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Organ of the Central Committee, CPI(M.L)

NEW DEMOCRACY

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Undeclared War Against Tribals

Undeclared War Against Tribals

On 3rd May 2002, the Environment and Forest Ministry of the Central Govt. issued a directive to remove all encroachments from forestlands. While issuing this directive, reference was made to the Supreme Court's order of 21st November 2001. Since 1995, the 'Godavarman Thirugampadu vs. Indian Union of India', also known as the 'Forest Case' has been pending before the Supreme Court. In this case, the Supreme Court set up a Central Empowered Committee of Bureaucrats. This Committee recommended clearing out of all encroachments after 1980, on the basis of which the Supreme Court asked the Central Govt. to submit an 'Action Report'. In the light of this, the Environment and Forest Ministry of the Central Govt. issued the directive of 3rd May 2002 directing all state governments to clear all encroachments by 30th September 2002. On top of it, the Supreme Court banned 'podu agriculture' in forest areas, while it is the widely used means of subsistence by tribals.

If the Supreme Court order is implemented, the around one crore tribals living in the forests of India will be deprived of their livelihood. The way this order, which will play havoc on such a massive scale with the lives of the most poor and backward section of society, has been issued illustrates well the anti-poor attitude of the Supreme Court and the Central Govt. in the period of the 'new economic policies'.

The basis of the above order of the Supreme Court is the harm being caused to the environment by these encroachments in the forests. It is worth noting that the brunt of the Supreme Court's love for environment is always borne by the poorest and neglected sections of society. They may be the workers of the small-scale sector industries in a city like Delhi, or the tribals residing in the forests of the country!

It would be relevant to look a little more deeply into this issue 'environment', about which the judges of the Supreme Court, the World Bank, the officials of Indian Govt., a section of intellectuals and the NGOs working for 'social welfare' are so agitated. Harm is done to the environment by the pollutant chemical gases mainly be-

ing produced by industrial establishments, as these gases harm the protective ozone layer around the Earth. This protective ozone mantle blocks the harmful section of radiations from the Sun from reaching the Earth; thus the amount of such radiation reaching the Earth will increase if the layer is depleted. On the other hand, there is a danger of global warming due to increasing pollution, and due to this

Encroachments

Andhra Pradesh	3.413 lakh hectares
Assam	2.547 lakh hectares
Chattisgarh	1.504 lakh hectares
Karnataka	1.090 lakh hectares
Maharashtra	0 936 lakh hectares
Orissa	0.756 lakh hectares
Madhya Pradesh	0.728 lakh hectares
Kerala	0.459 lakh hectares
Jharkhand	0 339 lakh hectares
Uttar Pradesh	0.252 lakh hectares
Uttaranchal	0.104 lakh hectares

there is danger of the ice at the poles melting leading to swelling of the seas/oceans and danger of some parts of the earth being overlaid by water.

Big trees, in the course of their metabolic activity, purify some of these polluted gases emitted by the industries and render them harmless. In this way forests regulate our environment. Thus the question of protecting the environment is a question of balance between the harm caused to it due to industries and the need of forest cover in adequate amount to purify it. To present this question one-sidedly is to give all rights to destroy the environment to the big industries

and developed countries, and put the responsibility of protecting it on the poor inhabiting the forests and on the backward countries of the world.

USA alone is responsible for the production of one-fourth of the world's polluting gases. The G-8 countries together are responsible for producing about three fourths of them. But USA is not ready to cut down the level of polluting gases being produced by it; rather it is not ready for any curbs on its own industrial production (the source from which these polluting gases emanate). They have refused to follow the environment related "Quoto Declaration". Other industrially developed countries also advocate cutting down of pollution by all countries, while they themselves are responsible for it. In this way, they want to transfer their burden onto the third world countries and finish off even the possibilities of their industrial development, whereas third world countries are not responsible for the imbalances in the environment.

On the other hand, the World Bank, an US controlled organization of imperialist countries, is forcing such environment related policies on third world countries which are against their agricultural and industrial developments. The NGOs, nurtured by the World Bank and imperialist countries, make a noise in India and third world countries about environmental conservation and in this way serve the interests of their patrons. The World Bank is giving aid of crores of rupees to displace the tribals and non-tribal poor living in the forests from there in the name of protecting forests in India.

Never was there any threat to environment from the tribals and their agriculture and there is none now. The tribals have been living in the forests for thousands of years and have been protecting them. In reality the work of destroying forests is being done by the nexus of ruling politicians, officers, forest officials and contractors. MNCs and comprador big capitalists have destroyed a big section of forests. Recently in the Balco case, the Supreme Court gave consent to handing over the land acquired from tribals to private capitalists in the name of 'govt. enterprise', and in this way flouted the rights of the tribals and other poor of that area not only for government enterprise but also for the profits of big capitalists.

As far as the protection of forests is concerned there are nearly 8

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crore hectares of forestland in our country. On this land there is forest cover on less than half of the area. Even if the govt. statistics regarding encroachments are relied upon, even then such land is only a few lakh hectares. Who has stopped the Govt. and the Supreme Court from developing forests on the rest of the land under the forest department?

As far as the issue of farming by tribals is concerned (more than 80% of the tribals are dependent on farming), "podu farming" has also been going on in forest areas since a long, long time, and no harmful gases are produced due to it. If it is necessary to protect forests in order to protect the environment, why is the burden of this being put on the shoulders of the tribals alone?

Campaign of World Bank

The eagerness of the World Bank for the 'conservation' of forests in India is worth paying attention to. The World Bank has brought out a document for the 'protection' of the forests of Andhra Pradesh, which the Bank acknowledges as a 'Reforming State' i.e. implementing reforms. According to this document the main danger to the forests is from "Podu farming in forest areas, occupation of forestlands, use of fuel wood and grazing by domestic animals." (Page 20) From this it is clear that in the name of conserving forests the target of the World Bank are the tribals living in the forest areas. Where on the one hand the repressive machinery of the state is being relied on to evict the tribals and poor people from forestlands, on the other there are attempts to entice them. For this, the document talks of 'provision of clear drinking water', and 'local health facilities' etc. By linking the provision of drinking water and basic health facilities to the vacation of forest land, the Govt. and its patrons – imperialist agencies like World Bank – only show their bankruptcy. Are provisions of clean drinking water and health facilities not the constitutional responsibilities of the government?

Though on the one hand the Govt. and the World Bank say there will be no forcible eviction of people residing in the forests, on the other, they are conspiring to rob them of their means of subsistence, forest produce and land. How can the tribal and poor people live in the forests if they cannot do farming and cannot use the forest resources, is something only the Govt. leaders and World Bank

can tell.

