again was a hoax. Two of the major import items were exempt—crude oil and capital goods. On the contrary, on India's largest import item, crude oil, bowing to WTO demands, the FM reduced the duty by 5%. Though, the major impact of cheap imports in the last year had been on the capital goods industry which had lost orders to the tune of Rs. 5,000 crores yet this sector was exempt from the hike. Yet again, those imported goods involved in trading, were also exempt from the hike.... so it also did not apply to consumer goods that flood the Indian market. So, what remained of this hike was merely favouring a few select industrial houses (as we shall see later). Besides, on a host of specific items, customs duty was in fact dropped, with the servile FM unashamedly stating in the budget speech that he was acting in accordance with GATT's binding. Some of

the items on which duty was decreased were telecom equipment, jumbo film rolls, nylon filament yarn, calculators, pagers, cellphones, PVC compound, computer hardware, floppys, and even foreign liquor !! Finally, under pressure, even this 8% hike was later reduced to 4%.

On the question of FDI, the FM promised to double it to \$6 bn within two years by giving bigger concessions and speeding up clearances. It has infact decided to appoint 'monitoring officers' to help clear any deal worth over Rs. 100 crores, thus creating a nest of new MNC agents, paid-for by the Indian government. And to cover up the blatant capitulation to the MNCs, the BJP resorted to stunts like banning Coca Cola, Pepsi Cola in the UP assembly. With power at the centre, if it had the guts, why does it not kick them out ??

When we turn to the FIIs, we find that the BJP is even out to entice the ruthless international speculators, by introducing Futures trading in edible oil seeds, oil cakes and oil seed. Futures trading is nothing but gambling in forward prices, and by pushing India into the multi-billion dollar derivatives market, the BJP is opening up the economy even further to the most unscrupulous wolves of finance capital.

Finally, in a desperate bid to woo NRI capital, due to its excessively close dependence on these worst agents of the imperialists, the BJP has planned massive incentives to these 'foreign Indians.' Much talk has been there of countering sanctions by getting NRI money. This, inspite of the betrayal of these NRIs in 1991/92 when India sought their funds at the time of the BOP crisis; and inspite of the fact that NRI flows had dropped from \$3.3 bn in 96/97 to a mere \$1.1 bn in 97/98 (compare this with the inflow of \$11 bn from Indian workers abroad). But ofcourse the BJP is interested only in placating the Hinduja (of Bofors fame), Mittals, Swaraj Pauls etc and not the lakhs of Indian workers !! And to do this, in this budget, they have planned to launch two new bonds at high interest rate, free from tax and with freedom to repatriate the full amount. Also it has increased the limit of NRI investment in Indian companies from 1% to 5%.

It would thus appear that imperialist interests reign supreme in this budget.

Loaves For the Rich, Crumbs For the Poor

This budget, more so than any earlier one, blatantly and crudely gives direct favours to specific industrial houses.... allowing them to hike their profits enormously. The 23 changes in the customs duty regime and the 13 in excise duty are totally ad hoc, with no logic involved, save to dispense favours to BJP-friendly business houses.

For example, Reliance stands to gain an immediate

Rs. 300 crores, besides other long-term benefits. Reliance dominates the polymer and petroleum products market in the country, manufacturing items like PDY, PTA, PSF, MEG, etc., from the raw materials, crude oil and paraxylene. The government's increase in import duty of, now, 4%, raised the price of imported petroleum products like PTA, etc. This enabled Reliance to raise its selling price of PTA, etc.... which it promptly did on June 5, just two days after the budget. But this was not the only advantage gifted to Reliance. With the import duty on crude being cut by 5% and on paraxylene by 10%, Reliance is now able to reap a fortune, as 50% of it paraxylene and the bulk of its crude is imported. But this too, is not all. The government's extension of the tax-holiday period on new refineries from 2000 to 2003, will be a major financial gain for Reliance's giant refinery cum petro-chemical complex coming up at Jamnagar... and nearing completion.

Then, certain industrial sectors have gained as a whole, like : the builders lobby and real estate dealers through the tax concessions and 5-year tax holiday on housing projects; the transporters, have gained Rs. 2,000 crores by the abolition of service tax; and a section of the small scale industries, which stand to gain Rs. 300 crores through some excise and other reliefs.

Besides there have been some over all benefits granted to the corporate sector : Not only has the low tax regime of Chidambaram's 'dream budget' remained fully in tact, but an added gift of Rs. 950 crores has been given by allowing depreciation at the rate of 25% on intangible assets (like copyrights, patents, etc) and full amortisation (write off) of preliminary expenditure; then, capital gains tax will not be levied on specific cases of business reorganisation; and finally, the FM's 'Samadhan' Scheme, is a boon to all companies that evaded corporation tax, who will now pay a tax amount at the existing rate without interest or penalty being charged, and as far as excise duty defaulters go, they will just have to pay 50% of their dues.

Such then are the enormous benefits given to the elite, particularly the big business houses. But just as big business has gained, the masses of our country have lost, with the bulk of the burden of taxes being pushed onto them. It is like taking away from the poor and middle classes and handing over the funds to the rich.

Besides the general inflationary impact of the budget, which effects the poor and fixed-income people disproportionately, there has been an excessive dose of indirect taxation. Even after the reductions, the amount pushed onto the people will be over Rs. 5000 crores. In addition postal charges have been hiked from 25% to 100% adding another Rs. 270 crores burden on the people. And added to all this is the 5% to 25% increase in railway passenger fares adding a further Rs. 400 crores... the bulk

of which will come from second class fares, and another Rs. 50 crores will be extracted through a 2% increase in freight charges.

Then the government has temporarily saved Rs. 5,000 crores, in not having to pay retirement benefits by raising the retirement age by two years and has saved huge amounts by further cutting recruitment. Thereby the unemployment problem is aggravated. And now even worker's provident fund is to be used to prop-up private capital, with 10% being allowed to be invested in private-sector infrastructure securities.

In addition, on instructions from the World Bank, the government has announced its intention to hike electricity charges to the farm sector in order to recover the so-called Rs. 10,000 crores due from the State Electricity Boards. This will badly effect the farmers, as was its failed attempt to raise urea prices by 27%. Both these were attempted in this budget itself by the BJP, whose anti-people intentions were clear.... but were unsuccessful, due to contradictions with the coalition partners.

From this it is clear that a minimum of Rs. 12,000 crores will get extracted from the masses through this budget, and an equivalent amount, if not more, has been gifted away to the rich, particularly the corporate sector.

Crisis Looms Large

Today, the country's trade deficit is growing, the value of the rupee is dropping, the external debt is reaching unmanageable proportions... and with the continuing recession, all these factors are pushing the economy to breaking-point.

What then is the real scenario of the India's economy? The government and media continue to white-wash the reality, and specifically with the threat of sanctions, put on a brave face. The reality is that in 1996/97 the trade deficit reached the figure of \$14.3 bn; today it has risen to over \$15 bn. Next, with the external debt having reached Rs. 4½ lakh crores (with the 20% devaluation of the rupee) the yearly drain through interest alone (at say 4%) would amount to \$5 bn.... and this does not include repayment of capital. Then, the drain through income on foreign investments in India which amounted to \$3.3 bn in 96/97 would also have increased due to new capital flowing in each year. Therefore, today, at a conservative estimate the total foreign exchange requirements for the year comes to about \$27 billion !!

Now, how is this large foreign exchange commitment to be met? If there was a trade surplus, earnings through exports could meet the bulk of the other commitments. But, that is not the case. So this is met through foreign loans/aid, FDI, FII, NRI investment and through remittances by Indian workers working abroad. In 1996/97, the situation was saved by, infact, the last category

who remitted \$11 bn. But this is not a definite quantity, as in the previous two years it was just half that, while in 1990/91 it was nil. As far as NRI investments go the amount has been declining and was just \$1.1 bn last year. In other words the government is totally dependent on a flow of funds from imperialists (FDI, FII, GDRs, Foreign loans etc) to meet the bulk of this foreign exchange requirement.... particularly so, as long as the trade deficit keeps mounting. And if this tap is turned off... a balance of payments crisis is precipitated. So, for all the BJP's brave talk, they know that sanctions — and cutting off loans, or flight of FII capital, or drop in FDI, GDR etc — could soon precipitate a crisis.

So, the government's desperation to increase exports, even at the cost of drastic devaluation of the rupee (which it is itself encouraging), to somehow reduce the trade deficit and thereby postpone a BOP (Balance Of Payment) crisis. But, the irony of the situation is that, though rupee devaluation may make Indian goods more competitive in the international market, it need not lead to more earnings.... after all, with a 20% devaluation, even a 20% growth in the quantum of exports, will mean a zero growth in dollar-value terms !! So, we find that even if export growth happens to double, we would be exactly where we started — a burgeoning trade deficit.

'Economic reforms' has pushed the country into this trap.... in which a highly lop-sided economy has developed, where import-exports account for 23% of India's GDP; while agricultural production, which involves 75% of our population, accounts for a mere 27% of GDP. Such a warped economy, fully dependent on the import-export — foreign loan/foreign investment cycle, and not on a growth of the home market and indigenous technology and investment, must necessarily be caught in the imperialist trap. Effective sanctions, and the cutting off the flow of foreign funds can precipitate a crisis. And, in the recession-hit, n-bomb scenario ... this is what the country is facing. Unfortunately, the key to economic survival (within the existing framework) lies not with the Indian government, but with the imperialists.

Ofcourse, there is a way out — that is, to come out of this vicious circle, break free from the foreign trade — foreign loan/investment cycle. But that means not merely reversing 'economic reforms', but breaking free from dependence on imperialism. Which parliamentary party is willing of prepared to do that? There can be no mid-way course in this imperialist-driven global market — either break free from this rapacious monster or get devoured by its unlimited appetite; either total self-reliance and indigenous growth or complete dependence. This global imperialist economy is like quick-sand, stepping into it means getting sucked into the quagmire. India has already been pushed neck-deep into this muck by its ruling classes. It is the people alone who can save our country by extricating it from this quick-sand. □

Chief Ministers' Conference Grants Legitimacy To Police Goondaism

Ever since the BJP-led coalition government assumed office at the centre, it has been itching to dig its fascist fangs into the revolutionary movement in AP and Dandakaranya. Tackling "left extremism" in AP and DK has become a high-priority task in the BJP agenda as it is highly conscious of the strength, and, more important, the potential of the revolutionary movement led by the CPI (ML) (People's War), especially in the context of the deepening economic and political crisis in the country and the pro-imperialist policies of the government, resulting in the total sell-out of the country's interests. It knows that any movement on the basic demands of the people in AP will inevitably pass into the hands of the so-called left extremists. An Indonesia-like situation where lakhs of people come out onto the streets defying authority, could spell disaster for the ruling classes wherever the cadre-based extra-parliamentary revolutionary parties are in existence. Moreover, the AP, DK movements have wide influence all over India and are emerging as the real alternative to the people of the country.

Besides, in Telangana, the BJP-RSS-ABVP have some scores to settle with the revolutionaries as the latter had virtually wiped them out of rural Telangana in the course of the intensifying class struggles in the past two decades. These Hindu-chauvinist, communal forces are eager to gain some foot hold in Telangana by eliminating the revolutionaries. Thus what they failed to achieve all these years based on their own cadre strength they now wish to achieve using the state's armed forces at their disposal. The BJP, of course, is not alone in dreaming of wiping out the revolutionary movement. There is a broad consensus among all the parties of the ruling classes—Congress, Janata Dal, various regional parties, the so-called Left parties like the CPI and the CPI(M) etc—on this question. All of them know how discredited they have become in the eyes of the people.

Hence, the BJP at the centre, the ruling TDP in AP, the Congress in neighbouring MP and Orissa and the BJP-Shiv Sena in Maharashtra, and their masters abroad—the imperialists and their agencies like the IMF, World Bank, WTO—have all come together to hatch nefarious schemes to wipe out "left extremism" and especially the CPI (ML) (People's War).

On June 15 a meeting of the Chief Ministers of the four states—AP, MP, Maharashtra and Orissa—was called by the central government in Hyderabad. The chief ministers of AP and MP, the deputy chief minister of

Maharashtra and the top officials of Orissa attended the high level meeting presided over by the home minister L.K. Advani. A co-ordination centre was formed under the chairmanship of the central home secretary B.P. Singh and comprising Chief Secretaries and DGPs of the concerned states. They will meet in Hyderabad every month, review the progress made and chalk out required plans. The home minister will have a meeting with the chief ministers twice in a year to discuss the problems of 'left extremism.'

The June 15 meeting also recommended the introduction of Special Acts for the suppression of naxalites. Acts in the model of the Tamilnadu Prevention of Terrorist Activities Act, 1998 are being contemplated in these states. Earlier too, especially since 1992, there have been meetings of chief ministers of these states and attempts were made to run a Joint Command and a Nodal Centre. But what stands out as striking in this meeting is the complete change in the perception and approach of the governments towards the question. Earlier, there was atleast a recognition of the fact that naxalism was basically a socio-economic problem and that it cannot be dealt through law and order measures alone.

But this time the entire approach adopted by the chief ministers' conference guided by BJP's Advani was that naxalism is basically a law and order problem and a national security problem; hence, it has to be seriously tackled at that plane. Though some of them say that economics and politics are also involved, there is no plan whatsoever to deal with the socio-economic problems of the people. The conference thus only talked in terms of more sophisticated weapons, training for the police forces, deployment of more central forces, better communication systems, stronger and more secure buildings for the police stations, security for the police personnel working in naxal-dominated areas, protection for politicians and VIPs, better roads and so on and so forth.

The RSS ideologue Advani vomitted all his pent-up venom and hatred against communism and naxalism. He described naxalism as a "crime against humanity", that to attribute the growth of the naxal movement to backwardness of the region tantamounts to giving respectability and credibility to the movement, that naxalism was purely a law and order problem and that it posed a threat to the security of the country and so on and so forth.

The very approach adopted by the BJP government at the centre and the Congress, TDP, BJP-Shiv Sena chief

ministers towards the naxalite issue will only lead to further escalation of class war in these states. The brutal suppression campaign that is sought to be unleashed against the revolutionary movement will compel more and more people to take up arms to fight back the enemy. On the other hand the failure on the part of the governments to address the actual grievances and the burning problems confronting the people and instead resorting to brutal force will generate more disgust and hatred among the people against the system. As the deepening crisis drives more and more people into the clutches of poverty and unemployment, they are bound to look upon armed struggle as the only way out. The strong-arm tactics of the government will only backfire as the movement's roots are in the socio-economic conditions of the people not on the subjective wishes of a few individuals as fancied by the fascists in power.

Who Poses The Real Threat ?

Today it is the BJP-RSS-VHP-Bhajarang combine which has emerged as the greatest threat to peace and security in the country. They are a security threat to the muslims, sikhs, christians and other religious minorities. Their attempts to convert the religious minorities into hindus or eliminate them through communal riots is the worst crime against humanity. They are a security threat to the entire hindus too as the latter are compelled to live under constant fear of the breakout of communal riots due to the machinations of the BJP-RSS led hindu fascist forces. They are a security threat to the entire Indian people because they started off a mad nuclear arms race on the sub-continent and made Indian people also a vulnerable target of the weapons of mass destruction. They are a security threat to the people and the countries of entire South Asia as the latter are bullied and blackmailed by the Indian expansionists who see themselves in the role of a regional power in South Asia.

BJP's nuclear bomb is the real crime against humanity. Advani's rathyatra that left a bloody trail of death and destruction by instigating pogroms against muslims is the greatest crime against humanity. The BJP-RSS-Bhajarang Dal's gory act of demolition of the Babri Masjid leading to Hindu-Muslim riots all over the country is a crime against humanity. And it is this cut-throat Advani, now in charge of home affairs, who was in the forefront instigating and goading saffron karsevaks to demolish the Babri Masjid and openly fanning anti-muslim frenzy. It is Advani who is the number one enemy of the Indian people and a threat to peace and security in the sub-continent. Such a criminal who instigated communal riots resulting in the killing of thousands of muslims and hindus has no right to speak of naxals being a security threat to the country.

In AP itself where the naxalite are said to commit the

largest number of "crimes", one would be surprised to find that these "crimes" pale into insignificance before the ghastly crimes committed by the police day in and day out or by the two ruling class parties — TDP and Congress. While the revolutionary violence of naxalites is blown out of proportion by the media, the much greater violence of the ruling class parties find hardly any mention. It is said that the number of those killed in the clashes between the TDP and Congress in four districts of Rayalaseema in any year in the past decade far exceeds those killed in naxalite violence in entire AP and DK. It is thus these two ruling class parties which pose the real threat to law and order in AP as they are filled with communal elements.

Lock-up deaths, tortures, rapes, destruction of property, blackmail, extortion, corruption and anarchic acts have become the routine duties performed by the police in AP and elsewhere.

For instance, the hooliganism of the police in Karimnagar and Peddapalli towns on April 18 reminds one of mediaval times. When the district SP, Umesh Chandra was transferred, the police men loyal to him went berserk setting fire to vehicles on the roads, attacking and looting shops and houses, beating up people on the roads and even the patients in hospitals, and molesting women. An enquiry committee led by the SP of CB CID, Rajiv Ratan, stated that Rs. 45 lakhs worth of RTC property was destroyed by the police attack. A Telugu daily's office was attacked and the computer, printer and furniture was destroyed. Even ruling party representatives were not spared. The houses of a Zilla parishad chairman belonging to the TDP, a DCCB chairman, two MLAs houses and those of several other politicians were attacked and property destroyed. These goonda acts of the police created so much anger among the people that to pacify them Naidu had to terminate the services of some policemen.

There are scores of incidents of custodial deaths, of rapes of women by the police in AP which make chilling reading. For instance, Hussain Bee, who along with her husband Eedanna, surrendered before the government in November 95 after serving in the People's War guerilla squads for about 3 years, was picked up on Bakrid day in April 1998 and repeatedly raped by a gang of SSF policemen in Mahaboobnagar district. When it became a big issue, the chief minister suspended three constables. Hussain Bee's episode took an even more ghastly turn when the police kidnapped her husband on June 11 in Hyderabad and murdered him the next day. Eedanna had served as a squad commander in Nalgonda prior to his surrender in November 1995.

On Moharram, a 12-year old minor girl was kidnapped by an APSP constable in Amrabad mandal of

Mahaboobnagar district and raped in the most brutal manner driving her to a state of unconsciousness. A tribal woman, Laxmi of Narsaipalli village in the same district was raped by four police goondas and six other civil goondas. A vegetable vendor Balavva, was arrested, stripped naked and beaten brutally in the same district. On May 21, a CRPF jawan tried to rape a 55-year old woman in Bhimaram village in Warangal district. There was a public uproar over the incident finally with a lathi-charge and arrests of demonstrators and finally the jawan had to be arrested after conducting an identification parade.