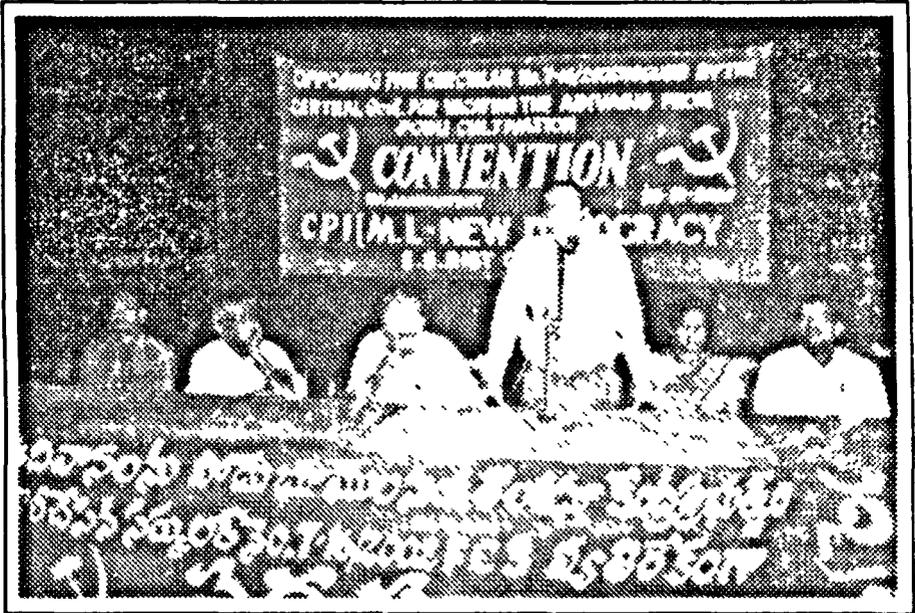
The essence of the above plan of the World Bank is to deprive the tribals and other poor people of land for farming. There is provision to hire some of them as casual labourers to look after the forests but the majority will be forced to hire themselves out as workers for a pittance, as there is no other means of subsistence.

The Conspiracy of Imperialism and Comprador Rulers Against Tribals

The approximately 10 crore tribals living in large parts of India had been victims of the conspiracies of the colonial rulers for a long time. Where the British colonialists ended the natural rights of the tribals over the forests by making Forest Laws, there they also brought settlers from other areas with the aim of collecting land revenue thereby giving rise to a class of landlords from among the outsiders. Against this colonial policy, the colonial rulers, and against these non-tribal landlords and contractors, the tribal peasantry waged heroic struggles. The Santhal Revolt, the Revolt under the leadership of Birsa Munda, the struggle led by Alluri Seetaramaraju and other struggles of the tribal peasantry hold important positions in the glorious heritage of anti-colonial struggles of the people of India. In the course of these struggles, the colonial rulers framed laws for the protection of tribals' lands but most of these laws remained confined to paper and in reality the colonialists kept up encouragement to compradors, landlords and contractors.

After 1947, the Indian rulers kept up the old policy in tribal areas. The nexus of ruling politicians, bureaucracy, landlords and contractors kept on exploiting these areas and by occupying more and more forest land increased landlessness among the tribals. On the other hand the brunt of Government developmental projects was also borne by the tribals and non-tribal poor. The areas where they live are rich in natural resources – mineral, coal, and source of water. The projects established here only gave casual or unskilled employment opportunities to the tribals whereas tribals and other poor were displaced in large numbers. The question of rehabilitation remained only on paper, while the displaced people were knocked about from pillar to post.

cussed legal aspects of the issue. Mentioning the problems of tribals particularly women, Com. P. Tanya stressed on the tradition of struggles amongst tribals. The AIKMS President Com. M. Narainaswamy emphasized the need of unity between tribals and non-tribal poor in the struggle against this order of the Central Govt. The Convention



was also addressed by CPI(ML) – New Democracy MLA Com. G. Narsa ah, Khammam District Secretary of the Party, Com. K. Ranga Reddy and AP State Secretary of AIKMS, Com. G. Diwakar. Prof. K.R. Choudhury released the booklet "Undeclared War Against Tribals", published by the Party.

The main speaker of the Convention, General Secretary of CPI(ML) – New Democracy, Com. Yatendra Kumar, dealt with the brutal attack on the livelihood of the tribals by the Central Govt. and the Supreme Court, at the behest of the World Bank and pointed out that the Courts have come forward to implement the pro-imperialist New Economic Policies. He said that the environmental hazard caused by the industries of the developed capitalist countries is

sought to be compensated by the evicting the tribals and non-tribal poor from the forests of third world countries like India. He also stated that the real objective of this World Bank Project is to displace the tribals, an overwhelming majority (fifth-sixth) of whom depend on agriculture, employ some of them as casual labourers, and compel them to come out of forests in large numbers in search of jobs. The real danger to environmental protection and forest conservation, he pointed out, is from the MNCs, the contractors and the govt. officials, and not from the tribals.

In addition to AP, efforts were also made to mobilize people in other areas of the country against the Central Govt. order. The Lok Sangram Manch in Orissa has started a massive campaign in tribal areas of Southern Orissa. A regional Convention was organized on 16th December 2002 at a place near Badagada in Ganjam district. Around 1000 people from Ganjam, Gajapati, Kandmahal and Rayagadda districts participated. Presiding over the Convention, Com. Buddha Gomang, President of LMS, highlighted the problems of tribal land. Addressing the Convention, a renowned advocate from Berhampur, Shri Bhagawan Sahu, threw light on the dreadful conditions of education, health facilities and public distribution system in tribal areas, and called upon the people to struggle against it. The Convention was also addressed by Shri Neelmani Sahu (an intellectual), Secretary of AIKMS, Com Y Sambasiva Rao and Secretary of Lok Sangram Manch, Com. Bhala Chandra Shadangi.

The Chief Guest of the Convention, Com. Yatendra Kumar, denouncing the barbarian attack on the subsistence of tribals by the Govt., asserted that the people of this region will not allow implementation of the Central Govt. order and will fight back the World Bank dictated collusion of the Govt. to oust the tribals from their own lands.

There is widespread anger in the tribal areas countrywide against this order of the Central Govt. and the inhabitants of these areas are eager to fight against it. The opposition from the masses has prompted several state govts to request the Supreme Court to review its order and to express their inability to implement the order of the Central Govt. Nonetheless, implementation of the order has already started in several states. Only the tribals and non-tribal poor of those areas can defeat this conspiracy of the World Bank and Central Govt.

Gujarat: BJP Returns to Power by Organizing Genocide

Deepening the communal divide by orchestrated genocide of Muslims, using the inhuman killing at Godhra as an excuse, the BJP under the leadership of Narendra Modi has returned to power in Gujarat Assembly elections. BJP secured fairly large electoral successes in the riot hit areas and even in other areas it was helped by the communal divide. The BJP, which has been ruling the state for the past ten years (barring the short period of Shankar Singh Vagehla), succeeded in distracting the attention of the people from the all-round failure of its Govt. and improved its position at the hustings in comparison to the 1998 Assembly elections.

The situation in Gujarat is peculiar in many respects. Since 1991, the BJP has been continually recording big electoral successes here. In the three Assembly elections held since then (including this election) the BJP has secured two-third or almost two-third majority in each and has also been continually successful in the past four Lok Sabha elections from here. After the disintegration of Janata Dal, those social sections that had earlier broken away from Congress in Gujarat, gravitated to the BJP making it the principal party of this state.

Due to its socio-political domination over Gujarat, the RSS adopted it as a laboratory for its 'Hindutva'. Using organizations like the VHP, Bajran Dal, Hindu Jagaran Manch etc., it launched a propaganda campaign and also organized attacks against the minorities, especially Christians and Muslims. Much before the Godhra incident, the RSS-BJP and their associated organizations had made preparations for genocide of minorities in Gujarat.

Many reports on the Gujarat Violence have exposed the detailed planning by RSS-BJP, the barbarity of it all, and the participation of the police and government machinery in the genocide of Muslims after Godhra, particularly in areas of Central Gujarat. Neither communal division nor the use of communal violence for electoral purposes is new for the parties of the ruling classes of India. The orgy of communal violence has been occurring in the past in several parts

of the country. The administrative machinery has been openly and shamelessly indulging in killings of minorities. After the violence ceases, usually judicial inquiries are also conducted and their reports are then given a burial. After 1947, the riots of 1984 in Delhi, Kanpur and other cities of the country were an attempt at communal polarization by the ruling party of that time by labelling a minority community as anti-national and engineering inhuman killings of its members. The burning alive of people and the open participation of police in killings were widespread in the genocide of Sikhs in 1984. The use of riots in elections prior to this was to increase the communal divide among the masses and to exploit the insecurity of the minorities. In 1984, the ruling party not only asserted the correctness of planned violence on a minority community, but also secured unprecedented success in parliamentary elections on the strength of this violence.

The communal role of the police and communal cruelty also openly came to the fore in the riots in Bombay following the demolition of the Babri Masjid. At that time the Congress was ruling in Maharashtra and scores of Muslims were victims of the riots in the situation of collusion between the rioters of Shiv Sena - BJP and the Congress Govt. In the elections held subsequent to the riots, the Shiv Sena - BJP combine came to power on the strength of the communal divide.

There is a great deal of similarity between the anti-Sikh riots of 1984 and the planned genocide of Muslims in Gujarat. Both genocides were done in order to secure electoral victories for the party in power. In both, the excuse for the violence was sought in a deplorable incident (the killing of Indira Gandhi in 1984 and the Godhra killings in 2002). But in many ways the genocide in Gujarat is much more barbaric and organized than the 1984 riots. The killings of Muslims continued despite countrywide condemnation. Secondly, atrocities against women occurred on a large scale; many were raped and then cut into pieces. Thirdly, whereas the riots of 1984 were confined to the cities, the anti-Muslim violence in Gujarat in 2002 encompassed the villages also. The Muslims were chased away from their villages. Fourthly, whereas in 1984 the homes and business establishments of the Sikhs were looted and burnt, in 2002 in Gujarat not only were the homes and business establishments of the Mus-

lms looted and burnt, their homes and lands were usurped. "Crime Against Humanity," the report of an enquiry team of legal experts has estimated the property losses of the Muslims at around 3800 crore rupees!

Whereas the immediate context of the anti-Muslim riots of Gujarat were the assembly election and the BJP-RSS wanted to stop its series of electoral defeats, but the violence must also be seen in the context of the fascist Hindu Rashtra project of the RSS-BJP. The purpose of the RSS-BJP is not limited to communal polarization for electoral purposes. The real purpose behind the capturing of properties of Muslims, the uprooting of their businesses and the usurping of their lands in the course of the Gujarat violence is to cutaway this minority from the socio-economic life of Gujarat. Whereas since 1947 the Muslims have been living in India as equal in the law but second class citizens in practice, there the Hindu Rashtra of the BJP seeks to make them second class citizens in all respects.

Due to the special features of Gujarat, including that of a virtually absent democratic movement the RSS-BJP adopted it as the laboratory for its 'Religious cleansing', is representing its electoral success as a victory of its 'Hindutva' and making plans for polarizing the Hindu majority, using this success, to gain an independent victory for itself in the next elections. The National Executive of the BJP has decided to replicate the 'success' of Gujarat in the rest of the country.

The threat of the fascism of BJP-RSS in the country has definitely increased after the Gujarat elections. With the help of communal violence, the RSS-BJP has succeeded in Gujarat in diverting the attention of the people from the anti-people policies of the government. Now they will conspire in this way on a large scale for the coming Assembly elections and Lok Sabha elections. The agenda of the RSS-BJP will be implemented in place of the NDA Agenda in the coming time. The other constituents of the NDA have either become unimportant due to losing in those states where they were in power. Or in their lust for power, they have lost the ability to oppose the RSS-BJP and want only to enjoy power with the help of this combine. Their failure to secure the resignation of Modi even after the genocide of Muslims in Gujarat has made the non-Hindutva con-

st tuents of the NDA quite irrelevant. Even otherwise the outlook of the regional parties is centered on the politics of power in their states and for this they are willing to stoop to the lowest depths of opportunism.

To challenge the Hindutva of the RSS-BJP, revisionist parties - CPI and CPM - have reposed their hopes in Sonia led Congress. The Gujarat elections have made crystal clear that the Congress cannot be a helpmate in the struggle for genuine secularism. During the entire Gujarat violence the Congress remained a mute spectator. Despite being a major party in Gujarat it did not oppose this violence anywhere. The lesson should also be taken from the burial of the Sri Krishna Commission's report by the Congress Govt. in adjacent Maharashtra. In Gujarat, the Congress ran its election propaganda in the role of a 'Hindu' party. Presuming the minority votes to be already part of its kitty, the Congress countered the militant Hindutva of BJP - RSS by putting forward its 'soft Hinduism'. The duplicity of the Congress can be gauged from this small fact that it made the issuing of license to a slaughterhouse into an election issue! Nowhere did the Congress take a position against Hindu communalism, rather it remained sunk in dreams of coming to power on its own strength at the Centre after keeping up its winning spree in the assembly elections. But Panchmahal (Godhra) has given a jolt to its Panchmari dreams!