In Kadiri excise station in Anantapur, a circle inspector, constables and brandi shop owners gang-raped two women. In Proddutur in Cuddpah district, when the CI tried to molest a woman, the people revolted and the CI had to be arrested. In Kanigiri of Prakasham district excise constables along with other goondas gang-raped a muslim woman, Mumtaz. They also tortured two other women, Ramanamma and Dilshad. The above are just a sample of the atrocities carried out by the police in AP in the past few months. The crimes of the ruling class politicians and their kith and kin too seem endless such as the incident in Gorantla in Kurnool district in which a woman was gang-raped by relatives of a TDP minister in a cinema theatre on April 19.

The atrocities on the people in rural Telangana and other areas of naxalite influence, are indescribable. And it is these criminals who are entrusted with the task of maintaining law and order by suppressing the naxalites! The chief ministers' conference directed by the BJP has thus given complete liberty and license to the already lawless policemen to step up their atrocities against the people in the name of curbing naxalism. What the consequences of these measures would be is anybody's guess. The atrocities of the uniformed criminals would grow unchecked. Entire tracts in rural Telangana will be converted into vast concentration camps. Fundamental rights would be suspended throughout the region. The scenario is really horrifying.

People, on the other hand, will be forced to take arms more resolutely. The communal Advanis and criminal Chandrababus and their pet police dogs cannot suppress the revolutionary movement through brutal means. The socio-economic causes behind the movement would assert themselves again and again providing life-blood to the movement. Naxalism will continue to spread as long as exploitation and oppression exists. And the repression unleashed by the ruling classes will only beget more and higher forms of resistance. This is the lesson taught again and again by history which the Advanis and their likes fail to learn. □

Motlagudem Ambush : Guerillas Strike Back

On 10th June 1998, armed guerillas of CPI (ML) (People's War) exploded a powerful landmine near Motlagudem bus-stage falling under Pasara police station limits in Warangal district of North Telangana in which 10 policemen were killed along with three others. Two AK-47 rifles, seven self-loading rifles and a 9mm pistol were carried away by the guerillas. Among those killed were 8 CRPF constables, the Sub-Inspector of Pasara police station and his gunman.

The blast comes at a time when the ruling TDP government led by the World Bank's stooge, Chandrababu Naidu, had unleashed a brutal reign of terror all over Telangana, killing even people showing the slightest sympathy to People's War and resorting to the cowardly tactics of sending infiltrators into the revolutionary camp to eliminate revolutionaries from within. The police, who have been taking the maximum security precautions to pre-empt ambushes and raids by guerillas, were outwitted and lured into a trap laid by the guerillas. This time a landmine itself was used as a bait.

Information was first sent to the police that landmines were placed under some culverts near Narlapur by guerillas of the People's War. The CRPF jawans led by the Pasara SI went to the said culvert, removed the mines placed in two buckets from under the culvert and were taking it back to Pasara in their jeep jubilant that they had foiled the ambush attempt by People's War guerillas. But their jubilation was short-lived. As soon as the jeep reached Motlagudem bus-stage a kilometer away, a mine placed under another culvert was triggered off by the guerillas who later also opened fire, killing all the occupants of the jeep.

The daring ambush by the People's War guerilla squad killing the well-trained jawans belonging to the central police force all of whom were armed with highly sophisticated weapons, has enthused the revolutionaries in AP and other parts of India giving them confidence that they can deal effective blows against a far more superior enemy by displaying courage and proper guerilla tactics. The successful ambush and seizure of weapons is also a slap in the face of the ruling TDP and the police bosses of AP who have been claiming that they have achieved great successes in stamping out naxalism in Telangana.

An Interview With Comrade Mahesh, Secretary, A.P. State Committee, CPI (ML) (People's War)

(Two prominent Telugu dailies, Vartha and Andhra Jyothi conducted an Interview with Comrade Mahesh, Secretary of AP State Committee of CPI (ML) (People's War) who is also a member of the Central Committee, in the first week of May. The interview was serialised in the two newspapers for three days from 8th to 10th of May, 1998. The reporters had to traverse a long distance through the forest in order to meet the People's War leader. We are reproducing below part of the interview for the benefit of English readers.)

Q :- Has the CPI (ML) (People's War), which has become a synonym for sacrifice and discipline, lost its prestige due to the recent incidents in Nalgonda and Karimnagar?

A :- As far as the movement led by the CPI (ML) (People's War) is concerned, the incidents in Nalgonda and Karimnagar are not the first ones of their kind. In the past, the police instigated Kattula Sammaiah to murder three of our comrades in Karimnagar. The AP State government has been resorting to fascist types of suppression of the revolutionaries and revolutionary sympathisers by forming mercenary armed groups like the Green Tigers, Kranti Sena, Praja Rakshana Samiti etc.

The people's movement did not subside even though the PW is banned. Thudum Debba (a militant organisation of the adivasis that had emerged in AP since the beginning of 1997-Editor), Madiga Reservation Porata Samithi (MRPS-an organisation of a section of Dalits demanding classification of the Dalits into A,B,C,D categories for the purpose of reservation in education and jobs with the claim that the most oppressed of the Dalits, Madigas, have been deprived of equal opportunities with the relatively more advanced Malas- Editor), Rytu Seva Samithi in Warangal, Jala Sadhana Samithi (formed in the past two years in some districts of Telangana demanding irrigation facilities to the peasantry through construction of small dams etc-Editor), Anti-Famine Struggle Committee and various other conscious mass movements of Dalits and women are raging in A.P. The People's War is giving open support to all these movements. It is not only expressing support to these movements but is also actively participating in them. That is the reason why Chandrababu Naidu's government chose the cowardly method of eliminating the revolutionaries through hand-picked and trained betrayers from the revolutionary camp itself. Through this it is desperately hoping to demolish the prestige of our party among the people and democrats. In Punjab too the movement was crushed through such

means. But the consciousness arising from the ideology and politics of People's War is qualitatively different. The People's War has an armed force (people's guerilla units) that has no personal interest. The government cannot crush the revolutionary movement through one or two incidents like Nalgonda and Karimnagar. It cannot bring discredit to the enormous prestige, sympathy and affection the revolutionaries enjoy among the broad masses of people. Lakhs of people are guarding our movement. The people themselves are protecting the guerilla squads by keeping an eye on police informers. The government should recognise that, the reason for the advance of our party even in the midst of most cruel police repression, is the support it enjoys among the masses at large. Compared to the police forces, the number of our armed squads and weapons in our possession, are negligible. Yet, we are able to survive and advance our armed struggle due to the actions and protection provided by the people. The same people will also teach a fitting lesson to the betrayers like Somla Naik and Jadala Nagaraj.

Q :- Is not a lack of political consciousness among the squad members the reason for such incidents?

A :- These incidents occurred as we failed to identify and check in time the wrong trends and weaknesses that were appearing in some individuals. It is not correct to think that these incidents have occurred only due to the lack of political consciousness among the squad members. Earlier the government used to be satisfied if any squad member surrendered before the enemy. But now it is placing the condition that if someone wants to surrender, he/she should kill some squad members before surrendering. We can check a repetition of such incidents by identifying the changes taking place in individuals and checking them in time. Our party has also decided to raise the political consciousness of our members through collective study.

Q :- What is the reason for taking a surrendered person like Jadala Nagaraj into the squad in just two months after he was released from jail?

A :- It is only a humanitarian outlook on the part of our comrades that lay behind such a decision. The police have been murdering even those who have surrendered to them through fake encounters. Hence believing his assurances, Nagaraj was taken into the squad thinking that his life was in danger out side. But with this incident the party has learnt a lesson that it should not repose over confidence nor lack vigilance while dealing with such individuals. In fact, in 1994 itself our party took a decision not to take the surrendered persons without thorough investigation and testing them in practice. A pre-condition has been that the surrendered person who wants to join the squads again has to first work in the mass organisations for atleast six months. In the case of Jadala Nagaraj, however this rule was violated. We shall take the loss resulting from this lapse seriously and protect our party and the movement.

Q :- Do you have informers in the police ?

A :- There are several policemen who render assistance to us. Their cooperation will increase further in future. The majority of the policemen are poor and are forced to take up their job to make a living. Their consciousness is gradually increasing. They will render more and more help as they are bound to realise the truth in the course of the ongoing ever-widening movement.

Q :- What type of developments would arise as a result of the World Bank dealing directly with the states without the role of the central government ? How do you particularly understand the phenomena of the World Bank sanctioning the largest amount of loans to AP of all the states in India ?

A :- As a result of the growing political instability at the centre, the era of controlling and instructing the state governments has come to an end. In these circumstances, the World Bank's role in the states is bound to increase. State governments are desiring imperialist intervention in the name of development and modernisation. The World Bank has realised that the influence of the AP-Dandakaranya movement will spread to the entire country. That is why it has been allotting funds to the AP government with the objective of wiping out this movement. This aspect should be noted. Loans are not being sanctioned merely basing on the efficiency of an individual like Chandrababu Naidu. Even if Naidu steps out of office, loans from international financial institutions to the AP government will not come down.

The aim of the World Bank, IMF and other international financial institutions is to serve the

interests of the imperialists. In particular, they are acting as stooges of US imperialism. America, which is unable to make profits out of the productive sector, is more and more trying to amass profits through speculation, banking and the service sector. It is only by emasculating the third world countries that the parasitic US imperialists can survive.

After the 1970s, instability has increased both at the centre and in the states. Especially with the weakening of the centre due to increasing political instability, international financial institutions began to have relations with the state governments directly and dictate terms to them. Chandrababu is in the forefront in accepting and implementing the conditions imposed by the World Bank. He is trying to curry favour with the World Bank by privatising every thing in the name of modernisation.

There is also another political reason behind the World Bank's excessive love and affection towards AP: the revolutionary movement, that aims at the overthrow of the existing exploitative social system on which the comprador bourgeoisie depends for its survival, is growing phenomenally in AP. It is not just confined to AP but is extending to the rest of the country on a considerable scale. The influence of the movement is bound to be there on other third world countries that are suffering from similar problems. That means the interests of imperialism will be in jeopardy. Having realised this danger, the imperialists have drawn up plans to wipe out the revolutionary movements. They began to advance huge loans to AP with the aim of killing two birds with one shot. This is the reason why the World Bank has advanced crores of rupees worth of loans for road construction in Karimnagar district where the revolutionary movement is particularly strong.

Chandrababu has also been loyally implementing every condition placed by the World Bank. When the World Bank ordered that subsidies should be reduced, he promptly slashed the subsidy on rice for the poor. All subsidies to the peasantry were slashed. He hiked all types of taxes when the World Bank ordered him to do so. The World Bank ordered that education should be privatised. He began to implement a policy of education for those who can pay. The World Bank's supervision has grown even on drinking water and irrigation. The World Bank's managing director visited Karimnagar to oversee the functioning of the Irrigation Water Consumers Association. The peasantry placed their problems before him. He assured them that he will solve these problems by informing the Chief Minister. Is he a banker or the country's Prime

Minister? Such is the pathetic situation we are in today. Even the state cabinet has no say in preparing the state budget. It is the World Bank which has to see and approve the budget before the people of AP hear of it. Such is the extent to which our state has been placed at the feet of the World Bank by Chandrababu Naidu.

Q :- Is not development being hampered due to huge subsidies being doled out by governments that are only interested in immediate political gains ? If there are no cuts in subsidies, will it not be a hurdle for long-term development works ?

A :- The government has not slashed all subsidies. It has only reduced the subsidies going to the peasantry and to the poor and middle classes. In fact, the subsidy going to the peasantry has never exceeded 5% of the total subsidies. In several countries, 40% of the subsidies go to the peasantry. While slashing the subsidies to the poorer sections of society, those going to the industrialists and big business are increasing enormously. Reduction of excise duties, tax concessions and other subsidies and incentives to the export-oriented industries in the name of promoting exports, are all offered to big business.

Q :- When the People's War criticises the government for its anti-people policies, how could the ruling TDP get so many seats in the last parliamentary elections in Telangana where People's War has a good mass base ?

A :- Boycott of elections is as much a democratic right of the people as participation. But there is no political freedom for the parties that propagate the slogan of election boycott. It is in such unfavourable conditions that we are exposing the fake nature of the elections and propagating the need to boycott the elections. The government has created a reign of terror by staging fake encounters, arresting the militants and sympathisers, using force and threatening the people to vote at gun-point. This time, the police did not confine themselves to issuing threats to the people to exercise their franchise; they even decided for whom the votes should be cast. The state itself was involved in large-scale rigging in the recent elections.

Q :- There has been criticism in the past that People's War took a favourable stand towards some parties on some occasions during elections. What do you have to say regarding the allegation that the victory of Vidyasagar Rao in Karimnagar was due to the pro-BJP stand of PW ?

A :- We never pursued any policy that would favour a certain party. There is no question of giving support

to Vidyasagar Rao. Ours has been an uncompromising stand on the question of elections.

Q :- Is there any possibility of change on the question of election boycott in future ?

A :- The boycott of elections is a tactic. There is no scope at all to review this tactic in the near future. The experience of the assemblies and parliament over the past 50 years has only dispelled illusions on elections. Hence, there is no question of coming to power by utilising elections. It is only through protracted people's war that we shall achieve victory in the revolution. Moreover in a backward country like India, revolution cannot become victorious simultaneously throughout the country. Our idea is to complete the revolution through area-wise seizure of power. Those regions that are socially and economically backward will be liberated first.

Q :- What is the understanding of People's War towards the Citizens' Forum ?

A :- Members of Citizens' Forum are intellectuals of repute in their concerned fields in AP. We have respect for them. However, all of them are not people with the same thinking. There is consensus among them only on some matters. They are liberal democrats and there is some confusion in their line of thinking. They do not oppose the bourgeois system. They support the aspirations of the people in the struggle for a new society. The Forum members had gone to the government and were assured by Chandrababu that there will be no more fake encounters. But even before the ink had dried on the assurances, encounters took place. We have confidence that the Forum members will be able to understand the double-standards of the government in its practice.

Q :- Do you have differences with the Forum on any issue ?

A :- The Forum has over-simplified the problem as that between the police and the naxalites. The fact is that naxalites do not have any separate problems or demands apart from those of the people. People's demands are the demands of the naxalites. The issue is between the people and the ruling classes. If the police are indulging in violence, it is not because they have become insane. They only obey the orders of the political party in power for safeguarding the latter's class interests. In the suggestions made by the Citizens' Forum on what the police and naxalites should do, the fundamental and democratic demand of revoking the ban on People's War does not find a place. Likewise, in its second report, though the forum

analysed the past history objectively to some extent, it refuses to see the ongoing events with the same standards. A tendency of believing the assurances of the government and increasing the illusions in the government is seen in the Forum. Even Chandrababu tells them that the naxalite problem is not a law and order problem but that it is a political, social and economic question. It is because the people do not believe it as a law and order problem that he is saying this in order to dupe the people. If one examines the past fifteen years of AP politics it becomes clear that every ruling party dealt with this as a law and order problem only. The parties in opposition says that it is a political, social and economic problem. At the time of elections, even the ruling party says the same thing. Genuine democrats will realise the hypocrisy behind these utterances. Our aspiration is that the Forum members will become genuine democrats. To that extent we will also extend our cooperation with them. They have the responsibility of exposing the government's double standards before the people.

Q :- There is concern about increasing gun-culture in AP ? Is not the People's War also responsible for this ?

A :- When the oppression of people by the ruling classes takes an armed form, people also will inevitably take up arms. When the ruling classes resort to armed suppression of the people, no one talks of gun-culture. But when people take up arms for their self-defence there is grave concern. Is this not unjust ?

Q :- Though the People's War has expressed support to the separate Telangana movement, it has not taken active role in the ongoing agitation. Why ?

A :- In fact, we are the first to bring out a document on the demand for separate Telangana. The movement has come to the fore as a result of regional imbalances and inequalities in AP. Our party is supporting this demand but it is not confined just to the division of a region as proposed by the BJP, Indra Reddy and such other bourgeois parties' representatives. In our view separate Telangana means democratic Telangana. It is not merely the limited programme of demarcation of boundaries. There should be a guarantee for a democratic system for the people. We will fight for such a separate Telangana.

Q :- Do you have any preconditions for joining hands with the ongoing movements for separate Telangana?

A:- We do not set any conditions. We have a specific programme. We shall work jointly with any party or individual that supports our programme. In the course

of development of the movement People's War will give leadership let alone giving support to the movement.

Q :- Can you explain your specific programme ?

A:- Assurance should be made to grant pattas to the land already occupied by the peasantry. Radical land reform should be implemented. Dependence on imperialist and comprador bourgeois capital for establishing industries in Telangana should be given up. Should start industries based on local resources with the aim of achieving self-reliance. Should not allow big projects sponsored by international financial agencies for drinking water and irrigation but give importance to small and medium-scale projects. Small hydel projects should be set up instead of major projects. Adivasis should be given the right over forest produce. The 1 of 70 Act should be implemented sincerely. The religious minorities in Telangana should be guaranteed their rights. In the light of the growing intervention by the centre, separate Telangana should demand that barring a few subjects, the states should have all powers in all spheres. This is our programme. The bourgeois parties and individuals who showed over enthusiasm in advancing the slogan of separate Telangana in order to serve their own selfish political interests, turned tail after we placed our programme before the people.

Q:- The CPI and CPI (M), after distancing themselves from the ruling TDP, have declared that they will form a third front along with the naxalites. Have they held talks with you regarding this ? What is your stand regarding this front ?

A :- No party will come to us to conduct talks as part of parliamentary politics. Even if they come our response will not be favourable to them. There is neither any secular content nor democratic trend nor alternative programme in their third front. These parties, swearing by the red flag, do not have the capacity to solve the basic problems facing Indian society. There is no question of People's War joining such a front. However, if any party is prepared to come forward to advance the people's movements, we are ready to fight jointly with them.

Q:- What efforts is your party making to achieve unity among various revolutionary groups ?

A:- There are two types of M-L groups in the country at present : those parties that have formulated their tactics basing on elections belong to one type while those believing in armed revolution comprise the second type. People have nothing to gain from the first type of parties. In the second category of parties which believe in armed revolution there are : CPI (ML) (People's War), the Maoist Communist Centre and the

CPI (ML) Party Unity.

Apart from these three there are around 40 other groups but they are not in a position to play a revolutionary role. Under the present circumstances, although a merger of these three parties has not yet become a material reality, there is the necessary understanding among them regarding advancing the people's movement unitedly. Unity among these three parties will bring about a qualitative change in Indian politics. We are expecting such changes in the near future. The struggles of the nationalities for self-determination in various parts of the country are also joining hands with the revolutionary movement to fight the common enemies. This also shows that the objective conditions in the country are highly favourable for revolution.

Q :- What is the extent of impact of your movement in the social, economic and cultural spheres in the past 20 years ?

A :- Prior to the initiation of our movement, Vetti (bonded labour) was prevalent in Karimnagar. We achieved victory in eliminating it in the early years when the movement was taking root. We could ensure minimum wages and even more to the daily agricultural labour and the permanent labour.

In the tribal areas, People's War's main achievement has been the distribution of over 2 lakh acres of forest land among the Adivasis apart from achieving an increase in the tendu-picking rates and ensuring remunerative rates for forest products. Due to this the economic life of the Adivasis has improved considerably. Our movement has also strived hard for achieving an increase in the wages of Singareni workers and resisting the attacks by the management and mafia gangs on the workers. In rural Telangana, as the landlords fled the villages, middle peasants became liberated from the social, economic and political authority of the landlords. We are showing an alternative to the people and some financial opportunities are being provided by forming development committees and peasant cooperative societies as part of the overall programme of our movement. We are helping the people to collectively carry out the various welfare programmes.

Socially, we are able to check the attacks on the dalits and other backward castes by the landlords and upper castes. The cruelty associated with the caste system has been brought under control by our movement. Dalits and other castes are now able to co-exist with self-respect and individuality. Our movement has also helped check atrocities and

harassment of women. Our party is striving to help women organise themselves.

In the cultural field there is a lot of work to be done. Until now in the villages our party has achieved progress in controlling the evil habits among the youth. Presently, the influence of cable TV is increasing even in tribal hamlets. The revolutionary movement has to seriously look into this aspect. Cultural degeneration has begun due to the impact of TV channels. The government is encouraging this cultural attack in various ways with an aim to suppress and weaken the people's movements. We have decided to address this problem by educating the people and creating an awareness. Towards this end, we are conducting night schools.

Q :- Does your party recognise the dalit problem ? What are the measures being taken by your party regarding dalit leadership ?

A :- Our party has recognised the growing assertion among dalits. Our party has prepared a perspective on the caste question at the end of 1996 with a view to channelise the growing dalit assertion in favour of the revolutionary movement. We decided to take up a special programme to fight the caste system. The number of dalits among the party's leading cadres is increasing. We are making special efforts to enhance the political consciousness among dalits coming into the party and encouraging them to take up leadership responsibilities. In the future, dalits will be in a position to play an active role in leading the party.

Q :- How can the People's War confront the innumerable, stronger Indian armed forces and the police ?

A :- Numerically we are nowhere before the enemy's armed forces. However, ours is a political struggle. Policemen and army jawans also belong to the poor. They are bound to come to us attracted by the spread and aims of our movement. Every government has been saying that it will wipe us out through its police force. Between 1977 and 1997, more than 2000 of our squad members, party leaders and rank and file members and sympathisers became martyrs. But the revolutionary movement has not receded. Today, People's War is not confined to AP alone. It has spread to Maharashtra, M.P, Orissa, Tamilnadu, Karnataka, West Bengal, Bihar, Haryana and some other regions in the country. The more the repression on us, the stronger we shall emerge. It is the very anti-people, pro-imperialist policies pursued by the government that will make the revolution victorious. □

Let us Avenge the Death of Our Beloved Martyrs !

Observe July 28-August 3 as Martyrs' Memorial Week !!

In the past one year from July '97 to the end of June '98, around 160 comrades belonging to the party and its various mass organisations, sacrificed their precious lives in the course of advancing the revolutionary movement in North Telangana, Dandakaranya and AP. All these comrades, barring five, were killed by the police. While some of them died fighting heroically with the police and central para military forces as in Chadmal (Nizamabad), Nerellavagu (Warangal), Mukha-lingapuram (Srikakulam), Kornaguda (Orissa - AP border), Medinipur (Medak), the majority were arrested by the police and shot dead in the name of encounters. Among those who sacrificed their lives in the past one year are : important leaders of the party like, NTSZC member and Karimnagar DC secretary, Comrade Malkapuram Bhaskar (Ramesh); South Bastar DC Secretary Comrade Vijaypal (Ashok) and Comrade Lingala Subhash, the City Committee Secretary, Hyderabad; DC members Comrades Sirnapalli Ramulu (Saleem) of Nizamabad, Comrade Narayana (Vinod) of Singareni Coal belt, Comrade Joganna of South Bastar, Comrade Bhanu Prasad (Balanna) of Medak, Warangal Town Committee Secretary Comrade Rajaram (Naresh); Squad commanders Comrade Ramanna (Krishnapatti, Nalgonda), Comrade Veeranna (Srikakulam), Comrade Kanukuiuh (Murali) of Giraylupalli, Medak, Comrade Chittekka (Srikakulam); Squad Area Committee members Comrades Kamalakka, Babu, Rammurthy and Anil (DK), Comrades Bikshapati, J. Shankar, Gopi, Rajkumar; Central Organisers like Comrades Janjanam Savithri (Vishaka), Kompelli Srinivas (Adilabad), Laxminarasiah alias Sudheer (Nizamabad), Muppidi Nageswara Rao alias Sagar (Warangal), Sarangapani alias Sudarshan (Devannpet, Warangal); PRs like Comrades Medarapu Maruti, Allibilli Seenu, Bommagani Shankar, Anjanachari, Siddulu, Kiran, Venkati; VRCS leaders like Comrades Tammoji Tirupati, Salakula Rajanarsu, Kammari Ganesh, Chakali Balraj, Jukanti Balraj, Babanna; RSU leaders like Comrades Srinath, Muralidhar, Sampath; and several party members, squad members and sympathisers of CPI (ML) (People's War).

Comrade Karthik Pannalal, a member of the party unit in Maharashtra died in a road accident at a young age while Comrade Vilas Ghoghre committed suicide due to sudden depression. Comrade KV Ramana Reddy, the founder secretary and current president of RWA died of a heart attack. A comrade Dayanand, JNM activist, died following severe police torture. There were also several women comrades like Comrades Sharada, Lata, Phani, Bujji, Sandhyakka, Girijakka, Arunakka apart from those mentioned earlier who became martyrs in the past one year.

Proletarian Vanguard pays its humble homage to these heroic sons and daughters of the Indian proletariat, the leaders of the toiling masses of India, the cream of the society who left their hearths and homes, their kith and kin and chose the path of revolutionary armed struggle ever ready to shoulder the tasks placed upon them by the revolutionary movement. These martyrs are like the red sun rising in the East breaking the darkness of the night and heralding the dawn; they are the milestones in the path to victory; they are the silver lining to the dark clouds of gloom and despair enveloping Indian society; they are the guiding stars in our revolutionary war; in short, they represent all that is living, vibrant and growing in an other wise rotten, decadent and degenerate society. Their sacrifices will not go waste. They shall be remembered for generations to come. These martyrs have already become a legend, a part of the folklore - in their respective areas. And a whole generation of youth - inspired by the selflessness, heroism, conviction and readiness to sacrifice for the cause of the people, and by the uncompromising struggle against exploiters displayed by the martyrs - are coming forward to replace the fallen to carry forward their cherished dreams.

Notwithstanding the ban on People's War and its mass organisations, people are rallying in their thousands for the meetings held in commemoration of their beloved martyrs and for the funeral processions wherever some comrades are killed. Starting July 28 - Martyrs' Day i.e. the day when Comrade Charu Mazumdar became a martyr in 1972 - it has become customary for the revolutionary sections of people in the various parts of the country to observe a whole week every year in memory of the martyrs. Proletarian Vanguard calls upon the people of India to observe martyrs' week by holding meetings, rallies, torch-light processions and conducting a wide propaganda campaign to spread the message of the revolutionary martyrs.

Comrade Bhaskar (Ramesh) Will Live Forever In The Hearts Of The People !

Comrade Malkapuram Bhaskar alias Ramesh, alias Vijay, a member of the North Telangana Special Zonal Committee, became a victim of police conspiracy when a betrayer trained by the police killed him on April 12, 1998 in Ramgiri Khilla of Karimnagar district. Comrade Bhaskar's revolutionary life spans nearly two decades during which time he worked his way up from a squad member in 1982 to SZC member in 1997.

Comrade Bhaskar hails from a teacher's family in Chitoor village in Lingala Ghanpur mandal of Warangal district. He was influenced by revolutionary politics when he was studying intermediate in Warangal in 1979 and became aware of the problems of the peasantry after participating in the "Go to the Village Campaign". He completed his degree in Hyderabad in 1980 and became a PR in 1982. Eversince then he worked as a squad member in various squads of Adilabad and was gradually promoted as a commander, then a DC member, DC secretary and finally as a SZCM by 1997. Popular as Rameshanna throughout Adilabad, he worked as a squad member of Asifabad squad in 1982, Sirpur squad in 1983, Khanapur (Indravelli) squad in 1984, became Khanapur squad commander in the same year and was promoted as a DC member of Adilabad in 1989 and DCS in February 1996. In September 1997 he was coopted into NTSZC and was allotted the responsibility of directly leading the revolutionary movement in Karimnagar district. He assumed charge of Karimnagar as its DCS under the name Vijay. Ever since he began to guide the movement in Karimnagar starting with the district plenum held in October 1997, the situation in the district began to improve. It was at this point that Comrade Ramesh became a casualty of the enemy's conspiracy. TDP's fascist government in AP led by the wily World Bank's stooge Chandrababu Naidu, hatched the conspiracy to eliminate the leadership of the party by sending infiltrators into the squads of People's War.

As part of this plan, an ex-squad member, and a covert police agent, managed to gain the confidence of the district leadership and infiltrated into the armed squads. He shot dead Comrade Ramesh at the dead of the night when the entire camp was in deep slumber. And for his act of 'bravery', he was awarded a huge cash award as

well as a police job by the state government.

Comrade Ramesh displayed exemplary communist qualities during his revolutionary life spanning almost two decades. He had deep-rooted commitment to the masses and integrated himself with the gond adivasis among whom he spent the most part of his revolutionary life. In return he gained the love and affection of the adivasis. He led and guided several struggles of the adivasis including the series of famine raids and land occupation struggles.

During the brutal reign of terror unleashed by the police in 1985-87 and again since 1992, Comrade Ramesh not only played a prominent role in boosting the spirits and morale of the people by educating, inspiring and mobilising them into daring acts of resistance against the state, but also personally led military actions against the police. He took charge as the commander of the military squad formed in Adilabad in 1993. He led the successful ambush in Darogapalli killing four BSF jawans. He was a deputy commander in the raid on Sirpur (U) police station in December 1996, in which 13 policemen were annihilated and their weapons confiscated. Comrade Ramesh also evinced great interest in studying various military aspects including the military experiences of the communist parties in other countries. In February 1998 he was coopted into the Sub-committee on Military Affairs (SCOMA) which works directly under CC.

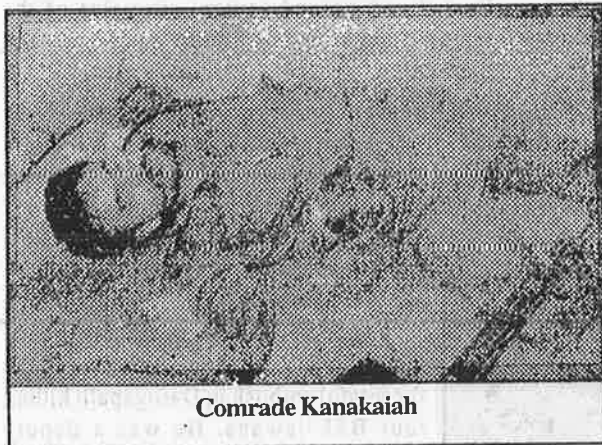


The martyrdom of Comrade Ramesh is a grave loss to the revolutionary movement in North Telangana and the country as a whole. In his martyrdom, People's War has lost a brave and uncompromising fighter, a brilliant organiser, an inspiring leader and an exemplary communist. The revolutionaries have lot to learn from the life of Comrade Ramesh. A spirit of self-sacrifice, his death-defying heroism, his deep commitment to the masses, unflinching conviction in Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought, loyalty to the party and revolution, his modesty and comradely attitudes, his undaunting spirit even in the most adverse circumstances - all these are qualities to be emulated by every revolutionary. 'Vanguard' pays its revolutionary homage to this proud son of the Indian toiling masses and the leader of the CPI (ML) (People's War). □

Red Salutes to Giraipalli Martyrs !

After the two major encounters in Theegul and Laxmapur in Medak district in March 1997, there is once again a major encounter in the district on June 20, 1998. In the encounter which took place in Medinipur village in Kondapaka mandal, seven comrades belonging to the Giraipalli Central Guerilla Squad of CPI (ML (People's War) became martyrs.

The guerillas were taking rest in the house of a peasant



Comrade Kanakaiah

situated in the midst of agricultural fields when all of a sudden they found themselves surrounded by teams of the special striking force who arrived in the morning on a tip-off provided by a police informer. The house had only one entrance which was covered by constant fire from the policemen. The guerillas showed exemplary courage and put up a heroic fight for over two hours. They tried to pull down a wall of the house by blasting it with explosive but as the attempt did not succeed, five of them rushed out of the entrance as one of the guerillas provided them with fire cover. Outnumbered by the enemy forces and with no cover in the agricultural fields, the guerillas died after a fierce gun battle. Two others died in the house itself.

Among the dead were the commander of the Giraipalli squad, Comrade Taduri Kanakaiah alias Murali Mohan hailing from Rampur village of Nanganur mandal of Medak district, SAC member Comrades Chakali Pandu alias Yadanna belonging to Renigunta of Nalgonda district, Squad members Comrades Sheik Meera and Bharati (both from Raghunathapalli of Warangal district), Comrade Kishan alias Chandram of Laxmapur village in Medak district, Comrade Kamalakhar alias Kistanna of Duddeda village and an RYL activist Swamy alias Durganna.

Comrade Murali Mohan hails from a poor dalit family. He completed his Intermediate education and while

working in a transport company, came into party contact in 1988. He became the town organiser of Siddipet in 1990 where he worked until 1993. As a town organiser, he conducted several mass struggle under various covers proving his talents as a brilliant organiser. The martyrdom of Comrade Kanakaiah is a great loss to the movement in Giraipalli area and in Medak district as a whole.

Comrade Yadanna hails from a poor washerman's family. He worked on a powerloom and led the powerloom workers' struggle after coming into contact with People's War in 1989. He also led several struggles of the agricultural



Comrade Bharati

lab- outers demand- ing wage incre- ses. He became a squad member of Narasapur squad in 1993 and was then promoted as a SAC member in the trade union squad. In 1996 he joined the Giraipalli squad.

Comrades Sheik Meera and his wife Bharati participated in the peasant movement in Cheryal of Warangal district and came to Medak in 1997. Comrade Bharati left her six month-old child and plunged into the struggle. Comrade Kishan was associated with the squad from his very childhood itself and was taken as a squad member in 1996. Comrade Kistaiah joined the squad last November while Comrade Swamy worked as the RYL president of Rajampet area.

The Giraipalli squad enjoyed wide support of the entire area. It led several land occupation struggles of the poor and landless peasantry, struggles for wage-hikes and led the peasantry against the increase in power tariffs, fertiliser prices and incessant power cuts. The popularity of the squad was evident when on June 21 thousands of people from several villages in the area gathered spontaneously in Rampur, the native village of Comrade Kanakaiah, to see the body of their beloved leader. They took out a funeral procession lasting for over two hours. Comrades Kanakaiah's body was placed on a raised platform in a tractor draped in red cloth and surrounded by fluttering red flags. Slogans hailing Comrade Kanakaiah's martyrdom rent the air. 'Vanguard' salutes these heroes who died fighting the enemy. □

Red Salutes to the Heroic Martyrs of South Bastar

On April 7, '98, a bandh paralysed life in the entire Dandakaranya area in response to the killing of five comrades during a raid on the Tarlaguda police station in South Bastar.

Since the last 18 years, ever since the tribal masses have begun to assert themselves under the leadership of the CPI(ML)(PW), the government and police have unleashed inhuman repression on the masses. Having been kept in bondage, backwardness and under conditions of semi-starvation, first by the British and then by the various governments in so-called independent India, the rulers could not tolerate the struggle of the tribals to live with dignity, self-respect and free from exploitation. Since 1985, the government has let loose thousands of brutal police and paramilitary forces, on the people and the Party arresting, torturing, raping and killing. They sought to destroy the growing assertion of the masses in an ocean of blood.

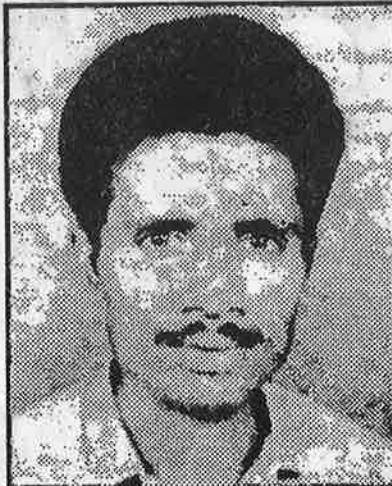
The masses, led by the Party has fought back, refusing to surrender their new-found freedom to these cruel monsters. Having been exploited, suppressed and crushed for generations by one set of rulers after another, they were not willing to easily give up, the fresh breeze of freedom unknown to their forefathers. They defended themselves, through their organisations, first using traditional weapons, and later, weapons seized from the enemy. Dedicated cadres of the Party integrated with the tribals in these thick backward forests of Bastar, made them aware of their rights and led them to the path of freedom. Eating, living and struggling along with them, the Party slowly built South Bastar into a strong bastion of armed struggle.

The masses and Party could only survive and advance against these brutal onslaughts of the enemy, armed to the teeth, by arming themselves. Being a Party of the poor masses, the major source of weapons had to come from the enemy..... through ambushes, raids, etc. Also, to break the morale of the enemy forces—these hired mercenaries—it was necessary to attack their weak points. It was in this connection that the South Bastar squads planned the Tarlaguda raid on an isolated police station on the border with Andhra Pradesh.

On March 11, '98, the police station was attacked by the squads. In the course of this raid, and the encounter that ensued, five such dedicated comrades laid down their lives for the revolution. They were: Com. Ashok

(Vijaypal) who was the secretary of the South Bastar Divisional Committee(DvC) and an alternative member of the Dandakaranya Special Zonal Committee; Com. Joganna, a member of the South Bastar DvC; Com. Kamalakka, a squad commander of a South Bastar Local Guerrilla Squad(LGS); and comrades Ramamurty and Babu who were squad members from the area.

Com. Ashok, from Warangal district in A.P., after finishing his 12th standard education, joined the Bastar squads since 1984-85. Soon he was arrested and spent 2 years, 1986-87, in jail. But, in a daring escape from the Jagadapur jail he was able to rejoin the revolutionary movement in Bastar. Later he became deputy commander of a squad and then commander. In 1995 he was elected as the member of the South Bastar DvC, and in 1997 was elected as its secretary.