The threat of RSS-BJP organizing preplanned attacks on minorities to deepen the communal divide in the near future has definitely increased. These fascist forces can go to any extent in order to retain state power. The BJP lead Govt. while wearing the mask of the NDA agenda, has stuffed every establishment with communal forces; education, history and culture are being communalized and public property and govt. treasuries are being plundered. Alongside it is deeming as correct the communal violence being incited by the fascist elements of RSS-BJP-VHP and is giving them government protection. Riots in the country have repeatedly established that the administrative and police machineries are very communal and that they are not spectators in attacks on minorities but participants. The ruling class parties deliberately ignore this aspect of the danger of communalism.

It is clear from the analysis of the increasing threat of fascism and its social base that the opposition ruling class parties do not even have a desire to oppose it. A wide, strong and militant unity of the working class and of the revolutionary and struggling people is necessary to challenge it.

Imperialism and the Threat of Fascism

Ours is a semi feudal semi colonial country where comprador big bourgeoisie big landlords are in power. They subserve the interests of imperialism. Imperialism has a deep-seated hold over the various aspects of the economic, military, social and political life of the country. The big capitalists of the country are compradors of imperialism and the big landlords are dependent on it. Thus there is no ruling class party, which does not serve the interests of imperialism. That the ruling class parties may side with one or other imperialist country or camp in the event of inter-imperialist conflicts is a different question. In today's unipolar world where one imperialist superpower leads the imperialist powers and where inter-imperialist contradictions have not reached the point of military conflicts the contradictions of India's ruling class parties also do not touch those issues which concern the interests of imperialist powers. All sections of the ruling classes – rightists RSS-BJP-Shri Sena, middle-of-the-roads Congress and regional parties and 'leftists' like CPI, CPM, etc. are all one on WTO, New economic policies and similar issues. Today the central questions in their struggle for power are communalism and casteism, through which they try to cover up their servility towards imperialism. Even when they intervene in the mass movements against pro-imperialist policies, their attempt is to keep this opposition within the confines of the present system.

RSS-BJP is eager to please US imperialism. Its desperation to implement pro-imperialist policies has torn its 'Swadeshi' mask to shreds. Removing of quantitative restrictions on imports and privatization of public sector undertakings has unmasked the pro-imperialist 'Sangh Pariwar', and they are trying to cover the shredded mantle of their pseudo-patriotism with the curtain of their fascist 'Hindu Rashtra' and the imperialist powers also are looking on these attempts of theirs with sympathy.

The danger of fascism can assume dangerous proportions only

under the patronage of some imperialist power or camp. Ind ra Gandhi's emergency was supported by the then rulers of Soviet Social Imperialism. Today RSS-BJP has the patronage of US imperialism though all parties of the ruling classes are eager to serve the interests of US imperialist superpower. A party opposing the tightening of imperialist tentacles on the country cannot adopt the policy of communal division, as it will be striving to unite all the people of the country.

RSS-BJP are not only eager to do just anything to serve imperialism, especially US imperialism, companies of western countries, especially of US and Britain, are accessing funds to them on a large scale. Foreign companies are giving big sums of money in the name of 'social service' to organizations formed by non-resident Indians and this money is coming to the RSS and its sister organizations. The example of their 'social service' can be seen in Gujarat quite clearly. It is not as though their activities are not known to those companies – though this is possible in some cases. This money coming from abroad is a big source of income for RSS-BJP. Imperialist countries, particularly US, expect that RSS-BJP will divide the people by communal violence and be more easily able to implement the pro-imperialist policies. The danger of fascism in India is linked in an integral way to the increasing loot of the country by imperialism.

In order to challenge the increasing threat of fascism in the country it is necessary to forge a wide and militant unity of the people. Other ruling class parties neither want to forge such a unity nor can they do it. Such a unity can only be forged by intensifying mass movements and developing better solidarity between them. Seeing the increasing fascist repression in the country and the link between the fascist threat and imperialism, we must continually be vigilant about imperialist agencies and the many machinations they use.

The coming period is no doubt going to be one of grave challenges and splendid opportunities for the progressive and democratic sections. Today the people of the country are groaning under the burden of increasing exploitation by the pro-imperialist policies and the reactionary forces. The reactionary rulers of the country are

launching one attack after another on the people at the dictates of imperialism and its agencies – WB, IMF and WTO. Various sections of the people are coming into struggles against those policies. To establish unity among these struggles and to give it political expression is the immediate task of progressive and democratic forces

The sycophants and advocates of imperialism and reaction extol 'lack of an alternative' and thus try to blunt the struggles of the people. To an extent they have succeeded in spreading despondency among the middle classes. To overcome this it is necessary to intensify those struggles, which show the alternative to this system. In India only the revolutionary peasant movements fill this position. Only by intensifying agrarian revolutionary movement can the forces coming forward in peoples struggles be linked with the struggle to change society and the web of deceit about 'lack of alternative' spun by the ruling classes can be swept away.

The unity of the people who have been steeled through revolutionary struggles and peoples movements, can not only halt the fascist campaign of BJP-RSS but can bury the communal conspiracies of the ruling classes. The secularism the people learn out of struggles alone can wipe out the communal poison in the country's politics and can give the country's politics a firm base of secularism.

The fascist campaign of the RSS-BJP and conspiracies for communal violence in order to add it, is a serious challenge before the entire country and is increasing the sense of insecurity and fear among the minorities. The war launched against the world people by imperialism in the name of terrorism and the participation of the Indian ruling classes in this has made the situation even more complex. The revolutionary forces will have to show expected farsightedness and clarity, firmness and flexibility in order to face this difficult situation.

Delhi

10th Anniversary of Demolition of Babri Masjid Marked by Dharna at Jantar Mantar

On 6th December 2002, Delhi Committee of the CPI(ML)-New Democracy organized a Dharna at Jantar Mantar from 11 30 a m. onwards. Around 200 people, mostly drawn from the working class, and also several progressive individuals participated. The Dharna was organized to highlight three demands. Firstly, the protesters demanded that the UP Govt. should issue a corrected notification to rejuvenate the Special Court at Lucknow. Starting the case at another special court at Rai Barali as suggested by Mayawati Govt. and decreed by the Supreme Court, virtually amounts to killing the case and bailing out LK Advani and his Hindutva-ranting hordes. Secondly, as several speakers pointed out, 10 years ago, Narasimha Rao Govt. had assured the shell shocked nation that the Babri Masjid would be rebuilt at the site. Today of course the demand has been virtually discarded as the Hindutva brigade has not only pushed the agenda to one of building a Ram Mandir, but also actually conducted a state sponsored Shila Pujan. Democratic and progressive forces have also fallen into the trap of discarding the demand with the passage of time. Thus the second demand raised was that the Babri Masjid, a monument of our common heritage, must be restored at the same site.

The third demand raised by the Dharna was for punishment to the guilty of the Gujarat genocide of Muslims, including Narendra Modi, guilty police officers and administrators. Especially, punishment should be immediately meted out to those guilty of spearheading bestial sexual crimes against Muslim women in Gujarat, all of whom are roaming free as the police have consistently refrained from registering FIRs. However the names and crimes have been fairly well listed by several organizations.

Among those who addressed the Dharna were Shri Anil Chamadiya (Journalist), Shri Jaspal Singh Siddhu (Journalist) Shri Pankaj Singh (Poet), Dr. N K. Bhattacharya (Convenor, Janhastakshep) and leaders of the party, of IFTU, NBS and PMS. A memorandum addressed to the President was also submitted

“Crime Against Humanity”

(Noted jurists had formed a panel headed by Justice Krishna Iyer to probe genocide of Muslims in Gujarat. They have brought out a report entitled "Crime Against Humanity". From the summary of the report, we are reproducing parts relating to Violence Against Women and Police Involvement. -Editor)

Violence Against Women

A distinct, tragic and ghastly feature of the state sponsored carnage unleashed against a section of the population, the Muslim minority in Gujarat, was the systematic sexual violence unleashed against young girls and women. Rape was used as an instrument for the subjugation and humiliation of a community. A chilling technique, absent in programs unleashed hitherto but very much in evidence this time in a large number of cases, was the deliberate destruction of evidence. Barring a few, in most instances of sexual violence, the women victims were stripped and paraded naked, then gang-raped, and thereafter quartered and burnt beyond recognition.

According to the evidence recorded by the Tribunal, the leaders of the mobs (many of whom have been identified) in Naroda even raped young girls, some as young as 11-years-old. The young girls were made to remove their clothes in front of 1000-2000 strong mobs who humiliated and terrorized the girls. Thereafter, they were raped by 8-10 men. After raping them, the attackers inserted sharp swords, knives or hard objects into their bodies, tortured them before burning them alive. In the many bouts of communal incited programs that have taken place in different parts of the country, never has there been this depth of perversion, sickness and inhumanness. Even a 20-day-old infant, or a foetus in womb of its mother, was not spared. They flung babies in the pyres that they had prepared. They cut up people, threw them in a well known as 'teesra kuva' and then burnt them. The police supported the mob during the assault by shelling tear gas shells on the hapless Muslims. They also opened fire on men when they were trying to defend the women in the area.

Evidence placed before the Tribunal shows that in the later phase of violence, even in Vadodara city, vulgar and brutal behaviour of

the police with women of the minority community was recurrent. Evidence on record shows that from March 15th onwards, the Vadodara police played a prominent role in terrorizing Muslim residents in their localities through combing operations and illegal arrests. Women, in particular, were subject to oppressive forms of harassment in their homes, especially when their men had either fled or were away.

Evidence before the Tribunal shows that women have suffered the most bestial forms of sexual violence, including rape, gang rape, insertion of objects into their bodies, stripping, and molestation. A majority of women who suffered this violence were then burnt alive. Amongst the survivors, many have spoken about the assaults but many have been silenced, for fear of further attacks and for fear of censure from their own families and community. Besides lack of faith in the system of justice, the humiliation faced by women who dare challenge taboos and demand punishment for gender crimes like rape have silenced the natural cry for retribution and justice.

Attacks on children were used as instruments of terror. In what is surely the most perverse dimension of the violence, children were used to torture and terrorize victims. In one particularly tragic incident in Tarsali, an old Muslim man was shown the head of his be-headed son on a tray before he was himself brutally slain.

Police Involvement

Evidence before the Tribunal clearly established the absolute failure of large sections of the Gujarat police to fulfill their constitutional duty and prevent mass massacre, rape and arson – in short, to maintain law and order. Worse still, is the evidence of their active connivance and brutality, their indulgence in vulgar and obscene conduct against women and children in full public view. It is as if, instead of being impartial keepers of the rule of law, they were part of the Hindutva brigade targeting helpless Muslims.

Once the Godhara tragedy had occurred, the Gujarat police made no preventive arrests. The only two arrests made on February 27th were those of Shri Mohammed Ismail Jalaluddin and Shri Fateh Mohammed, who were picked at Astodia that night, for shouting slogans.

Since 1998, there has been a proliferation of hate speech and incendiary pamphlets all over Gujarat. The Gujarat government and the police had enough evidence of this incendiary and provocative literature, printed in hundreds of thousands and thrust even on those opposed to the violent brand of politics that they typify. Various communal Hindu groups – the Dharam Raksha Samitis (Committees for Protecting Hinduism), the VHP, the Bajrang Dal – have been circulating these pamphlets inciting its cadres to rape, humiliate, destroy and kill. ... The Gujarat police are guilty of not initiating or pursuing criminal action against the hate-mongers for four long years, even after hate speech and hate writing had frequently been used to create an 'appropriate' social climate to precipitate violence against the minorities.

"The police tried their best but they couldn't stop the mobs. They were grossly outnumbered when the mobs grew," Ahmedabad's Police Commissioner, Shri P.C. Pandey, had pleaded. But in most cases, inadequacy of forces is a mere excuse touted by serving police officers who failed in their primary duty. ... P.C. Pandey publicly changed his stand four months later when, on June 1st, 2002, in an interview he stated that "VHP and BD were responsible for the violence in the state."

The shocking levels of police complicity in the Gujarat carnage cannot be overemphasized. On February 28, of the 40 persons shot dead by the police in Ahmedabad city, 36 were Muslims. This despite the fact that it was the minority community which was being targeted by huge and well-armed mobs on that day, at both Naroda Gaon and Patiya as well as Chamanpura.

Gujarat Police has finally admitted that it killed more Muslims than Hindus in its ostensible attempts to stop what was clearly targeted Hindu violence against Muslims. Of the 184 people who died in police firing since the violence began, 104 are Muslims, says a report drafted by Gujarat police force itself. This statistic substantiates the allegations of riot victims from virtually every part of the state that not only did the local police not do anything to stop the Hindu mobs; they actually trained their guns on the helpless Muslim victims.

The Tribunal has enough evidence to establish that the Gujarat

carnage was not simply a case of failure or abdication of duty, in far too many cases, the police were accomplices in the carnage. We recall here just a few of the most glaring instances of obvious police complicity.

On February 28, former Congress MP, Shri Ashan Jafri from the Gulberg society in Chamanpura, made repeated frantic calls pleading for police assistance against a huge mob in a murderous mood. He kept calling the control room for several hours until, finally, with no one to check the mob, he was charred to death along with 65 of his relatives and neighbours. Pleading anonymity, police officials who met the Tribunal confirmed that Shri Jafri had also made frantic calls to the Director General of Police, the Police Commissioner, the Chief Secretary and the Additional Chief Secretary (Home) among others. Three mobile vans of the city police were on hand around Shri Jafri's house but did not intervene.