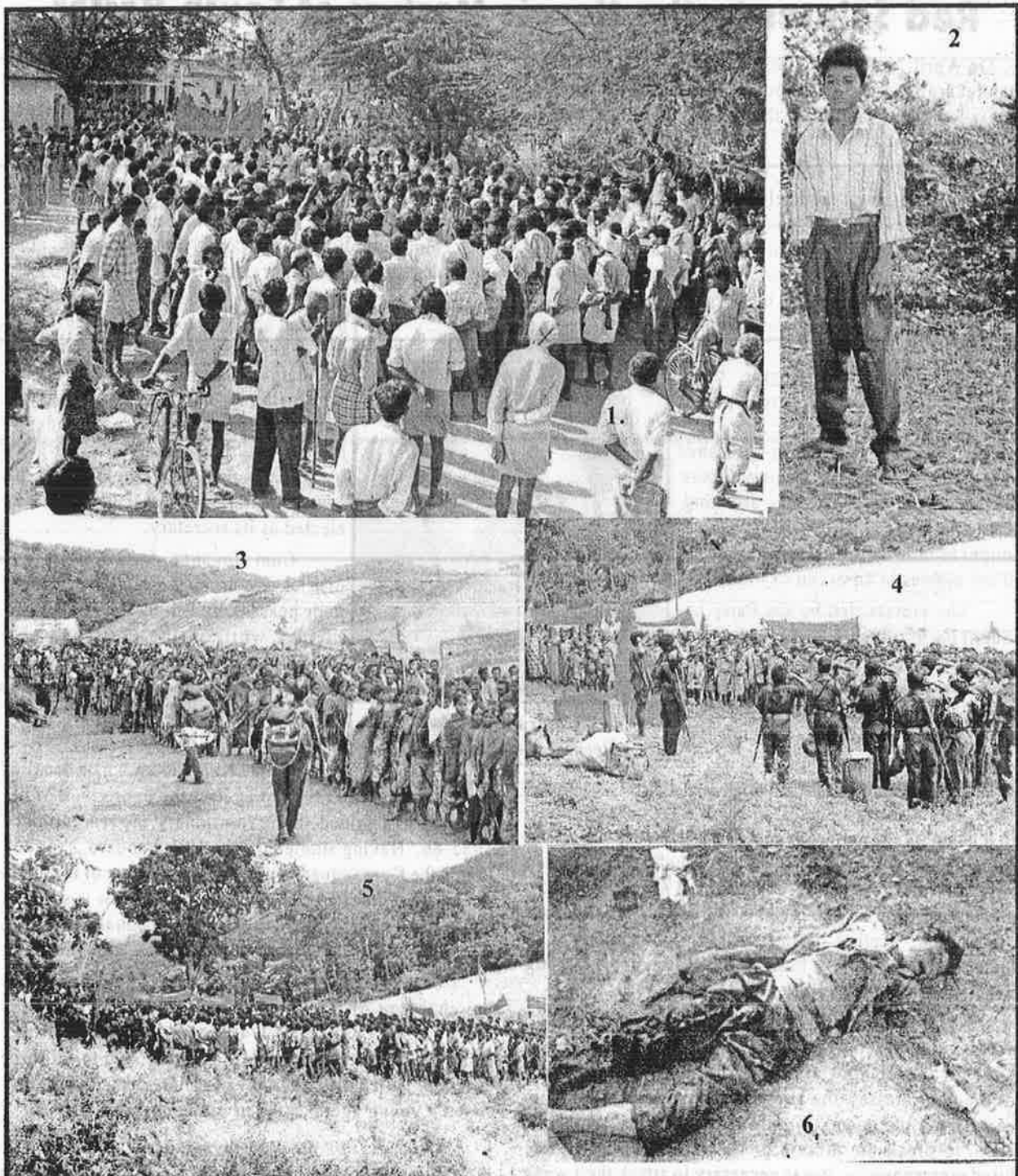
Comrade Ashok
Alternate Member, DKSZC

Com. Joganna, from Karimnagar district was from the family of a very poor peasant, and illiterate. He gained literacy while in the Party and also joined the Bastar squads since 1984-85. He later became the deputy commander and in 1998 was elected to the South Bastar DvC.

Com. Kamalakka was a local of Kunta Taluk, who revolted against the oppression of her husband and joined the revolutionary movement since 1985-86. Having studied till the 10th standard, she soon joined the Kunta squad and became a member of its Squad Area Committee (SAC). After the squads grew in strength and formed into CGS (Central Guerrilla Squad) and LGS, in 1996, she became commander of the Kishtaram LGS.

Com. Ramamurty was also a local whose father was the chairman of the Bastar District DAKMS, who was arrested by the police in 1994, and has since disappeared. Following in the foot steps of his father, and to fulfil the goals for which his father gave his life, Com. Ramamurty too, at a young age, has fallen to the enemy bullets.

On the day of the Bandh, on April 7, entire DK mourned the death of these heroic martyrs..... with tears in their eyes and hatred for the enemy in their hearts, the people of DK vowed to avenge their killing by advancing the New Democratic Revolution till final victory. For those of South Bastar who personally knew these comrades, the pain was even deeper; but wiping away their tears, they vowed to shoulder the responsibilities of their fallen comrades. □



1. Thousands bid farewell to Comrade Subhash (Ravi), Hyderabad City Secretary, who was killed by the police on 17th April, 1998.
2. Comrade Janumuri Chinnabbai (Naresh), a squad member of Nagulkonda Squad, who was killed by the police in Peddamallapuram village of East Godavari Dt. on 20-8-97

- 3, 4 : Scenes from last year's Martyrs' Day function in Tandava Dalam area of East Godavari district.
5. A Martyrs' Day procession in the Eastern Ghats last year.
6. Comrade Narayana (Vinod, Sagar), District Committee Member of Singareni Coal Belt who was shot dead by the police on 1st April, 1998.

The following is the list of Comrades who became Martyrs in the past one year. Names of some Comrades are not available right now and hence not included.

No.	Date	Name	Place of 'Encounter'	Party Position
1.	July 1, 1997	Chintanuru Suresh	Redlavada, WGL	Squad member
2.	July 7	Gondla Bashedty (Bhaskar)	Kondapur, NZB	Area VRCS member
3.	July 8	Medarapu Maruti	Chinmetpally, KNR	PR
5.	July 10	Durgam Muthiah	Kothapally, KNR	Militant
6.	July 12	Neerati Raju	Unikicharla, WGL	Militant
7.	July 14	Nannaveni Butchaiah	Beerpur, KNR	Sympathiser
8.	July 14	Kamalakar	Volikatta, MDK	Squad member
9.	July 18	Ramesh	Potharam, KNR,	VRCS
10.	July 19	Yerveni Devaiah	Pothireddypalli, KNR	
11.	July 19	Mudam Ramesh	Kalikota, KNR	Squad Member
12.	July 23	Allibilli Sreenu	Dasannagudem, WGL	PR
13.	July 27	Chandu	Kalleda, KNR	Sympathiser
14.	July 31	Thare Sailo	Jogapur, KNR	VRCS
15.	July 31	Laxminarsaiah (Sudeer)	NZB town	Town Organiser
16.	August 5	Jala Venkanna	Padisala, NLG	PR
17.	August 11	Donakonda Rajanarsu	Bodeguttapalli, KNR	Militant
18.	August 11	Balle Gangaram	"	"
19.	August 11	Varala Gangaiah	"	"
20.	August 12	Jala Raji Reddy	Veeranarayanapuram, KNR	
21.	August 12	Gajji Sampath	Nagasamudrala, KNR	VRCS
22.	August 15	Kasarla Ilaiah	Medipalli, KNR	VRCS
23.	August 20	Vanam Butchiaiah	Yendapalli, KNR	Sympathiser
24.	August 22	Bommagani Shankar	Kistampet, WGL	PR, Area VRCS president
25.	August 25	Mukkera Shankar	Dammannapet, KNR	PR
26.	August 25			
27.	August 26	Dyagala Rajam	Narayanapuram, KNR	PR
28.	August 26	Sambaji Anjaneyulu	Sangem, NLG	PR
29.	August 26	Nari Siddulu	"	"
30.	August 28	Janumuri Chinnabbai	Peddammallapuram	
			East Godavari	Squad member
31.	August 28	Koppu Sathibabu	"	Sympathiser
32.	August 28	Venkanna	Laxmidevigudem, NLG	Squad member
	August 29	Bhuvanagiri Venkanna	"	PR
33.	September 8	Srinath (Haribhushan)	Vaddepalli, WGL	NTRSU Coordination committee member, PR cell secretary
34.	September 8	Muralidhar (Satyam)	"	Student PR
35.	September 8	Kirithi Sampath	"	"
36.	September 9	Anumula Venkateswarlu (Babanna)	Nekkonda, WGL	Area VRCS leader
37.	September 9	Srineboina Asanna	Konasamudram, KNR	VRCS leader
38.	September 13	Veeranna	Mahaboobabad, WGL	PR
39.	September (?)	Chandra Komaranna	Rampur	PR
40.	September 22	Velisala Kumaraswamy (Ilanna)	Devannapet, WGL	Squad member
41.	September 22	Srinivas	Kondaparti, WGL	FT
42.	September 25	Kammari Ganesh	Rajukhanpet, NZB	VRCS leader
43.	October 2	Veeranna (Manganna)	Mukhalingapuram, SKL	Commander
44.	October 2	Sandhyakka (Paryati)	"	Squad member (PM)

No.	Date	Name	Place of 'Encounter'	Party Position
45.	October 3	Barikanna	Narsingapalli, SKL	Squad member (PM)
46.	October	Subhash	Siripuram, SKL	Squad member (PM)
47.	October 4	Janardhan (Lingareddy)	Santhangi, NLG	Squad member
48.	October 25	Chintala Narsimhulu	Potharam, KNR	Squad member
49.	October 27	Panduga Ramesh	Veler, WGL	Militant
50.	November			
	1st week	Suresh	Pantulapalli, WGL	Area VRCS secretary
51.	November 7	Salakula Rajanarsu	Parupalli, KNR	VRCS leader
52.	November 22	Simharajula Ravi	Chegyam, KNR	VRCS
53.	November 23	Vijayagiri	Rajarampalli, WGL	VRCS
54.	November 23	Nadigottu Venkatesh	Paidipalli, WGL	VRCS
55.	November	Ilanna	Kondapur, WGL	Squad member
56.	November			
	last week	Muppidi Nageswara Rao (Sagar)	Taralapalli, WGL	Town organiser
57.	November			
	last week	Appa Rao	Devannapet, WGL	Squad member
58.	December 10	Chakali Balraj	NZB	VRCS leader
59.	December 10	Narsimhulu (Bheemanna)	Singarayapalli, NZB	GRD member
60.	December 12	Devanna	Pakala, NZB	Village party Cell secretary
61.	December 14	Jukanti Balraj	Markal, NZB	Area VRCS member
62.	December 16	Anil (Atram Dharmam)	Khursud, Balaghat (MP)	Squad member
63.	December 21	Janjanam Savithri (Jyothi)	Salvapuri, WGL	Vishakha CO
64.	December 21	Prasad	"	"
65.	December 29	Dayanand	Hyderabad	JNM member
66.	December 30	Tammoji Tirupati	Dharmajipet, KNR	NTVRCS vice-president
67.				
68.	December 30	Amruta Rao	Kadem, Adilabad	FT
69.	December 31	Jangili Satteiah	"	Militant
70.	January 2, 1998	Enukababu	Indanpalli, ADB	Sympathiser
71.	January 5	Suresh		
72.	January 6	Nagolla Anjaiah	Bollaram, Medak	PR
73.	January 13	Kompelli Srinivas	Devapur, ADB	Town CO
74.	January 16	KV Ramana Reddy,	Vijayawada	
			(Died of heart attack)	(RWA president)
75.	January 16	Pothuganti Ramesh	Racharla Timmapur, KNR	PR
76.	January 17	Desapaka Bikshapati	Janagam, NLG	Deputy Commander
77.	January 24	Inumula Pandu	Koyyuru, KNR	
78.	February 4	Sirnapalli Ramulu (Saleem)	Chadmal, NZB	DCM
79.	February 4	Jajjiri Shankar	Chadmal, NZB	SACM
80.	February 4	Chanti	Chadmal, NZB	Squad member
81.	February 4	Sharada	Chadmal, NZB	Squad member
82.	February 4	Latha	Chadmal, NZB	Squad member
83.	February 4	Gopi	Chadmal, NZB	SACM
84.	February 4	Phani Bujji	Chadmal, NZB	Squad member
85.	February 5	Paladugu Vinod	Allapalli, Kmm	PR
86.	February 7	Kotha Ravindar Reddy (Kiran)	Jubilinagar, WGL	PR
87.	February 17, 18	Sakinala Sammaiah	Gangaram, KNR	militant
88.	February 24	Rajaram (Naresh)	Nerellavagu, WGL	Town Committee Secy.
89.	February 24	Konkimalla Rajkumar	"	SACM
90.	February 24	Laxmi	"	Squad member

No.	Date	Name	Place of 'Encounter'	Party Position
91.	February 24	Bandi Ellaiah (Yadanna)	Nerellavagu, WGL	Squad member
92.	February 24	Sudarshan	"	MGS commander
93.	February 24	Madhu	"	Squad member
94.	February 24	Gade Surender Reddy	"	Peasant activist
95.	March 11	Vijayapal (Ashok)	Tallagudem, Kmm (DK)	DCS
96.	March 11	Joganna	"	DCM
97.	March 11	Kamalakka	"	SACM
98.	March 11	Babu	"	SACM
99.	March 11	Rammurthy	"	SACM
100.	April 1	Narayana (Vinod)	Bellampalli, ADB	DCM
101.	April 4	Ramanna	Pavuralagutta, NLG	Commander
102.	April 4	Shantakka	"	Squad member
103.	April 4	Veeranna	"	"
104.	April 12	Malkapuram Bhaskar (Ramesh)	Ramagirikhilla, KNR	SZC Member
105.	April 12	Paramma (Chittekka)	Kornaguda forest Vijayanagaram-Rayagada border	Commander grade
106.	April 12	Sharadakka	"	Squad member
107.	April 12	Girijakka	"	JNM Squad member
108.	April 12	Arunakka	"	"
109.	April 13	Errojula Krishna	Kurmapalli, KNR	Militant
110.	April 17	Subhash (Ravi)	Hyderabad	City committee secretary
111.	April 17	Bhanu Prasad (Balanna)	"	DCM
112.	April 17	Nagarjuna Reddy	"	Sympathiser
113.	May 11	Komse Parsaiah	Laxmidevipalli, Medak	RYL activist
114.	May 26	Jadi Pocham (Ramakrishna)	GDKN, KNR	CO
115.	June 5	Durgam Srinivas	"	Sikasa member
116.	June 7	G. Devraj	Somarampet, NZB	Courier
117.	June 13	Kondal Reddy	Ramancha, Medak	Militant
118.	June 13	Bhoopati	Ramancha, Medak	Militant
119.	June 14	Siddaboyina Ashok (Sridhar)	Vengalapur forest, WGL	SACM
120.	June 16	Itha Mondeiah (Shankaranna)	Kumbampalli, KNR	SACM
121.	June 16	Jyothi (Neelakka)	Kumbampalli, KNR	LGSm
122.	June 16	Atkuri Venkati	Kumbampalli, KNR	LGSm
123.	June 20	Taduri Kanakaiah	Girayapalli, Medak	Commander
124.	June 20	Chakali Pandu alias Yadanna	Girayapalli, Medak	SACM
125.	June 20	Sheik Meera	Girayapalli, Medak	Squad member
126.	June 20	Bharati	Girayapalli, Medak	Squad member
127.	June 20	Kishan	Girayapalli, Medak	Squad member
128.	June 20	Kamalakar	Girayapalli, Medak	Squad member
129.	June 20	Swamy alias Durganna	Girayapalli, Medak	RYL activist
130.	June 21	B. Venkati	Gopalapuram, Medak	Militant
131.	June 21	P. Yadaiah	Gopalapuram, Medak	Militant
132.	June 27	Mangali Gangadhar	Sunketa, NZB	Militant
133.	June 30	Rajkumar (Latchanna)	Jaggaihpeth, WGL	Squad member
134.	June 30	Ilaiah (Sambaiah)	Jaggaihpeth, WGL	Squad member
135.	June 30	Mahendar (Bhadraiah)	Jaggaihpeth, WGL	Squad member

WGL = Warangal Dt.; KNR = Karimnagar Dt.; ADB = Adilabad Dt.; SKL = Srikakulam Dt.; NLG = Nalgonda Dt.; DK = Dandakaranya; Kmm = Khammam dt.; NZB = Nizamabad dt.; SACM = Squad Area Committee Member; LGSm = Local Guerilla Squad Member; DQM = District Committee Member; SZCM = Special Zonal Committee Member

Protest Of Prisoners In A.P. Jails

Once again the prisoners in the jails all over AP led by CPI (ML) (People's War) have raised the banner of revolt protesting against the high-handedness of the police and the jail authorities. The protests were sparked off in the wake of the death of an undertrial due to the negligent and callous attitude of the jail authorities as well as due to the severe torture by the civil police in the second week of May, 1998. The following petition filed by the political prisoners of CPI (ML) (People's War) in the AP High Court on 21-5-98 gives an insight into the conditions of the prisoners in Warangal jail and the nexus between the police and the jail officials.

We the general and political prisoners languishing in prisons, beg to submit that the lives of prisoners are no longer safe in the so called correctional institutions of our state. The numerous jail deaths of prisoners in several prisons all over the state stand testimony to this fact.

It is submitted that Chandramouli, a rickshaw puller was remanded to judicial custody at the central prison, Warangal on 11-5-98 vide a case filed by the Intesargunj police station, Warangal. At admission, his health was in a delicate condition, due to the barbaric third degree methods used by the Intesargunj police in the name of interrogation. Though his condition started deteriorating, the jail authorities were indifferent to his critical condition. Lack of immediate and proper medical treatment aggravated his condition further. At the eleventh hour, while he was succumbing to his injuries, he was taken to the hospital and was pronounced dead on arrival, by the doctors.

Enraged at the death of Chandramouli, due to the callous and negligent attitude of the jail authorities, all the 1185 prisoners including 27 political prisoners went on a hunger strike, demanding ex-gratia payment to the family of the deceased and provision of government employment to the wife of the deceased Chandramouli. It was organised as a peaceful hunger strike, without any violence, led by the political prisoners of the jail.

In spite of the passive nature of the protest by the prisoners, the Warangal jail superintendent deemed it fit to call about 150 civil policemen into the prison, which in itself is an unprecedented move in the annals of jail history. The civil police under the Warangal town D.S.P. Chandramouli "persuaded" the general prisoners to call off their hunger strike, by using their repressive methods; resulting in injuries to many of the prisoners. The political prisoners refused to yield to the threats and intimidations of the police and continued their hunger strike.

The Warangal town DSP Chandramouli, then ordered a lathi charge upon the political prisoners, without even taking into consideration their frail physical condition due to the hunger strike. The brutality of the assault on the unarmed political prisoners resulted in grievous, bloody and fatal injuries to them. Two prisoners had to be hospitalised and admitted to the MGM Hospital, where

they are in critical condition.

Even during British rule, political prisoners were not subjected to such barbaric brutality. Fifty years after our so-called independence; in a "democratic India", where in freedom of expression is a right, the subjection of citizens to such inhuman cruelty, speaks for the sorry state of affairs, more so in prisons where the prisoners are a helpless lot.

Not satisfied with the lathicharge, the political prisoners were taken to the main gate of the prison, one by one and brutal physical torture was inflicted upon them, to break their resolve and determination.

The Warangal town DSP Chandramouli, the Warangal jail superintendent Lakshma Reddy were carrying out the instructions given to them by the DIG of prisons (Telangana region) M.R. Ahmed. This DIG is the same person, who lathicharged political prisoners in the same central prison, Warangal, when he was the superintendent there in 1986; towards the end of 1986 he was transferred to the central prison, Secunderabad, where he continued to suppress and oppress political prisoners.

The inhuman, callous and indifferent attitude of the jail authorities towards the welfare and well-being of the prisoners is defeating the very purpose of the establishment of correctional institutions, rehabilitation seems a far fetched dream.

The over-crowding of prisons, lack of medical facilities, lack of minimum basic amenities, sub-standard food and the authoritarian and dictatorship mentality of the prison authorities has made life unbearable and adds insult to injury.

Systematic and organised corruption, right from the moment of entry into the jail, upto the time of release is rampantly prevalent in all the prisons, and have made prisons into virtual hells.

The entry of the civil police into the realms of the jail administration, is a harbinger of worse things to follow. In the name of investigation and interrogation, the civil police if admitted and allowed into prisons, will find it very convenient to "do away" with political prisoners.

(Continued in page 36)

Jharkhand Adivasis Blazing A New Path

Vast regions extending from north Orissa to South Bihar, including parts of South West Bengal, is popularly known as the Jharkhand area. A land of the Proto-Australoid group of tribals — like the Santhals, Kols, Mundas, Bhumijis, Bishors, Orawans, etc - have, time and again drawn the attention of the entire country by its glorious history of struggles, stretching from the British era, till recently. Today, this region, covering parts of three states, is steadily preparing itself to resurrect that glorious history.

This is a vast region where, on the one hand, valuable mineral, forest, water and human resources abound, while, on the other, extreme poverty and destitution characterise the lives of the masses.... where big industries coexist with extremely backward villages perched on hill-tops or in the narrow gorges.... where daily cash transactions in crores of the landlords, stand in sharp contrast with the hand-to-mouth existence of crores of people... where naked exploitation and plunder result in enrichment for a few, with poverty and agony for the vast masses.... where the masses, in spite of a rich tradition and cultural heritage, suffer from a crisis of identity.... and where the basic rights of the people, much trumpeted in the constitution, are most nakedly denied, even today, at the threshold of the 21st century.

And this extreme contrast, discrimination, exploitation, police repression, etc have repeatedly drawn people into militant struggles for their identity, for their rights over the land and forest, for improvement of their living conditions, for development of their language and culture and for their democratic rights. But all their courage, heroism and sacrifice ended in a blind, due to betrayal by their leaders who fell prey to personal temptations and parliamentary politics. And it is in this background we witness the emerging new phase of struggle and uprisings of the people.

Midnapore

In Midnapore district of West Bengal, the peasant masses, getting organised under the banner of the BIPLABI KRISHAK MAJDUR SAMITY (Revolutionary Peasants & Agricultural Labourers Association) or BKMS, have, during the past two years, launched struggles on a number of issues.

In December '95, people from about 40 villages, from two blocks, took up the issue of their rights over the forest. In accordance with imperialist plans, the West Bengal government mobilised the villagers in the development of the forests, tempting them with a 25% share of the forest produce. At the time of cutting the trees, the people formed themselves into a new organisation, the Ban Samanway Samity (Forest Coordination Committee) and demanded 75% of the income. Two big demonstrations

were organised before the two range offices, with the participation of not less than 1000 people in each. Apart from that, smaller demonstrations were held before a few beat offices. This created a wave of enthusiasm amongst the villagers in a wide area. In the following years, in 1996 and '97, tree-felling was resisted in a number of villages falling under the two beats. Slowly, resistance on this issue is spreading from one village to the next.... notwithstanding the several obstacles created by the revisionist CPI (M), the corrupt Jharkhand leaders and the state. The growing movement has, in fact, exposed these parties and brought to the forefront the question of the adivasi's rights over the forest.

Apart from this issue, the question of the damage to crops and human life, from the influx of elephants from Bihar, was also taken up.

In addition, the issue of wage-rates to agricultural labourers was taken up by the BKMS on three occasions during 1996/97. Peasants were mobilised in about eight villages, the CPI (M) and Jharkhand party leaders' malicious propaganda was countered, the physical attacks of the landowners was boldly faced, and the struggle was led to victory. However, as the struggle drew to a close, the landowners, at the instigation of CPI(M) leaders, again resumed the old wages, though the government itself, in a recent note had fixed it at Rs. 4,511. Thus the CPI(M), waving the red flag and clinging to power for decades, acted as mercenaries to protect the exploitation of the landowners.

Besides these, a number of other issues were also taken up. Forest beat officers, not paying the wages due to the local labourers for cutting trees, were gheraoed in their offices and taken away en-mass. In a few villages, a good number of villages were mobilised to seize forest land for cultivation and for use even as a play ground. In another incident, in an area which is a CPI(M) stronghold, one activist of the CPI(M) raped a housewife.... on that night itself the people were mobilised and the culprit was beaten. Later, at the instigation of CPI(M) leaders, by implicating the people in false cases and threats from the police, they only helped consolidate peoples' organised strength and consciousness.

And in addition to all these issue-based struggles, the masses have also been participating in various political programmes. Students from Calcutta city took a campaign amongst students in the locality. Then, hundreds of men and women participated in the programme to commemorate 30 years of Naxalbari on May 23, '97. Further, Martyrs' Day has been observed both in 1996 and 1997. All these programmes have helped to enhance people's consciousness and prepare the ground for bigger struggles.

East Singbhum

The tribals of this district of Bihar, getting disillusioned by all parliamentary politics, are getting organised under the banner of the ADIBASI CHASI KAMIYA NIRYA GAONTA (Association for the Emancipation of Adivasi Peasants and Labourers) or ACKNG.

Recently, they took part in a struggle against the corrupt practices of rationshop dealers. The black-marketing of food grains and kerosene oil from fair price shops is rampant in the area. In addition to that, people are forced to purchase articles at rates far higher than the scheduled government rates in these F.P. Shops. Moreover, corruption is also rampant in the issuing of ration cards to those below the poverty line.

The masses of one block began a struggle against the corruption of these ration shop dealers who acted in collusion with the officers at the BDO office. The struggle which was initiated at one Gram Panchayat, spread to more GPs, and ultimately turned into a block-wide struggle. In each GP hundreds of villagers were mobilised to attack the dealers, forcing them to issue foodgrains and kerosene at lower rates and also to return the villagers' ration cards which they had been illegally keeping themselves. When the fire of the struggle threatened to engulf the entire block, each and every dealer contributed Rs. 1,000 each to bribe the police to intervene. They began confrontations at villages and weekly markets, created a hue and cry that extremists have entered the area, that they will be arrested and those giving them food and shelter will have to face the consequences. Under these circumstances, the people, though terrified at first, gradually got seasoned, adjusted to the new situation, and are now preparing for the next phase of struggle.

Apart from these issue-based struggles, several campaigns have been taken. The May 23, '97 programme was taken up by the local masses. Santhal rebellion day (June 30th) was commemorated last year, with over 1,500 men and women participating in an all-night programme. In addition a wide campaign on the Jharkhand issue has been conducted at the village level.

Particularly, in this district, leaders of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha have been propagating against the peasant organisation, that extremists from other provinces have infiltrated the area. At the same time, since the last phase of the Jharkhand movement, NGOs of numerous shades have flooded the area. Both the JMM and NGOs are conducting propaganda, trying to terrify the masses, and also drawing attention of the state and even acting as informers of the police. But, in spite of all this, the people are gradually realising their genuine friends and foes and are preparing to advance along the path of struggle.

Mayurbhanj

In this district of Orissa, people gave birth to their own organisation, the KRUSHAK MULIYA MUKTI

SANGHA (Peasants and Agricultural Workers Association) or KMMS, and took up issues like ration cards, atrocities of forest officials and wages of contract labourers.

In one block, people organised a demonstration this year before the BDO office and demanded quick issuance of ration cards as well as some related demands. This created enthusiasm amongst the people and created the grounds for taking up more militant forms of struggle. Gradually, people from more and more GPs got organised, spontaneously resisting the atrocities of forest officials, and preparing for the next phase of struggle. Getting terrified at the alertness of the masses, the local Congress leaders and goons attempted physical attacks on the activists. In February '98 the local Congress goons captured one of the activists of the peasant organisation and unlawfully confined him at the party office, under directions of the local Congress candidate. Getting news of his disappearance, the local villagers rushed enmasse, searched him out, rescued him and forced the Congressmen to apologize for this detention.

In addition to this, raising the wage-rate for plucking Sal leaves was also taken up. A mere campaign on this issue terrified the contractor who increased the rate by Rs. 2/- per 100 leaves.

In another block, contract workers from the local villages demanded scheduled wages in road construction jobs. When the contractor stopped work, some of the villagers tried to teach him a lesson, and did not hesitate to face attacks from the goons of the contractor, as well as arrests and criminal charges. This spark electrified the villages of the entire area, and a bigger outburst of struggle for better wages is not far off.

During the last parliamentary elections a political campaign was taken up for the boycott of elections, through meetings at the village level, leaflet distribution, etc in all areas. The campaign helped immensely to raise the political consciousness of the masses, to realise who's who, and to build confidence for future struggles.

Thus, in the Jharkhand area, the people have been awakened to a new path, the path of militant struggle, to establish their say and domination in the area through armed struggle, and to finally liberate themselves from the yoke of exploitation, plunder and repression. The Andhra-Bihar-Dandakaranya movements have opened up a new path for the whole country. The people of Jharkhand too, will surely follow the same path and once again turn Jharkhand into an area of struggle. The day is not far off, when, in the tradition of the heroic revolts of the Santhals, Kols, Mundas, Orawans and Bhumijis, the adivasis of the Jharkhand area will, once again, create a prairie fire of revolts, will contribute their part in the liberation struggle of the Indian masses, and will add an epoch-making chapter to the history of the revolutionary struggles of our country. □

Political Notes

Remembering Comrade Pol Pot-The Uncompromising Communist Fighter

A few months back, the one time communist leader of Kampuchea's Khmer Rouge, passed away at the age of 70. After Comrade Stalin, he is probably one of the most maligned communists. The imperialists, and the social-imperialists, have been paranoid about the Khmer Rouge, and its leader, Comrade Pol Pot. The US imperialists led a hysterical worldwide campaign against Comrade Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge leaders accusing them of having killed one to two million people during their brief rule between 1975 to 79. These same US gangsters who threw two nuclear bombs on Japan killing lakhs; who collaborated with Suharto to massacre 15 lakh communists in Indonesia; who assassinated Allende, Lumumba, and large number of progressive leaders to install fascist dictatorships that killed thousands; who installed a number of tin-pot dictators in South America which killed progressives and communists in lakhs; who has installed a Zionist mafia in Israel that has butchered thousands and thousands of Palestinians; who used mercenaries (contras) to massacre thousands in central America; and who killed two lakh Iraqi civilians in maniacal bombings.... what credibility do these butchers have, whose hands are dripping with blood, to stand judgement on others? But what is the real truth?

It was in the early 1970s, when the war in Indo-China (Vietnam, Laos, Kampuchea) was at its peak. With the Vietnamese striking telling blows at the US imperialists, the civil war had spilled over into neighbouring Laos and Kampuchea. In Kampuchea, the CIA overthrew the nationalist king, Norodom Sihanouk; installed its puppet, Lon Nol, and began one of the most brutal bombings and massacres, history has ever known. It was the Khmer Rouge, led by Comrade Pol Pot who organised the communists and patriots to fight back this terror. The US, through carpet-bombings, chemical weapons, etc, not only killed 4 lakh Kampuchean people (unofficial figures are much higher), but also destroyed much of its fertile land. Nearly 2 to 3 million people were forced to the capital city of Phnom Penh, living service to American troops (prostitution etc). In this most horrifying offensive, it was Comrade Pol Pot, who led the Khmer Rouge in effective resistance to the US and their puppets.



But, at the time of victory of the Vietnamese, the Soviet Union had already turned into a superpower contending with the US throughout the world. The Vietnamese rulers acted as their chief agents in the Far East, and sought to subvert both the Lao and Kampuchean resistance, and make them tools of Soviet policy. The Lao party and resistance capitulated, but it was Comrade Pol Pot who led the Khmer Rouge, refusing a Vietnamese-sponsored compromise with the US, and also resolutely fighting the social-imperialist subversion in its own ranks. And, in this extremely difficult and complex situation, fighting against all odds, it was Comrade Pol Pot who led the Kampuchean people forward, threw the US imperialists out and seized power in 1975. The communist victory in Kampuchea, was not only a big blow to the imperialists, but more so to the revisionists who had successfully subverted the Vietnamese and Lao struggles. Kampuchea and the Khmer Rouge was like a beacon red star in the Far East.

Faced with a country devastated through bombing; with the bulk of a starving population in the capital city; with economic embargo by both the imperialists and social-imperialists; and with continuous subversion and disruption by the Vietnamese, with military threats and aggression from across the border.... the Khmer Rouge consolidated a people's democratic system, taking some drastic measures, like the evacuation of Phnom Penh. And in this process thousands died from starvation.... a gift of the departing Americans, now portrayed as part of Comrade Pol Pot's massacres. During its four year rule the Khmer Rouge faced not only imperialist embargoes, but continued subversion and aggression from Vietnam. Not only was the Khmer Rouge, led by Comrade Pol Pot, able to resist the aggressors, but also consolidate the economic and social system.

Then in 1979, the Vietnamese launched a massive attack on Kampuchea, backed with a 4 lakh mercenary force. In a brilliant military strategy Comrade Pol Pot, led the Khmer Rouge, to evacuate the corridors of power, and returned to the jungles to fight a guerilla war. And as the Vietnamese and their puppets sought to consolidate their hold, thousands and lakhs more were killed.

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Comrade Pol Pot in the 1980s continued to lead the Khmer Rouge in a united front with the nationalists (now known as the FUNCINPEC) to fight the Vietnamese aggressors and their puppets.

Through this entire period it was only the CPC led by Mao who stood by the Kampuchean people and the Khmer Rouge. But with China turning revisionist this support was stopped. China is now backing the opponent — the fascist Hun Sen. For three decades the small Kampuchean country has been bled, first by the US imperialists and then by the social-imperialists. And through this holocaust it was the Khmer Rouge, led by Comrade Pol Pot, who effectively fought both imperialism and revisionism. But, in the last few years the Khmer Rouge was beset with an internal crisis with a number of top

leaders capitulating to the enemy. But Comrade Pol Pot, it appears, stood firm till the end, though isolated in his own party and imprisoned by his erstwhile colleagues.

In the two decades of the 1970s and 1980s the Khmer Rouge played an outstanding role in the international communist movement.... and Comrade Pol Pot was its chief leader. Though there may have been some excesses and errors during the extremely difficult conditions in 1975-79, the bulk of the deaths were either due to the massacres by the Americans and Vietnamese, or part of the civil war or else due to starvation because of the havoc caused by American troops. History, will no doubt, vindicate the Khmer Rouge and the leader who led it uncompromisingly, for nearly three decades. □

Ayodhya : BJP's Last Desperate Gamble

With the euphoria on the bomb dying down and the government on the brink of collapse, the Ayodhya issue is once again being pushed to the forefront. As long as their coalition is stable it will be kept in reserve, any instability will bring it to the fore, as the BJP's key electoral plank. While the BJP will continue to blow hot and cold on Ayodhya, its Hindu chauvinist programme continues apace, including feverish activity on building parts for the proposed temple.

Construction work on the pillars etc for the temple have been going on since the last three to four years at two sites : in a small town of Rajasthan, at Pindwara,; and at Ayodhya. At Pindwara, construction is being coordinated by Ashok Singhal's nephew, who owns a stone powder factory there, and is making a small fortune, utilising excessively cheap labour, including children. At Ayodhya the VHP has set up a 'Ram Janmabhoomi Mandir Nirman Karyashala' on a 10 acre plot. With 100 artisans working there, the VHP plans to increase it to 1000 within six months.

The sangh parivar have openly declared that they will build the temple, whatever be the court order, and that this construction work will continue. They claim that the platform, already built by Shilanyas in July 1992, will facilitate the quick erection of a structure, once all the pre-fabricated pieces are ready. In fact, in May, '98, the Commissioner of Faizabad sent a proposal to the Home Minister to make 'improvements' to the make-shift temple standing there. With Ayodhya fanatics as a CM of UP and as a Union Home Minister, one really does not know what secret activity is taking place at the site. Suspicions are further aroused, when the district court

recently banned the Babri Masjid Action Committee from visiting Ayodhya, while allowing puja to continue at the make-shift temple.

The BJP has clearly said in its manifesto, that it will not abide by a negative court order and will seek to build the temple through 'consensus' (i.e. buying over some muslim leaders) or through legislation. Kalyan Singh, on becoming CM, pledged to build the temple. And since coming to power at the centre, Vinay Katiyar has claimed, that the BJP government "has initiated discussions with Top muslim leaders within and outside the country"; and added that "considerable progress has been achieved in settling the issue." Of late, the sangh parivar, including top BJP leaders have been issuing inflammatory statements on the Ayodhya question. Even the Prime Minister has been making ambiguous and contradictory statements, in true BJP double-speak style.

But Ayodhya is not the only front for the BJP's hindu chauvinist agenda. While making a pretense of a 'National Agenda' they have been systematically and aggressively pursuing their own Hindu agenda. They have launched aggressive attacks on christians in many parts of the country and the VHP has vowed to make conversions and cow slaughter as its present major campaign. Near Indore, which is the new BJP president's home base, riots against muslims and a hysteria has been whipped up on the ancient Bhojshala Complex. The conflict on this complex, which is linked with the worship of Saraswati, has been now made into a national issue by sustaining the campaign against M.F. Hussain's paintings. Of late, another BJP outfit, Sanskar Bharati, has been planning to take out a nationwide campaign

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against Hussain. Besides these fanatical campaigns, the BJP has utilised control of the administration, to take tighter control over the media, bring changes in the education curriculum and in a swift move has taken control of the prestigious Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR) replacing well-known historians with RSS hacks.

That the BJP should pursue its own fascist agenda is to be expected, but what are the other 'secular' parties doing about it? As far as the coalition partners are concerned, besides intrigue and manoeuvrings for power and pelf, they are silent partners in this crime. About the Congress's 'secularism' the less said the better. Not only was Rajiv Gandhi directly responsible for enflaming the Ayodhya issue, the PVN government party to the destruction of the Masjid and construction of the make-shift temple, but, the Congress government in fact passed an ordinance in January '93 preserving the status quo as on January 6, '93 and NOT ON December 5, '92 !! The new Rashtriya Loktantrik Manch of the two Yadavs,

see nothing wrong in taking into its fold, Rajiv Gandhi's main hatchetman at Ayodhya, Buta Singh. As, for the revisionist CPI/CPM, real politics of aligning with the Congress (I) supersedes real secularism. Beside, all these parties are instrumental in whipping up an anti-Pak hysteria and thereby contributing to the Hindu chauvinism. In addition, not a single parliamentary party, including the 'revolution'-spouting Liberation Group, has called for the rebuilding of the structure, illegally broken down by hoodlums. This simple democratic demand goes beyond the pale of our parliamentarians !!