At around the same time as the carnage in Chamanpura was taking place the massacre in Naroda Patiya began, in which, by the end of the day, over 91 Muslims had been torched. Over two dozen survivors from Naroda Gaon and Naroda Patiya who appeared before the Tribunal said that they had attempted over a hundred distress calls to the Police Commissioner and other police officers for help, all in vain. They said that the Commissioner's mobile was permanently switched off. The response from most of the other top officers – additional CPs and DCPs – was equally callous. Police finally arrived only around 11 P.M.

Shri K K. Mysorewala, police inspector, Naroda police station, was indicted by several eyewitnesses for being a mere bystander, watching the massacre of helpless men, women and children at Naroda Gaon and Patiya.

The police could not, or did not, respond to pleas for protection to a retired and a sitting judge of the Ahmedabad High Court (Justice Akbar Divecha and Justice MH Kadri respectively), compelling them to seek army help on the night of February 28th - March 1st. None less than the sitting Chief Justice of Gujarat High Court told his brother judges not to rely on the police.

In the Best Bakery Case in Vadodara policemen from the Panigate

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police station simply drove by the bakery, totally unmindful of the huge mob that had encircled it. Not long after that, 14 persons were burnt alive.

When Vadodara's Commissioner of Police, Shri D.D. Tuteja, was contacted by the concerned citizens and traumatized survivors to protest against the overall failure of the police to respond to complaints, he is said to have remarked, "Aapka naukar kiska kaam karega?" ("Who's work would your servant do?"), implying that the police is subservient to the ruling party in power.

The Panchmahal and Dahod police were party and privy to the burning alive and hacking of villagers. The police posted at Anjanwa, Mora, Pandharwada villages, as also those near Limkheda and Limwada and Fatehpura (Dahod district) did nothing to stop the killings. The Mehsana district police were also guilty of the same misconduct, when they failed to prevent massacres like the ones at Sardarpura, Visnagar and Unjha. Similarly, in Anand and Kheda districts where massacres have taken place, the police presence was of no help.

As if these were not bad enough, the police itself committed atrocities against Muslims, especially in Vadodara (Bahar Colony, Noor Park and other areas) and Ahmedabad (Gomtipur and elsewhere). Even women were beaten and thrashed, often on their breasts and vaginas. In fact, such widespread sexual misbehaviour of the police with Muslim women marks a new low in police misconduct against the minorities.

Police conduct after the Gujarat carnage, with regard to the registration of crimes, conducting investigations etc., has been marked by a desire to please political bosses and an utter disregard for the law of the land. This is nothing but calculated miscarriage of justice. The police are required to file separate FIRs for each incident. Instead, separate incidents of crime committed by different aggressors at different places at different times have been clubbed together in single omnibus FIRs. Panchnamas have either been made 3-4 weeks after the incidents or not at all. Also, if the charge-sheets filed in the Gulbarg (Chamanpura), Naroda Gaon and Patiya massacres are anything to go by, the names of the man accused have been conveniently dropped. Worse still, in places like Pandharwada,

Anjanwara, Mora (Panchmahal district), Randhikapur and Sanjeli, Fatehpur and Dailol (Dahod district) as well as in villages in Bharauich, Sabarkantha, Mehsana and Himmatnagar districts, the Tribunal has evidence of the police bullying victim-survivors into filing FIRs wherein only mobs are mentioned, without naming the assailants and mob leaders whom the victim-survivors had clearly recognized during the incidents of violence.

The Tribunal is certain that the number of lives lost due to deliberate police criminality is astronomically high.

Dullena (Haryana)

Bestial Murders of Dalits

VHP leader Giriraj Kishore enunciated categorically that even in India 2002, for him and his ilk, the life of a cow is more important than the life of a dalit. That it was a dead cow in the specific context, is another matter. His assertion is entirely in accordance with the tenants of Hindutva with its vicious anti-woman, anti-dalit, anti-religious minority, male Aryan race agenda which many hanger-on forces like to believe they won't uphold, as it is not part of the 'NDA Agenda'. Not surprisingly, his assertion brought forth no denial or condemnation from his communal Hindutva family of RSS, Shiv Sena, BJP, right up to the NDA Govt. with its swayamsevak Prime Minister.

As the entire country is now aware, after the aggressive state sponsored Hindu communal attacks on minorities in Gujarat, Agenda Two was played out in Dullena (near Rohtak) in Jhajjar district of Haryana on Dusshera day – 15th October 2002. Subsequent investigations have unravelled the truth about the custodial deaths in police instigated "mob lynching" with either participation of local VHP leaders or their subsequent encashment of it. But the significant fact is that the VHP was and is entirely willing, even anxious, to

have these heinous murders laid at its door, as also to use the occasion to make policy statements.

Brutal Murders

Badshahpur, Akalimpur and Tikuli are 'modernized' villages on the Delhi-Haryana border in Jhajjar district. In these upper caste dominated villages, most families rear cattle. The couple of dalit families here, are licensed by the Haryana Govt. for disposing off dead cattle and for removing their skin for commercial purposes.

On 15th October, Dusshera, a trader from Karnal came to 58 year old Dalchand, resident of one of these villages, asking for animal skin. He dealt with Dalchand and his 31 year old son Dayachand. The deal was struck, half the money involved in the transaction was paid and the other half was to be paid on delivery at Karnal. A dead cow rotting before the house of one Sugreeve Pandit had been supplied to a young dalit, Kailash, by Rashid of Faruqnagar, who deals in animal hides. The animal was placed in a tempo, and Dayachand, Kailash, along with driver Totaram, and Virender and Raju (one of the latter two was the driver's assistant) set off for Karnal with the carcass.

National newspapers on 17th October informed of five dalits' killing a cow being lynched by a 2000 to 5000 strong mob returning from Dusshera festivities. The site was the police post in Dullena near Rohtak, 50 kms from the village of Dayachand. The police were described as being guilty of being mute spectators. The facts eventually unravelled were, however, different and if possible, worse.

Several reporters a Janhastakshep led team from Delhi, and many other sources, have made out the following sequence. There are, apparently, no villages in the near vicinity of the police outpost. The policemen posted there probably stopped the tempo to demand a bribe (that too one adequate for a festive day). The demand either was not or could not be met.