Meanwhile, the explosive Liberhans Commission report, enquiring into the demolition of the Masjid, completes its term on June 30, '98. Having faced numerous court battles by the RSS and hurdles from the earlier Congress government to close it down, this report is expected to have damning evidence on the role of the BJP. But like most reports it will in all probability gather dust.... it is only in the peoples courts that the BJP hoodlums can be administered real justice for their heinous crime. □

Worldwide Protests Against WTO

The last issue of VANGUARD reported a massive procession and meeting against the WTO, at Hyderabad, in India. This was part of a worldwide mobilisation against the WTO (World Trade Organisation), on the occasion of the second ministerial meeting of all its member countries, at Geneva, on 18-20th May '98. Reports have now begun to come in of similar protests held throughout the world.

So far reports from over 30 countries, from all the five continents, have come in of protests, big or small, during the months of April-May '98. The protests were marked by a growing awareness about the anti-people, exploitative role of the multilateral agencies like WTO, IMF, World Bank, etc, and, in many places, had to face the wrath of the police. It also signifies a step forward in the joint struggles of the people throughout the world against their common enemy — imperialism. Here, we present a brief report of the major actions.

In Europe, caravans of cyclists and tractors wound their way from three centres of Germany (North, East, and Centre) all the way to Geneva in Switzerland. The caravans stopped in many different towns, where local hosts organised talks, video shows, demonstrations, etc. While in Germany, the police prevented the caravan from approaching a military airport. At the Swiss border as a large group of people received the caravan, the Swiss police was unable to prevent its entry. But on the second

day a big posse of policemen arrested all the members, confiscated some of their material and expelled the non-Swiss members from the country, depositing them at the French border.

In Berlin, a street function by over 1000 people resulted in the arrest of three persons and a handful of people being hit by the police. In Belgium, some 250 people protested in the small town of Leuven. In the Netherlands, at Utrecht, for five hours a wild dance party of more than 800 blockaded a six-lane highway near the main station. In Austria, on May 20, over 1000 people took part in the protest at Vienna, from different social and ecological organisations. Even in Israel, 500 people participated in a procession.

In East Europe, the Czech Republic witnessed the largest demonstration when 3000 people gathered at Prague. They blockaded the city's main road, with drums, a puppet show and a fire performance... later though, the police stopped the march attacking it with truncheons. A police car was overturned when it tried to drive into the procession. After this attack, 300 continued the march, smashing windows of Kentucky and McDonalds. This resulted in a brutal police attack when 64 people were arrested and badly beaten....they were detained in jail for a fortnight.

In Finland, 2000 people participated in the programme at Turku. In Russia, students of the Student Revolution

Committee held a large meeting on 10,000 at Voronezh.

In Latin America, the largest demonstration was in Brazil. The march from the four cardinal points of the country converged, on May 20, in the capital city of Brasilia. The march, that brought together around 50,000 people from all over the country was called by CUT (Central Union of Workers), CMP (Centre of Popular Movements), CONFAG (Agricultural Workers' Confederation), CNBB (National Conference of Bishops), National Forum of Education and the militant MSL (Movement of landless People). As the march entered the capital, the MSL attacked the supermarkets and the commercial and government food stores, bringing out the fact that in Brazil 40 million people suffer from hunger. The MSL also continues occupying big landlord's estates — the most recent being the two haciendas of Pemambuco. In Chile, at a forum organised on the WTO, a large number of people attended from Mexico, Brazil, Colombia, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, USA, Canada, Japan and South Korea.

In the Philippines one thousand marchers belonging

(Continuation of page 30)

The death of Chandramouli is not an isolated incident. Such deaths have occurred previously and will continue to occur in future. The enquiry commissions that are constituted, will see, only what the jail authorities want them to see; they will hear, only what the jail authorities want them to hear. The truth is silenced and buried within the four walls of the jail. Any voice raised, will be suppressed and confined to the condemned single cells.

The jail authorities are an authority unto themselves; not answerable to any one. Very recently, in compliance with the orders of the High court, all the prisoners in all the prisons were medically checked up; but, after that no follow-up action was taken, the prescribed medicines were not provided, cases needing immediate, specialized treatment, though marked urgent, were neglected and left to fend for themselves.

To show our solidarity with the prisoners of the Warangal jail; all the political prisoners in all the prisons of A.P. will be observing 21-5-98 as a black day in protest against the incidence and atrocities at the central prison, Warangal. We have decided to boycott the "request round" on Monday 25-5-98 and to undertake a mass hunger strike in all the prisons on 26-5-98.

The political prisoners in central prison Secunderabad have already commenced a relay hunger strike; six at a time; and the prisoners in all the other prisons will commence relay hunger strikes, which will be intensified into an indefinite hunger strike if justice is not meted out through :

to the fisherfolk movement and the peasant organisation, KMP, staged a protest at the presidential palace.

In Canada, 800 people took over Bloor Street in Toronto, one of the busiest in town, with puppet shows, street theatre, etc. Later, this was attacked by the police, the crowd was dispersed and three arrested. When 60 protesters marched to the police station demanding their release, one more was arrested.

In the USA, at Berkeley, about 500 took to the streets with flags, bicycles, banners... functions continued throughout the day obstructing some major streets. But here again, police encircled the crowd and forcibly dispersed them. The people retaliated with bottles and in the confrontation 4 blacks were arrested.

And in Australia, demonstrators clashed for two hours with the police at Brisbane; and in Sydney about 4000 people demonstrated.

These movements against the WTO are just the beginning; they are bound to develop into a great anti-imperialist tide in the coming days. □

1. Immediate suspension of DIG of prisons M.R. Ahmed, Warangal jail superintendent, Lakshma Reddy and Warangal town DSP Chandramouli who are responsible for the lathi charge and torture of prisoners.

2. A judicial enquiry by a sitting judge of the High court into the death of Chandramouli and the subsequent incidents and atrocities in the central prison, Warangal.

3. Payment of Ex-gratia to the families of all the prisoners who die in jail.

4. Immediate halt and prevention of interference by civil police in jail administration.

5. Provision of basic minimum amenities in all prisons.

In this peaceful struggle we appeal to all prisoners to wear black badges on 23-5-98 to observe it as a black day. We appeal to all democrats and intellectuals to support us in every possible way, in our struggle in the prison.

On behalf of

CPI (ML) (People's War) Political Prisoners

1. S. Appa Rao

Place : Central Prison,

UT No. 434

Hyderabad

2. M. Balakrishna

Date : 21-5-98

UT. No. 3431

5th, 6th Schedules And Adivasi Autonomy

50 years after the transfer of power, the plight of the tribals has only worsened further. Deprived of their traditional homelands, their means of livelihood and their right to collect forest produce and subjected to social and cultural exploitation and other extra-economic coercion, the adivasis of India are treated like second class citizens. Their traditional organs of self-rule, their social organisation, their customs and culture have been systematically destroyed; millions have been displaced from their original settlements by marauders of all sorts — unscrupulous traders, greedy money-lenders and landowners, comprador big business bosses, parasitic government bureaucrats, wily forest contractors and officials, rapacious imperialist vultures and so on. A steady stream of these “civilised” brutes has been pouring into the tribal areas no matter if these have been notified as “Scheduled Areas” by the president of India, christened as “belts and blocks” where an inner permit is required for entry or granted autonomy in the form of tribal districts or regional councils. The innumerable laws and Acts enacted for over a century with the lofty claim of protecting the adivasis from the onslaught of the non-tribals and preserving their distinct identity and culture, have only remained on paper while in reality adivasis have been further pushed into the interior forests by the invading non-tribals. The state of Tripura presents a classic example of how the adivasis were transformed into a minority in their own traditional habitat due to the influx of outsiders. Until the mid-1960s the tribals constituted the majority of the population of Tripura but due to the unhindered exodus of Bengalis into Tripura, it came to be dominated by Bengalis by the late 1960s. Today, the indigenous adivasis constitute less than a third of the state’s population and have become victims of domination by non-tribals in all spheres. The adivasis, having been driven to the interior areas, have now begun resorting to militant struggles to stop the further influx of the non-tribals, to preserve their culture and their identity. All over the country adivasis face similar problems of alienation from their own lands and forest.

The government of India as well as various state governments claim that the life of the tribals is being rapidly improved by enacting and implementing a host of laws in their favour; by creating Scheduled Areas through the 5th Schedule of the Indian constitution; ‘Tribal District Councils’ and other forms of autonomy through the 6th Schedule; and by “empowering” the tribal bodies such as the Gram Sabha as local organs of self-rule with control over the village and the forest resources as recommended by the Bhuriya Commission report and

so on and so forth. Let us trace the condition of the adivasis historically, the various laws enacted from time to time and the present plight of the adivasis in order to understand the hollowness of these claims and then see how the adivasis can achieve real power and autonomy.

Historical Background of Adivasi Alienation : From Masters to Slaves

Adivasis comprise around 7% of the Indian population. Historically they were the masters of the vast forest tracts in the country : they gathered the forest produce, engaged in hunting and later used slash-and-burn methods for cultivation which gradually changed to plough-based agriculture. The adivasis had total control over the land and resources in the area where they lived. But with the conquest of their areas by the British, restrictions were imposed on their using the forest resources. As the British considered the entire forest as their own property, they imposed taxes on everything — land, water, timber and other forest produce. In fact, prior to the conquest by the British the adivasis had no relation at all with the outside world. There were no migrations of non-tribals to the tribal areas prior to the advent of the British. The adivasis had independence and even kingdoms in some regions. They had full rights over the forest.

It was during British rule that the migration of the non-tribals to the tribal areas began. This, combined with the British policy of taxation, undermined the independence and freedom of the adivasis.

What were the changes brought about by the British?

(i) Collection of land tax was done in cash form after conducting thorough land surveys. Hence the adivasis too had to depend on the moneylenders to raise enough cash to pay tax.

(ii) conversion of people’s labour power into a commodity.

The adivasis were turned away from their traditional land which was converted into their own property. Adivasis, having lost all their rights over the forest resources, had to sell their labour power in British estates or mines or in the various construction projects such as roads and railways. Worse still, some of them were branded as criminals by the British for exercising their traditional rights of enjoying the forest resources which now became British property. The adivasis thus became aliens in their own land by the British laws which prevented them from hunting or collecting the forest produce or bringing more land under cultivation.

It was also during British rule that the exploiter from outside entered the tribal areas in a big way. The British encouraged such migration initially as it would help them derive larger amounts of revenue. Another important reason for the British encouragement of the non-tribals was that the latter could be used to suppress the adivasis as well as break tribal solidarity. The fierce struggles put up by the adivasis were sought to be subdued by using the non-tribal settlers. Further, this fitted in perfectly with the 'divide and rule' policy pursued by the British imperialists throughout their empire. But, inspite of all these schemes of the British government, the adivasis' struggle continued relentlessly. In most parts of the country they put up fierce armed resistance to the British colonialists.

Adivasi Revolts

The conditions of the Adivasis became more and more miserable due to the British policy of annexing their entire territory and depriving them of their traditional rights over the forest and due to unending migration of the non-tribals who had begun to seize the adivasi lands along with other forms of exploitation. Finding the conditions intolerable, the adivasis began to revolt against the British as well as the native exploiters from the beginning of the 19th century.

The Sanyasi revolts, the Deccan revolts, the Parakimidi rebellion in 1839, the Santhal rebellion of 1856-58, the Rampa rebellion of 1879, and later, the revolts led by Alluri Seetharama Raju between 1922 and 1924, the various adivasi revolts from 1870 to the beginning of the 20th century, Komaram Bheem's struggle against the Nizam of Hyderabad, Siddu Kanu and Birsa Munda's revolts in Chotanagpur area, the various revolts in the north east, all these forced the British government to enact laws so as to provide some protection from the non-tribals as the danger of the adivasis being swamped by the unending influx of the non-tribals had become real. It should be kept in mind that each of these acts was invariably the result of an adivasi upsurge. These revolts by the adivasis are continuing to this day acquiring a more and more militant and organised character as could be witnessed by the various struggles in the north east, Jharkhand, Gorkhaland, Chattisgarh, West Nimad, Dandakaranya, West Godavari, Adilabad and and so on.

Laws To Protect The Adivasis

The first Act that gave exemption to the Adivasi areas from the common laws was passed in 1874. This Act brought the Adivasi areas into the category of 'Scheduled Areas'. Scheduled Areas are areas where adivasis live in large numbers. For instance in AP, 5913 villages covering

an area of 30,293 sq. km in the nine districts of Srikakulam, Vizianagaram, Vishakhapatnam, East and West Godavari (these five districts fall in the coastal belt), Khammam, Warangal, Adilabad and Mahaboobnagar (the latter four districts are in the Telangana region) are classified as Scheduled Areas.

In 1919, the Government of India Act divided the Scheduled Areas into two categories : (i) in the first category areas, legislative bodies have no powers to make laws. Here, the governor can sanction funds for the Scheduled Areas without the need for approval by state legislative Assemblies. The governor's permission is required for any outsider to enter the area.

(ii) The second category of Scheduled Areas are partially exempted from the jurisdiction of Assemblies. The governor has the right to implement or stop the implementation of the laws made by the state Assemblies in these areas.

The 1938 Government Act which replaced the 1919 Act allowed state governors to bring a ban on land transfers in the Scheduled Areas. In fact between 1915-1920, itself, such acts banning land transfers appeared in all Scheduled Areas in the country. In the coastal districts of AP, the British government enacted the 'Agency Tracts Interest and Land Transfer Act' in 1917, mainly intended to protect the adivasis from the clutches of the moneylenders.

In 1950, the President of India, under the new constitution, notified the regions inhabited by the adivasis as Scheduled Areas by listing them in the government Schedule. Those villages not included in the list, are not recognised as Scheduled Areas. In AP, for instance, only 68% of the total tribal population are covered by the Scheduled Areas while 32% live outside the Scheduled Areas. In states such as West Bengal, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, no Scheduled Areas are formed even to this day. Thus even the nominal protection of tribals is given up in these states. In the country as a whole, many adivasi areas fall outside the purview of the 5th and 6th Schedules and have no protection whatsoever let alone autonomy.

While the ruling classes were compelled to enact laws due to the tribal uprisings, in reality, however, they actually merely remained on paper. According to government statistics in AP, 7,53,435 acres out of a total of 18,48,000 acres in the agency areas or about 48% is in the hands of the non-tribals. In the district of Adilabad, 60% of the land in the Scheduled Area (1,80,349 acres out of 2,97,170 acres), and in Warangal 71% (1,02,104 acres out of 1,42,533 acres) is held by the non-tribals in spite of the legislation of 1 of 70 enacted by the AP government banning transfer of tribal land to the non-

tribals. Earlier, there was the 'AP Scheduled Area Land Transfer Regulation Act, 1959' which prohibits the transfer of land from a tribal to a non-tribal. So far, 6,962 cases involving 49,061 acres of land have been filed under this act. Of the 5,464 cases disposed till date, 2,238 cases had gone against the tribals and 1,498 cases are yet to be disposed. In fact 80% of law and order cases in the Scheduled Areas involve land disputes. Thus the judiciary too has taken the side of the non-tribal landlords who had seized the lands of the Adivasis. Even the law banning land transfer could not stand test in the court of law ! Such is the farce of the Government Acts that have been in existence ever since 1874, i.e. for a full 125 years.

The Fifth And Sixth Schedules

These schedules claim to create and protect tribal self-rule in the various regions of India; claim that their main aim is to protect the distinct life patterns and integrity of the tribals and provide additional rights and responsibilities for the tribals.

While the 5th Schedule covers the tribal areas spread out all over India, the 6th Schedule is applicable only in the north east states of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura.

The states in which the 5th Schedule is applicable have a two-tier administration system. The governor may exempt the Scheduled Areas from the laws made by the legislative bodies and is also empowered to change the laws in the Scheduled Areas. He can make separate laws such as the 1 of 70 Act in AP which bans transfer of the land of the tribals to the non-tribals. But although in the Scheduled Areas, the governor has the right to decide upon the form and nature of the administration basing on the peculiarities prevailing in a particular area, these powers were never used by them for the benefit of the adivasis.

In fact even the 1 of 70 Act was passed by the AP government in response to the adivasi struggle in Srikakulam in the late 1960s. While claiming to preserve adivasi traditional culture and their distinct identity and life patterns through several such legislations, the state and central governments, using several other Acts, have even intensified the exploitation of tribals further. Acts such as : (i) the Mining Act, (ii) Land Acquisition Act (by the government for its various projects) (iii) Wild Life Preservation Act (iv) Excise Act etc. have not only deprived the adivasis of their traditional occupations and control over land and forest resources, but also displaced them from their traditional homelands and disrupted the tribal bonds of solidarity and life patterns. There is also a rapid migration of the non-tribals into tribal areas leading to discrimination and suppression of the adivasis even in the Scheduled Areas.

The 5th Schedule also gives provision for forming a 'Tribal Advisory Council' in every state that has Scheduled Areas. The Council should be of not more than 20 MLAs of the concerned state, three-quarters of whom should be tribals. If there are no requisite number of tribal MLAs, ordinary adivasis should be included in their place. All these were proved to be a mere eyewash and the conditions of the adivasis have worsened further in all the Scheduled Areas of the 5th Schedule. The land of the Adivasis has passed into the hands of the non-adivasis and in every Scheduled Area, the adivasis have been reduced to a minority. In the Scheduled Areas in AP, according to the government's own statistics, more than half of the agricultural land has been acquired by non-tribals. Several government projects such as the irrigation and multipurpose projects, mining projects etc. have been set up in the Scheduled Areas without the consent of the adivasis and displacing lakhs of them from their traditional habitat.

Even the peculiarities and the special features in the Scheduled Areas were never taken into account by the government in deciding the boundaries for Assembly segments, Mandal and districts.

The provision for special laws provided by the constitution for the adivasis in the Scheduled Areas are given a go-by for the benefit of the non-tribals. As a result, the unity and integrity of the Scheduled Areas was destroyed and even their role in the Panchayati raj institutions has become nominal.

An instance on how reservations are being implemented in the adivasis areas in AP in the panchayat elections reveals the following :

In AP, 46 mandals were formed in the Scheduled Areas. 66 other mandals had a mixture of tribal and non-tribal villages. In the past, all the mandals in the Scheduled Areas were reserved for adivasis only. But now this is done basing on the tribal population. Under this, only 33 of the 46 mandals in the Scheduled Areas are reserved for adivasis. In the 13 remaining mandals in the Scheduled Areas, reservation for the adivasis has been revoked. In 66 other mandals, where both villages in the Scheduled Areas as well as those falling outside have been brought together in a single administrative unit, only 16 are reserved for the tribals. Consequently, even a Mandal such as Koyyur in Vishakhapatnam where 95% are adivasis, there is no reservation for STs. In order to implement autonomy for the tribals, preserving the integrity of the tribal areas in an essential pre-condition. Mixing these areas with other non-tribal areas in a single administrative unit will only hamper the development of the Adivasi community and will affect their identity and distinct life patterns, customs and traditional bonds, subjecting them to various forms of exploitation by the

non-tribals. But unfortunately this is what has been taking place all over the country in spite of the tall claims of preserving the tribal identity and customs. Even the 6th Schedule which is applicable to just four states in the North Eastern region of the country, has failed to give genuine autonomy to the adivasis and to protect their traditional life patterns.

The 6th Schedule

The 6th Schedule, applicable to the state of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura, provides for 'Tribal District Councils' inhabited mainly by Adivasis. These councils are supposed to have powers to take decisions on all matters related to Adivasi life. These Tribal District Councils are empowered by the 6th Schedule to enact laws and carry out administration of the concerned district. Thus it is claimed, autonomy has been established for the adivasis through the 6th Schedule. Compared to the 5th Schedule which gives all powers to the forest officials, the 6th Schedule does allow a role, however limited, for the adivasis in managing the forest resources as well as some role in the administration.

The 6th Schedule provides for a three-tier system with 'Tribal District Councils' serving as the lowest tier. It is the basic unit for the adivasis, has wide administrative powers and can make laws on the distribution of land, maintenance of unreserved forest, use of water resources, regulation of paddy cultivation, protection of social customs, generation of village and town councils, property disputes, marriage and divorce i.e., right to adjudicate civil and criminal cases; education, health etc : courts constituted by the councils to resolve disputes among the adivasis, have the right to adjudicate cases that involve upto 5 years conviction. The councils can set up primary schools, decide the medium of instruction and take up road and canal construction. They collect land rent and vehicle tax, toll tax and occupation tax. The governor can also allot animal husbandry, cooperative societies, rural planning and social welfare to the councils. The laws of the state and central governments cannot be applied in adivasi areas falling under the 6th Schedule without the approval of the 'District Tribal Councils'. The 6th Schedule has thus created scope for a measure of autonomy for the adivasis and has declared that in the course of development of the necessary administrative skills, the tribal areas would be given separate statehood status. But all these rights and powers can become null and void if the centre thinks so. For the centre reserves the right to scrap the laws and policies made by the district or regional councils in the name of country's integrity. These arbitrary powers vested with the centre make a mockery of the concept of tribal autonomy.

Of late, responding to the growing assertion of the adivasis in the Scheduled Areas for separate statehood

and more powers, some of the states have been trying to appease them by promising them 'Tribal District Councils' and other provisions of the 6th Schedule. This is proposed by the government of MP for the districts of Bastar and other Adivasi regions. This was already applied in the case of the Gorkha area in West Bengal, the Karbi area in Karbi-Anglong in Assam and Bodo areas in Assam. It was also proposed by the Bihar government to implement it in the Jharkhand area in Bihar. All these are attempts by the Indian ruling classes to partially accommodate the growing assertion for self-determination by these tribal and minority nationalities and to deny them real political power or even statehood. While the 6th Schedule is an improvement over the Scheduled Areas of the 5th Schedule in as much as it provides at least a measure of autonomy in the form of separate tribal district councils and regional councils, one should also keep in mind that it has serious limitations and is also used as a tool by the ruling classes to appease and divert the adivasis from their demand for genuine autonomy and total control over the land, water and forest resources falling in their region, their right to conduct entire village life according to their customary laws, control over development and credit sectors at the village level itself, power to solve civil and criminal disputes in the village according to their own laws instead of approaching the Indian courts of law, and so on and so forth. While supporting the demand of the adivasis in various states of India who have hitherto been covered under the 5th Schedule, for implementation of the provisions of the 6th Schedule in their regions, we must expose the limitations of the 6th Schedule. Real power can be achieved only through their own self-governing committees at the local and higher levels and opposing any type of interference — economic, political and cultural — by the state and central governments. Every tribal council should be given complete legislative, executive and judicial powers; no central or state laws should be applied in adivasi areas without the approval of Adivasi councils; the social and cultural traditions and collective tribal identity should be protected; and the adivasi right over land and resources in the region should be recognised and provision should be made for forming autonomous tribal councils at various levels with the above powers.

At the same time, the failure of the provisions of the 6th Schedule in the North East should be exposed. For instance, in Meghalaya the Khasis, Garos and Jaintias have been fighting against interference by the government into their customary laws by invoking the provisions of the 6th Schedule such as paragraph 12 (A) which, they feel, threatens their very existence as a single entity. Thus in the very areas where tribal district councils were formed under the provisions of the 6th Schedule, there has been

a growing demand for the right to self-determination including the demand for secession as in Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram. The Hynniewtrep National liberation Council (HNLC) and the A'Chik National Volunteer Council (ANVC) based in the Garo hills of Meghalaya have been waging armed struggle against the Indian government as the 6th Schedule failed to fulfill their national aspirations.

Panchayat Raj And Bhuriya Committee

As we have seen, the provisions of the 5th and 6th Schedules, meant to protect Adivasi rights, have become operational in limited areas and that too partially. These schedules have come up for discussion again since the early 1990s due to the Indian government's decision to strengthen the Panchayati raj system in the country.

For the first time the government recognised at least in principle that the administration of the Scheduled Areas and the district and the regional councils should be rearranged and that the Panchayati raj institutions similar to those in the rest of India cannot be set up in these areas as they violate both the letter and spirit of the 5th and 6th Schedules. The 73rd constitutional amendment Act of 1993 exempted the Scheduled Areas from implementing the provisions of the panchayat raj system. A committee under a tribal MP — Dilip Singh Bhuriya (who joined the BJP prior to the 12th Lok Sabha elections) and consisting of some adivasi MPs was constituted to advise the government on the nature of panchayat raj to be implemented in the Scheduled Areas in accordance with the provisions of the 5th and 6th Schedules.

The Bhuriya Committee submitted its report in November 1995 and the central government incorporated some of these recommendations into its statutory laws in December 1996. The central law made it mandatory for all state governments to implement these laws within a year from the end of 1997. According to this new law, wherever the state and central laws came in the way of its implementation in the adivasi areas, they have to be set aside.

As the Bhuriya Committee deals with the forms of Panchayati raj in the tribal areas, we must have an understanding of the Panchayati raj system as it functions in the rest of the country.

It was in the early 1990s that the central government began to review the forty years of experience in running the Panchayati raj institutions in the country. In 1991, the 72nd Constitutional Amendment Bill made the first attempt to grant constitutional status to the Panchayati raj institutions but the Bill could not become an Act. The Bill mentioned that though Panchayati raj institutions were in existence for nearly forty years as per the Directive Principles of Article 40 of the Indian Constitution, they

have not become popular institutions due to several reasons and that it was the need of the hour to grant the necessary powers to enable them to function as autonomous units. The reasons for the failure of the Panchayati raj system were identified as : not conducting elections regularly, lack of representation for SC/ST/ Women and other weaker sections, lack of adequate funds and so on. The 73rd Amendment Act, 1992, which came into implementation from April 24, 1993, granted constitutional status to the Panchayati raj institutions. It defined the basic principles of the Panchayati raj system while leaving the details to be worked out by the state governments.

The so-called Panchayati raj institutions which are said to empower the people at the grass-roots level have always been hijacked by the wealthy. Successive governments at the centre and the states have further weakened the Panchayati raj system as neither funds were allotted nor elections were held. Weaker sections of society have hardly any say or participation in the Panchayati raj institutions.

Some reforms though were introduced into the Panchayati raj system due to the pressure of democratic movements. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992 made it mandatory for the state governments to carry out certain norms for the effective functioning of the Panchayati raj system. These included :

- 1) Elections to Panchayats every five years. Government has no right to postpone the elections to the Panchayats.

- 2) Reservations to SC/ST, women and weaker sections in the following ratio : SC-17.56%, ST-7.61%, BC-34% i.e. a total of 59.17%. A third of the seats both within the reserved categories as well as general category to be reserved for women.

- 3) The setting up of a separate election commission at the state level to conduct Panchayat and municipal elections.

Prior to these reforms there were hardly any elections to the Panchayats in most states. For instance, in AP, the sarpanches elected in 1971 continued in office for eleven years until 1982 as no elections were held.

Even after the Panchayati raj institutions were given constitutional status through the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, they remained in the hands of the landlords and the local elite. Those who were elected under the category of reservation acted as the stooges of the wealthy and had only nominal power.

Similar is the fate of the Gram Sabha of the adivasis, though sweeping powers and rights have been given to it in the Bhuriya Committee report and incorporated by the central government in the new law.

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INDONESIA : EXIT BUTCHER SUHARTO

21 May 1998. The three - decade-old political "stability" imposed by butcher Suharto in Indonesia came to an end. Even a few weeks earlier, it appeared as if Suharto's regime would go on unchallenged into the next century, at least until the completion of his seventh term as president for which he was "re-elected" in March last. The constitution guaranteed the president a five-year term in office until 2003 A.D. but, it only remained an impotent piece of paper before the mighty tidal wave of people's revolts that stopped at nothing short of the President's resignation.

Infact, the economic crisis has been worsening since July 1997 when the Indonesian rupiah had to be devalued by 20% in the wake of the severe currency turmoil in entire south east Asia. It has been losing its value continuously since then : from 2400 to a dollar prior to the currency crisis, the rupiah at one stage fell to 15000 to the dollar and has been hovering between 9000 to 13000 for most part of the current year.

In the first quarter of 1998 inflation was 33%. The rising prices of food and other essential goods and the ever-declining value of the rupiah, compelled the Indonesians to withdraw all their savings from the banks thereby leading to a severe financial crisis. 16 private commercial banks collapsed and many more were on the verge of collapse. People who had money began to buy up large quantities of consumer goods for future use as money was losing value with every passing day. Those who did not have any bank balances or bank accounts—the largest proportion of the country's population — were the most unfortunate and hard-hit ones : the real value of their meagre incomes declined from half to a third of their nominal values. The number of poor more than doubled in just a years' time. Around a fifth of the country's population of 20 crores were virtually starving. The currency crisis and the inflation led to the closure of several big and small companies which were dependent on imported components for the manufacture of their products thereby throwing lakhs of workers out of jobs.

To add fuel to the fire, subsidies and social welfare spending by the government were systematically slashed under IMF instructions. In the second week of May, the slashing of subsidies led to a sharp escalation of fuel prices with the price of petrol shooting up by 70% at a stroke. A 60% hike in power tariffs was announced and was to be implemented by October in three doses of 20% each. This steep hike in fuel and electricity rates became the proverbial last straw on the camel's back. The long pent-up anger burst forth in the form of student protests and later transformed into a mass upsurge.

On May 12, six students were shot dead on the campus of Trisakti University in Jakarta, and in the three

days of rioting that followed, thousands of shops and buildings were torched and at least 600 people died. As the violence went on unabated, Suharto, who was on a visit to Cairo to a G-15 summit, had to cut-short his visit. As he returned to Jakarta on May 15, he was greeted with massive demonstrations in several towns and cities of Indonesia. What first erupted as a protest against price rise soon became transformed into a mass movement for the ouster of President Suharto and for the implementation of political reforms. 'Merdeka' (freedom) became the war-cry of the student community who came out in thousands all over the Indonesian archipelago in the 3rd week of May. On May 18, 50,000 students demonstrated in Bandung and thousands of students and other common folk gathered in the second city of Surabaya on the same day. In Yogyakarta, Medan, Solo, Bogor and several other towns and cities violence continued to spread. The battle between the students and the police became transformed into a mass upsurge against the state and the traders, almost all of whom were ethnic Chinese and who constitute 80 lakhs out of the 20 crore population.

In Jakarta itself, the student protests culminated in the occupation of Parliament for two whole days on May 19 and 20. It was at this point that the wily despot chose to step down on his own terms by appointing his crony, vice-president B.J. Habibie, in his place. Although Suharto succeeded in placing his own loyal stooge as his successor, even such an act was unthinkable just a few days earlier. Even as late as the beginning of May, Suharto declared that there would be no political reform until his seventh term in office was completed in 2003 A.D. On May 15, when he returned to Indonesia after cutting short his visit to Cairo, Suharto put up a hostile and adamant posture while granting a few concessions. He revoked the price hike on fuel and electricity while simultaneously imposing a clamp down on the protesters. The scrapping of the price-hike had virtually no effect at all on the mood of the people and his plans for a massive crack down on the mass movement in order to cling on to power met with stiff opposition from his own ranks. The rifts within the camp of the ruling classes as well as the pressure from the imperialists, the IMF and the World Bank, forced Suharto to step down on May 21.

Ironically, Suharto became the target of both the IMF and the imperialists on the one hand and the oppressed Indonesian people on the other. While student protesters demanded that Suharto's estimated wealth at a mind-boggling \$40 billion (Rs. 1,60,000 crores) be confiscated. the IMF, on the other hand, wanted him to open up his companies for foreign capital to takeover. IMF's rescue package— which incidentally is the same as that of

Suharto's family wealth – called for the speed up of the economic reforms, i.e. further liberalisation of the Indonesian economy, as well as political reforms i.e. granting freedom for the opposition parties, other people's organisations, and trade unions to function democratically.

The army top brass too were critical of Suharto. The commander-in-chief of the armed forces and defence minister, General Wianto, nursed the ambition to takeover from Suharto just as the latter did while serving as the army chief under President Sukarno in 1965-66. Tourism minister Abdul Latief offered his resignation. Parliament speaker, Harmoko, a long-term loyalist of Suharto, turned against him and called for his resignation. Harmoko and the other parliamentary leaders even threatened to convene a special electoral assembly to impeach him if he did not step down. Half the cabinet wanted him to resign. It was clear that the longer Suharto clinged on to power, the more massive and uncontrollable would be the people's protests. The ruling classes and their imperialist mentors even feared that the movement could become radicalised and challenge the very imperialist strategy of liberalisation and globalisation and turn its wrath against the IMF–World Bank – WTO combine as well as against the imperialist stooges in power. Suharto thus had no alternative but to step down before the movement took a more radical turn. By proposing his trusted crony, B.J. Habibie, in his place, Suharto hoped he could divert people's attention from himself and thus water down the movement's more radical demands. Though a section of the protesters were pacified with the change of the president, it is clear that the movement will grow even more broad-based and more radicalised as the economic, political crisis deepens further and as Suharto and his family continue to monopolise the various sectors of the Indonesian economy.

Suharto's Imperialist - backed Fascist Stability

For three long decades Indonesia was run like the personal fiefdom of Suharto. Elected as the president for the seventh five-year-term in March this year, Suharto ruled unchallenged for 32 years (the first election to presidential office was held two years after he seized power from Sukarno in 1966 through a bloody coup). After massacring nearly 15 lakh communists and their sympathisers during 1965-66 and imprisoning several lakhs, Suharto, who, as an army general under president Sukarno, took over the reins of power through a bloody coup, banned the communist party of Indonesia (PKI) and all the trade unions, ordained that no new political party should be formed and victimised anyone who showed signs of dissent by branding him/her as a communist or communist sympathiser. Under the constitution, only three political parties are allowed to

function in Indonesia. Until the early 1990s those seeking jobs had to show documentary proof that he/she had no communist links.

The over three-decade-old rule of Suharto, publicised by the imperialist and the reactionary media worldwide as a period of political stability, was in fact a stability achieved over the corpses of millions of people and through fascist repression. It was a peace of the grave yard. The political stability was a euphemism for fascist rule.

Once the main opposition (the PKI) and its various mass and trade union fronts, was crushed, Suharto went on to cut the other opposition parties to size. He and his Golkar party became the sole spokesmen and representatives of the Indonesian ruling classes and their imperialist masters.

Imperialism, particularly US imperialism, was elated by the swift and brutal manner in which a potential communist bid for power was averted by their trusted stooge in the mid-1960s. For the American and other imperialists and the reactionaries all the world over, killing communists and their sympathisers was no more a sin than killing dogs. They applauded, as Indonesia's soil became killing fields, as blood-thirsty armed mercenaries, armed and trained by the imperialists, lynched and maimed lakhs of communists. **Suharto—one of the biggest and most cruel butchers in the history of humankind – was hailed as “the saviour of democracy” and his repressive autocratic rule was not only tolerated but aided and encouraged by every imperialist power without exception notwithstanding their democratic pretensions. If, on the other hand, if a communist regime was compelled to eliminate even a small fraction of that number, its leader would earn the title of “fascist dictator”, “megalomaniac” and so on and so forth. But Suharto's butchery only warmed their hearts as it prevented the communists from coming to power. Such are the double standards of the imperialists and the reactionaries all the world over.**

After seizing power, Suharto consolidated his hold on the state machinery by exercising total control over the armed forces which were given a lucrative share in political power. The top brass of the armed forces were also offered several incentives. A nominal People's Consultative Assembly (MPR) was formed whose only function was to re-elect Suharto as president after every five years. The cabinet was impotent and had to carry out the orders of the omnipotent president. In short, it was a government run by decree and the parliamentary institutions were merely ornamental with hardly any powers worth the name.

The military's role in politics was even enshrined in the constitution which gave it a dual role in both political as well as military affairs. Military officials were

appointed local administrators, governors, diplomats and even as leaders of officially recognised trade unions. What actually prevailed in Indonesia since 1966 was a military dictatorship led by General Suharto — an autocratic rule that benefited only a handful of families—with the largest share of the loot going of course to Suharto's family itself.

Suharto Inc. a \$40 billion Octopus Embracing the entire Economy

Suharto's three greatest achievements were : the crushing of the communist party through the massacre of over 15 lakhs with active assistance of the CIA ; the three-decade-long political stability achieved through fascist repression; and, a massive and criminal amassing of personal wealth. Even the riches amassed by the ex-dictator of the Philippines, Ferdinand Marcos or Zaire's Mobutu pale into insignificance before the treasures amassed by Suharto by means of massive fraud on the people of Indonesia.

Born of middle class peasant background, Suharto became the fourth richest man in the world with a personal fortune of \$16 billion (Rs. 64,000 crores) even as the vast majority of the population of this fourth most populous country in the world eked out a miserable existence. It was estimated that if all the business empires of Suharto and his six children were sold off during the so-called boom period of the Indonesian economy, it would have fetched more than the \$43 billion dollar rescue package offered by the IMF.

Such a massive concentration of wealth was made possible only through a massive concentration of political power in Suharto's hands who retained the sole power to grant industrial licences, approve foreign investments, award contracts, sanction bank loans and state subsidies to big business and, most importantly, indulge in corruption and fraud of mega dimensions. In the three decades of autocratic rule, Suharto Inc. reached out into every nook and corner of the Indonesian economy — the productive sphere as well as the unproductive and parasitic spheres of speculation and finance.

The autocratic family had even destroyed the country's forest wealth to satiate their unending greed for wealth. The forest fires in Kalimantan and Sumatra were the result of the massive grants of forest lands to Suharto's children who destroyed the forests to make a fast buck.