Subsequently the police either instigated the local communal elements to organize a mob or these communal elements got to know of five dalits with a dead cow being in police custody and cooperated with the police in organizing such a mob. The five dalits were

lynched to death in what has been described as a process lasting for four hours. The Janhastakshep team has, however, categorically stated that the killings were not simultaneous but took place one by one. The driver, Totaram, in fact, was first taken to Faruqnagar by the police, probably to verify the source of the dead animal, and killed after being brought back. He was not allowed to talk to anyone at Faruqnagar and Rashid is reportedly now under intense police pressure. The report has also categorically denied the existence of a '2000 strong mob', and pointed out that if local people had participated in the killings, they can be immediately identified from among the nearby villages. If they are not among these villagers, it means they were people specifically brought for the 'act on' from outside – thus a totally organized crime.

Facing an immediate hue and cry from various non-BJP non-NDA political parties (NDA partners did not even condemn these murders, which speaks volumes about the all pervasive hold of casteism), Haryana CM Chautala ordered an enquiry at DSP level on 18th October. The local police immediately registered two cases – one against the five dead for cow slaughter, and one against an 'unknown' mob for the death of the dalits. They also sent the cow's carcass for postmortem, to ascertain whether the dalits killed it or it died naturally! It shows their utter faith that a dubious report or any pointer to the former position could save them despite five murdered human beings.

A 'red alert' was declared in the area on 17th October, following VHP's open warning to the police to not arrest anyone connected with the killings. They need not have worried; alert or none, nobody was even named. Arrests have occurred 'voluntarily' now after an 'agreed' list of names was prepared in consultation with local Hindutva leaders. Chautala has no intentions of upsetting the NDA's or his own applecart. BSP Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, as well as other prominent BSP spokespersons have not taken up the issue beyond cosmetic condemnation and money distribution, the Govt. in UP is under threat, and what are five more dalits, it is the dalit share in state power that must be saved, no matter to whose use that state is put to

Udit Raj is among the dalit leaders to go to the area. To 'punish'

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the Hindu upper castes, he organized mass conversions to Buddhism – Ambedkar's panacea for caste oppression. It was his claim that several of the families of the victims converted thus – anyhow the conversions were not very 'mass'. Within days a Hindu seer was in the area, organizing a press conference to inform that the victims' families had 'denied' converting.

There must be assessment. Is this the solution, to put the traumatized families between these two counter-pressures? Is conversion any solution at all for this social problem, grounded in land denial, and the feudal inequalities of India? It is not enough to pay lip service to Mandal – the Mandal report categorically substantiates that land reforms alone hold the key to abolition of caste oppression in India. It is a clarity the recent dalit conference convened by the Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister tried to evade, by calling for distribution of vacant Govt. lands to dalits.

Meanwhile, besides compensation, the families of the Jhajjar victims should get jobs and protection. Urgently needed is immediate, unequivocal, severe punishment to the guilty policemen, for custodial murders, for casteism, and to the leaders of the killers if any civilians were actually involved, as well as identification and prosecution of any others who participated in the killings.

This last is as important because the Hindutwa forces have now brought in the theory of 'mob actions'. Babri Masjid was razed because the mobs did it, post-Godhra state sponsored, organized Muslim killings is 'anger' of masses of people, and now this too is 'people's sentiments'. In another aspect, the hunting down and beating up of Valentine's Day-celebrating couples in Kanpur by VHP goons was also 'general anger' against those influenced by the imperialist culture which the BJP led NDA Govt. has allowed into the country.

Heinous though it is, violence on dalits is neither new nor inexplicable in India where caste is a major contradiction of society. Indian ruling classes, including political parties like BSP, have no intention of putting through land reforms for land to the tiller, which alone can wipe out the material basis for caste oppression. Rather land reform laws are being reversed in favour of MNCs and contractual farming. All medial, backward antagonisms are being played up with new intensity to distract and divide people. Anyway the past few years of

intensifying economic crisis have seen a significant rise in violence against dalits. Increased assertiveness on the part of the latter is also bringing such cases to light. But this particular Jhajar incident is important because it gives this violence a stated legitimate place as part of an agenda of a particular ideology. This Hindutwa ideology has set itself out anew to cohesify the most reactionary Hindu communal upper caste male chauvinist sections into an election winning machinery on one hand and to serve imperialist exploitation on the other. What it will result in is to increase, bind and to justify all such isolated incidents under this reactionary war cry. Thus it needs special vigilance, special condemnation and widespread mobilization against, by democratic forces.

All the while, instances of anti-dalit violence continue to surface. A dalit woman was stripped and beaten in Amritsar this September consequent to a property dispute. Post Dullena, OBCs beat up dalits in Tamil Nadu (known for its social reform movements) till their families ran to promise that there would be no further 'defiance' from them. In Panipat district of Haryana, on Diwali day, five dalits were beaten up for skinning a dead cow. Police ensured a 'compromise' where the guilty went scot free. It is necessary for democratic organizations and individuals to address this problem which is only being used and aggravated by Hindutwa forces but actually exists as a major contradiction in Indian society.

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New Democracy

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A Report of a Fact Finding Team from Delhi

Lynching of 5 Dalit Youths at Dullena Police Post in Haryana on 15th October, 2002

The ghastly events in Jhajjar on 15th October, 2002 show that not a single policeman has been booked for the murder of 5 dalit youths who had a valid licence from the State to skin any dead animal including cows and sell the skin in the open market. If RSS activists are against skinning of all dead animals, including cows, have they issued any directives to their cadre to not wear any footwear made from animal skin?

A fact finding team from Delhi went to Gurgaon and Jhajjar on 20th and 22nd October, 2002 to find out the truth about such cold blooded murder committed within the premises of Dullena police post under Jhajjar police station. The following was the sequence of events on 15th October, Dussera evening. When Sri Atal Behari Vajpayee, at Ram Lila Ground in Delhi, was enjoying the burning of Ravana and his family members with the light and sound of pollution spreading crackers, at that time within some few km adjacent to the boundary of Delhi, 5 Dalit youths were burnt alive for no fault of their own. Are we living in a civilized society?

As narrated by the public and by relations of the murdered persons:

The killed persons Birender and Dayachand were relations and residents of Badshahpur and had licence to skin dead animals and to sell their skin. Totaram belonged to village Aklimpur and was driving a Tata 407, number HR 26 D 9030 in which the processed skin was being carried. Raju was a cleaner and lived in Tikri village. All these four persons belonged to Gurgaon district of Haryana. In that vehicle there was another person called Kaish of Karnal in Haryana and he was an authorised dealer in processed skin. On Tuesday the 15th October, around 3 o'clock in the evening, these 5 persons started from Badshapur for Karnal with animal skin on Tata 407 as on the next day i.e. Wednesday, a large number of traders of animal skin from various parts of the state come to Karnal regularly to trade in

skin.