Some of the corruption scandals seem incredible but true. For instance, Suharto's eldest daughter, Siti, who had been a cabinet minister of social welfare under Suharto, was granted the franchise for building toll roads and also held major shares in a taxi company. She could obtain a bank loan of \$265 million to her taxi company which itself was capitalised at a mere \$3 million. This, incidentally was one of the major reasons for the collapse of the Hong Kong merchant bank, Peregrine, a few

months ago. Then there was the 'Kretek' scandal involving Suharto's youngest son, Hutomo (Tommy). Kreteks are cigarettes with cloves mixed with tobacco and are popular in Indonesia. Tommy was awarded the clove monopoly which meant that the Suhartos received a cut every time someone smoked a Kretek. Even more amusing is the 'National Car' project of Tommy Suharto for which he was allowed to import the cars made in South Korea by a company that has now gone bankrupt. The Aerospace factory of the new president B.J. Habibie which boasted of producing a "National Aeroplane", was just an assembly plant of imported parts. Much of the country's meagre resources were used up by this crony of Suharto in the name of producing a national aeroplane.

One could go on endlessly into the corruption scandals involving Suharto, his family and his cronies. The reach of the autocrat was so all-pervasive that no sector of the economy was left untouched by corruption. The foreign investors and the imperialist agencies too reconciled themselves to aligning with one or the other of the Suhartos. At the same time, the TNCs and the MNCs backed by the IMF and World Bank, increased their pressure on Suharto to further liberalise the economy so that they may buy up the shares and takeover the Indonesian companies. As the value of the rupiah depreciated rapidly, the lure of takeover of the local companies became even more lucrative and irresistible. As the Indonesian rupiah plummeted to an all-time low of 15,000 to a dollar at one time, the foreign investors stepped up their attempts to buy up the country's resources and industry at dirt-cheap rates. But this was not to the liking of the Suhartos who controlled much of the economy and feared that control would go out of their hands if they resorted to further liberalisation. The same thing had happened in South Korea, which saw a virtual invasion of the economy by the American TNCs. Many South Korean companies like Daewoo, Dongyong elevator company, the fertiliser, chemical and pharmaceutical conglomerate Daesang, Hanwha Energy etc., are losing their shares to the American TNCs like General Motors, United Technologies, Cargill, Chevron and Texaco. The IMF plan as implemented in South Korea was to acquire the domestic assets and the logic was that forex pumped into the economy in the process will restore investor confidence, stabilise the currency and revive stock markets.

But Suharto chose the currency board system as an alternative method to restore confidence in the rupiah. But this would lead to high interest rates, a liquidity crunch, slow down of growth and an increase in unemployment. Suharto's currency board system came under heavy attack by the IMF, World Bank, the US, the European Union and other imperialist countries. The governor of the country's central bank, the Bank of Indonesia, was dismissed in mid-February for opposing

the scheme. Suharto's plan was to peg the rupiah at any thing between 5500 and 7000 to the dollar. Such a step would also enable Suharto to take his wealth out of Indonesia in dollars making huge gains.

A stalemate ensued with the IMF offering a \$43 billion bail-out package provided Suharto toed its line, abandoned the currency board system, and allowed the foreign investors a free hand in the Indonesian economy which meant freedom to take over the Indonesian (read Suharto's) companies by buying up shares at the cheapest prices. Thus the IMF opposition was also one of the factors that sealed the fate of Suharto's presidency. Therefore the student demonstrations and people's upsurge against Suharto's corrupt, autocratic rule met with little resistance from the regime as the western powers continued to pressurise the president to resign. The cosmetic change of replacement of the president took place well before the protests became transformed into a fullfledged social explosion.

What the Future Holds for Indonesia

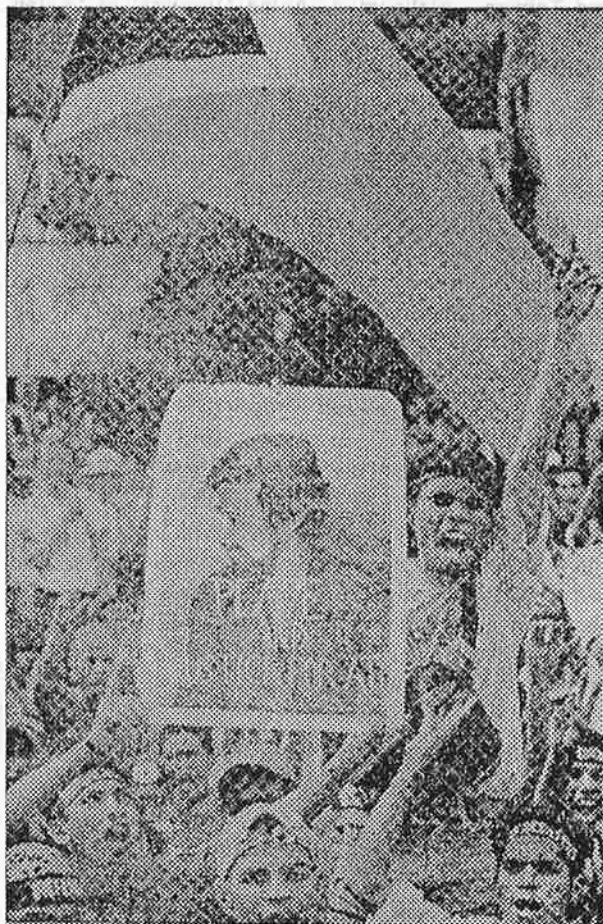
The events in Indonesia in the first half of the current year have made one thing clear : the days of autocratic rule are over. People are no more prepared to tolerate such corrupt regimes like that of Suharto. Indonesia had seen only two presidents in its 54-year-old history since the transfer of power from the Dutch in 1945. The first was Sukarno who ruled for 22 years followed by the 32 year-old reign of Suharto. This was made possible by sharing political power with the military bosses and by suppressing all dissent through the bloodiest means of physically eliminating the opponents or subjecting them to the worst type of harassment.

Today the situation has changed qualitatively. The armed forces themselves have become divided and the grossly underpaid rank and file soldiers and lower-level officers are facing dire economic straits and have begun to sympathise with the cause of the masses as was in evidence during the recent protests. Even revolts within the armed forces cannot be ruled out. More important, the people's democratic consciousness has enhanced enormously and their confidence on collective struggle had received a boost after their recent success. Although the ruling classes, backed by the armed forces, may try to impose fascist rule, they are unlikely to succeed in the long run. The political stability achieved through fascist repression under Suharto cannot be re-enacted in the changed circumstances. Many new forces have come to the fore; hitherto dormant masses have come to the centre-stage of Indonesian politics. The masses, impoverished by years of loot of their blood, sweat and toil by the exploiters, have now begun to demand their rightful share. It is obvious that they will no more tolerate such corrupt, autocratic regimes in future.

What is most crucial is the fact that the underlying

cause of the popular upsurge in Indonesia—the worsening economic crisis—continues to deepen, playing havoc with the lives of the overwhelming majority of the masses. It is estimated that 20 million children will dropout of school this year as their parents cannot afford the costs. This year the country will have to import 5 million tonnes of foodgrains to ward off hunger. There is no light at the end of the tunnel as the crisis only appears to worsen further all over Asia tending to bring the entire world economy to the point of collapse. Even the most optimistic pundits from the WB, IMF or the reactionary imperialist media, do not foresee any improvement in the economic front in the next five years atleast.

Such a bleak economic scenario is bound to give rise to a fresh round of popular revolts by all sections of the population under a more mature leadership. Whether elements of the almost-decimated PKI will reorganise themselves into a genuine communist party and lead the unfolding struggle, or, new forces come into the political scene, has to be seen. But what is certain is that the economic crisis will lead to a more severe social and



East Timor students demonstrating for the release of their leader Xanana Gusmao, and the withdrawal of Indonesian army. East Timor was annexed in 1975 by Indonesian ruling classes and turned into its 27th province.

political crisis in Indonesia: all sections of the oppressed and toiling population — the working class, peasantry, middle classes, students, women, nationalities and various ethnic and religious groups — are bound to assert themselves and play their role in shaping Indonesian's future. Already the prospects of secession of the East Timorese nation are looming over the political horizon of Indonesia. The armed struggle that has been continuing in East Timor for self-determination since its annexation by Indonesia in 1975 after the departure of the Portuguese is bound to intensify further and gather the support of the democratic forces all over Indonesia. Other nationalities within Indonesia will also follow cue as the impact of the deepening economic crisis hits them hard.

Many more Indonesias in the Offing

For years Indonesia has been held out as a success story of the IMF-World Bank's structural adjustment programme and their strategy of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation. The newly industrialised economies (NIEs) - South Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore and Taiwan - nicknamed 'Asian Dragons' or 'Asian Tigers' by their imperialist masters, which boasted of double-digit growth rates during the 1970s and much of the 1980s, began to decline rapidly since the late 1980s and particularly during the 1990s. Their much-publicised export boom has vanished; their trade surpluses gave way to trade deficits; currencies have been eroded so much that industrial and financial assets in these countries lost most of their actual value; prices of all commodities rose drastically within the country while declining steeply in dollar terms abroad. These "miracle economies" of the 1970s are facing debacle after debacle. Economists predict that the economies of Singapore, South Korea and Hong Kong could slip to zero or even negative growth rates this year.

Similar is the fate of the "success stories" of Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and the Philippines. The ASEAN countries which saw double digit growth over a decade, and which were projected as show-pieces to prove the correctness of the imperialist-driven strategies, have now become a spent force. These new tiger cubs have, after all proved themselves to be impotent "Kitten" as described by one of their own spokespersons — Malaysia's Mahathir Mohammad.

Although the IMF has been trying to stabilise the currencies in South East Asia through massive financial intervention (it agreed to shell out more than \$100 billion to help just three countries: Thailand, Indonesia and South Korea), the real crisis, of course, is left unattended. Thousands of factories are being closed down and millions of jobs are being lost; prices of essential commodities are soaring. The currencies have already lost much of their value which has made the cost of imports prohibitive.

Text-book economics teaches us that when currencies

become devalued, the goods become cheaper in dollar or foreign currency terms and hence become competitive in the world market. The decline in the value of the currencies would lead to an export boom. While this is true of classical capitalist economies (even this is a partial truth), it has no relevance at all in economies that are merely "assembly shops" of imported parts. The exports of the NIEs as well as Asian countries have a substantial import component. Most of the exported goods from these countries are in fact such assembled products based on simple "screw-driver technology". The currency collapses have made the imports out of reach for most companies as well as made exports dearer thereby leading to the latter's decline over the last one year. In Indonesia, imports fell by 30% and in South Korea by 36%. To cap it all, the international financial institutions are refusing to open Letters of Credit to finance trade in these countries. The export boom, the much sought - after and much-hyped panacea for all the ills of these economies, proved to be just a bubble. "Export or Perish" — the new motto of the neo-liberal theologists of dying capitalism — became "Export and Perish" in the case of the South East Asian and ASEAN economies.

The crisis of the Asian economies can any moment become a global nightmare. A sharp fall in consumer demand in the US or Europe or a crash of the stock markets could spell disaster for the export-dependent economies of Asia. As most of the exports from Asia are to the US and Europe, a fall in demand for these goods in the West could lead to the closure of most of the industries and the "assembly shops" driving millions of workers into the streets. Signs of this are already visible even in the so-called hitherto strongest economy of South East Asia - South Korea - where unemployment shot up to 6.5%. This has led to violent clashes between the South Korean workers and police during a rally on May 1st this year.

Malaysia, whose economy grew at an average 8.7% a year over the past decade, now finds itself in a quandary. During the so-called boom, the doors of the country's economy were flung wide open to foreign capital without any regulations whatsoever. The country's financial system, currency and stock markets passed into the hands of the currency speculators and stock brokers. The currency lost its value by 20% in July last and has been losing its value against the dollar continuously in the past one year. Mahathir Mohammad decried the role of forex speculators and racketeers for the currency turmoil. He claimed that imperialism was trying to destabilise his regime by creating such financial turmoil. But it was this very imperialist stooge like his Indonesian counter-part Suharto, who opened up the country's economy to the marauders from the West and Japan. To offset the effect of the crisis on his own assets, Mohammad used massive government funds to buy out his son Mirzari's tottering shipping firm. And his mad rush for modernisation saw

hectic construction and real estate activity culminating in the construction of the world's tallest building - the 88-storey twin Petronas Towers. All this at a time when the country's banks and corporations are struggling for survival under a national debt equal to about 170% of the country's GDP. The IMF's bail-outs seem to bring little relief to the ailing economies as there is virtually no financial regulatory system. The de-regulation of the financial markets worldwide has made the task of financial stabilisation of national economies almost impossible. As pointed out by the mouth-piece of American capital - TIME - in its May 28, 1998 issue : **"Recent talk of improving global financial regulation amounts to the equivalent of closing the barn door after the horse has escaped or perhaps even died."** According to an estimate by the World Bank, \$115 billion is said to have gone out of the five South East Asian countries — South Korea, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and the Philippines — ever since the downturn in their economies began in March last year. This is equal to 10% of their combined GDP. There is a reduction in bank credits worth another \$88 billion (or 8% of their GDPs). This is leading to a further crash of their stock markets and depreciation in the value of their currencies.

China, which has until now resisted pressure to devalue the Renminbi, cannot continue to do so any longer. Already, China's banking system is corrupt and inefficient : most of its loans are non-performing and these bad debts equal almost one-quarter of China's GDP. Its privatisation plans will lead to the closure of several of its state-owned enterprises or pruning the size of their workforce thereby throwing millions of workers onto the streets.

The crisis thus is not just confined to Indonesia but is a feature of entire Asia. Imperialism is worried about the health of Asia as it would have a contagious effect on the entire world economy. But as imperialism, through its agencies like the World Bank and IMF, has been administering a medicine that is more lethal than the disease itself, the crisis is bound to aggravate further. The IMF prescription of administering liberal doses of

liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation which calls for de-regulation of banking and finance, scrapping of subsidies and social welfare measures will only make the disease more deadly and chronic. The very same medicine that led to the current disease is once again administered to cure it! Needless to say, the conditions of the economies will get worse driving them to the point of collapse due to the lethal IMF medicine.

Indonesia will repeat itself in the other ailing economies that are under the intensive medical care of the IMF - WB - WTO combine. In all countries utilising the IMF pill, there appears to be a rapid rise in the industrial growth rates initially (how much of it percolates to the bottom is another matter) to be followed by sudden collapse with no real recovery there after. This was what happened to much of Latin America in the past decade and is now repeating itself in the NIEs, ASEAN countries, China, India and other countries of Asia. The growth miracle has given place to the worst debacle in each and every country that swallowed the IMF medicine.

The coming decade will see many more Indonesias. The worsening economic crisis in Asia will give rise to social and political crises of unprecedented dimensions. Poverty, starvation, death and disease, unemployment and soaring prices of food grains and essential commodities, social insecurity and growing oppression will bring all sections of the people onto the streets. Food riots and famine raids, street battles and general strikes will be the order of the day in the coming years. This was foreseen by the vice-president of the World Bank for East Asia and the Pacific region, Jean-Michel Severino, who said recently : "People who are hungry, can also become angry." The proletariat has to prepare itself to give leadership to such spontaneous struggles and mass upsurges as well as prepare the masses for battles with the state.

Capitalism, after reaching its highest and last moribund stage, has managed to survive for nearly a century. But the world revolutionary crisis that is bound to develop as a result of the deepening economic crisis will bury the rotting, decaying system that has outlived itself. □

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PRESS STATEMENT**CONDEMN THE NUCLEAR TEST
BY THE INDIAN EXPANSIONIST RULERS**

We, the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) (People's War) and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) strongly condemn the series of nuclear tests carried out by Indian expansionists led by the BJP coalition government of India. People in this region have to be aware of the real reason hidden behind the series of nuclear tests carried out by the Indian ruling class.

This series of nuclear tests itself explicitly manifest a long-standing desire of the Indian ruling class to become a South Asian regional power. Being a big and relatively powerful country in the South Asian region the Indian ruling class has been imposing many unequal treaties on neighbouring countries. Whenever others are not bowing to its feet, Indian rulers are using bullying tactics, even military interventions. The present BJP-led government is dictated by the RSS (Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh), which is the No.1 designer of Indian expansionist ambitions and which preaches the theory of "Akhanda Bharat". The present nuclear tests are also aimed at bringing the neighbouring countries to their feet.

By exploding the bombs and appearing to be defiant, the Indian ruling class try to strike a bargain with the imperialists : to recognise India as a regional power in South Asia, accept it as a junior partner in exploiting the smaller countries of the region and, in exchange, India would carry out all the dirty works of exercising military control over the region on behalf of the imperialists. The economic crisis is growing with every passing day, all the problems of society are intensifying; all the sections of the peoples are disgusted. The government is vainly trying to divert the people's attention from the burning problems by means of these nuclear tests. The Indian ruling classes are preparing the ground to suppress all the people's struggles by creating a war-atmosphere among India, Pakistan and China.

The BJP-led coalition government is continuing in power amid severe instability. They are trying to achieve 'stable' support from other parliamentary parties, by creating a war-atmosphere and pseudo-nationalism.

Even the Pakistani ruling class have conducted a series of tests following a few days of the Indian test. The Nawab Shariff government is also actively working to divert the people's struggle and nationality struggle in Pakistan, by creating a war atmosphere. In order to suppress the people's struggles which are going on against his fascist rule, the Nawab Sharif government has virtually imposed an internal emergency. We also condemn the nuclear test conducted even by the Pakistani government.

The nuclear arms race started by the Indian expansionists has raised an acute feeling of insecurity among the people of the neighbouring countries like Bangladesh, Nepal etc.

From the very beginning the Indian ruling class imposed unequal treaties like the 1950 treaty, 1965 treaty, Mahakali treaty etc., on Nepal and they became the main threat to the sovereignty of Nepal by maintaining a permanent army post at Kalapani and military intervention into Nepal on different occasions. In spite of all these facts, instead of condemning the nuclear tests conducted by the Indian expansionists, the Nepali ruling class and government are maintaining a silence thereby proving once again that they are the stooges of Indian expansionism.

The CPI (ML) (PW) and CPN (Maoist) appeal to the people of Nepal and India to fight unitedly against Indian expansionism. The people of the South Asian countries should fight unitedly against the war-mongering character and chauvinistic approach of the Indian ruling classes.

During the period of cold war between America and USSR, the nuclear arms race went to a peak stage. This arms race deteriorated their economies and contributed to the disintegration of the USSR and decline of the USA. This arms race will also inevitably deteriorate the economic conditions of both countries, develop war tension and insecurity in this region and ultimately it will plunge them into insurmountable crisis.

We also condemn the sanctions imposed by the imperialist countries initiated by US imperialism. The imperialists have no moral right to question any countries going nuclear, unless they themselves first destroy their huge stockpile of nuclear weapons. These imperialist sanctions on India and Pakistan are against the sovereignty of these countries, which should be opposed by all democratic sections and the peoples of the world over.

PRADEEP**PRAVESH**

Dt. 12-6-'98

CC, CPI (M-L) (PW)**CC, CPN (MAOIST)**

Edited by Dr. Pranab Kumar Mukherjee & Printed at S.C. Mazumder & Co., 52-Aravinda Sarani, CALCUTTA-700 005

Published by : Alok Bhattacharya, 63, Bijoli, P.O. Titagar, Dist : 24 Paragans (North), W.Bengal, Pin-743188