When the vehicle reached Faruqnagar, Rashid, the authorised skinner of dead animals of that area collected an unclaimed dead cow from the road and sold it to Kailash for Rs 200 as he was not allowed to skin the cow at the authorised place at Faruqnagar due to Dusserah festival and the local BDO was not available it being a holiday. They loaded the dead cow in the same vehicle and left for Karnal.

At around 7.30-8 p.m. the same Tata 407 came back with Totaram as driver and with constable Hoshiar Singh of Dullena police post. Local people led the constable to the place where the dead cow had been lying unclaimed and all the people present there clearly told the constable that it was nothing but a dead cow and was sold by Rashid, the authorised person. They saw Totaram at the driver's seat and his face was swollen, indicating that he was beaten up before he was brought back to Faruqnagar. He was ordered not to talk to the people present there. These people also told us on 22nd October, that constable Hoshiar Singh was sent there on the consecutive three days to tell them that they should not say to anyone that the cow was dead, otherwise they would have to face the consequences. When we asked them the whereabouts of Rashid, they could not say where he was; being afraid of his life he must have gone underground.

When the fact finding team met the relations of the murdered families on 20th October, they showed us the photos of the dead bodies which clearly showed that the living human beings were first tortured like animals, then their bodies were cut to pieces, some bodies were even burnt at several places and the eyes were taken out. Relations of Totaram, the driver, who was ordered to go to Faruqnagar with constable Hosihar Singh of Dullena police post, could identify him only from his clothing because his head and limbs were separated from the body, eyes were taken out and so on. Totaram's brother and a neighbour who went to take the dead body from Jhajjar were informed that he was the last person to be killed and it happened around 10 p.m. at night when the entire police establishment of Haryana was present at the police post Dullena and he was brought back by the Haryana police to be killed in most inhuman manner. Relations of the dead persons told us that the team was carrying

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around Rs 70,000 in cash as they do in every trip so that they can carry on some trade in skin and this was known to the police as they passed that way every week. Police had returned the dead bodies, but not that cash etc. Police FIR says that 5 unknown persons were lynched by a mob. How was it that their families were contacted after the killings, to dispose of the dead bodies? Some neighbours of Totaram told us that one driver called Rajender saw a crowd of 10-15 persons in front of Dullena police post and the police had thrashed three persons and a dead cow was lying in front. Tailor master Vijay, while returning from Jhajjar to Faruqnagar around 6 P.M. on public transport, saw the same situation in front of the police post.

What the law and order machinery had to say:

When we reached the Dullena police post located around 8 km from Jhajjar town; there was hardly any settlement nearby except one or two families living around half a km away. There were some industrial establishments in the neighbourhood but on the 15th, it being a holiday, no one was there. We enquired for the police post incharge, SI Dharam Vir, but he was not available. So that well known face who accompanied Totaram that day and threatened Faruqnagar people for consecutive three days, constable Hoshiar Singh, faced us and tried to explain that day's events. By that time a large police force landed at the police post and DIG Marwah of SC/ST commission came out of car number DL8CG 4927. When he was told that SI Dharam Vir was not there, Hoshiar Singh refused to answer his next question as to since when he had stopped coming to the police post. So actually, after 15th, SI Dharam Vir was kept out of bounds for public. There are three rooms in the police post complex and we were informed that 5 dalits reached there around 6 P.M. and Kailash was kept in one room and the other 4 in another room. Rumour was that though these people regularly pay their 'hafta' to the police post, that day the demand was fabulous as they were carrying a dead cow and they refused to pay more extortion money. FIR no. 451372 of 15th October 2002 was prepared at Jhajjar police station at around 10 15 P.M. and it claims that the incident occurred at around 8 30 P.M. It does not mention the names and addresses of the victims, though they were in police custody since 6 P.M. on 15th October, 2002. In one room we noticed patches of blood both on the walls and

on the floor. This is on the eighth day, though every effort was made to clean the room after 15th incident. No one was allowed to take photographs of that room. When we asked the officer of SC/ST commission, after his enquiry was over, about his observations, he refused to comment. We also requested DSP Narender Singh who was accompanying SC/ST Commission representative, about that day's incident. He told us that around 8 30 P.M., on receiving the call, he started from his office for Jhajjar with some police force and found that some thousands of people had surrounded the police post. He also said that city magistrate, Rajpal Singh, BDO, Sajjan Pal, Nayab Tehelsidar, Shyam Lal Bari were all present with the large police force. Neither firing in the air nor tear gas was used to save five lives that, according to DSP and the FIR, were lodged in one room. The FIR says the mob overpowered the state power and lynched the 5 dalit youths in the presence of Haryana police. Why no criminal and killer was arrested till 22nd? DSP's answer was that police have identified the criminals and action would be taken very soon! Why SP, Mohammed Akil, being young and dynamic officer, did not visit the site even once? DSP naturally refused to comment. People said in anger that he being from the minority community refused to face an angry crowd mainly belonging to RSS and the latter assembled there with all types of weapons to take revenge on the killers of their 'Go Mata' or mother cow. DSP also said that another FIR was lodged against those 5 Dalits for killing the live cow on the complaint of some people but he refused to give us a copy of that FIR in which the names of those people would be mentioned. Thus police is working on the instructions of these anti-social Hindutva forces and it is completely biased.

The police story, that there was a huge crowd and the police was helpless, appears fully incorrect because on the 8th day, when we were within the boundary of the police post, we found all the tender flower plants in front of the rooms blooming with beautiful flowers and not a single plant was trampled on by anyone. There was a huge quantity of bricks meticulously stacked near the building and it appeared that no one had touched those bricks in the recent past. On the road side there was some thatched cover and it was burnt, black ashes were still there as witness. The place where the cow was slaughtered, as claimed by the police, in drain no. 8 within a distance of one-fourth kilo-metres from police post, was checked by the team.

but there was no visible evidence that any animal was cut there during the last 7-8 days.

State politics

The well known crooked Chief Minister of Haryana refused to go and see the carnage site on 15th or 16th morning. He was touring Jhajjar on 22nd when the team from Delhi visited. He was laying foundation stones for various projects but landed at Badshahpur on 24th morning meeting relatives of the 'killed' persons and had a press conference in Delhi in the evening. He ordered Commissioner level enquiry into the incident, knowing fully well that it was a case of allowing trained 'killers' to murder people in police custody. RSS and its front organisations are running a *gurukul* type organisation in Jhajjar and one of its leaders reached the spot on 15th with 20-25 followers fully equipped with murderous weapons. Police knows each one of them and that day there was a sports meet in the *gurukul* and VHP and Bajrang Dal activists were present in large number. The criminals had called a Jhajjar bandh on 16th and threatened the police to not arrest any one found guilty of killing those 5 dalits and police obliged them shamelessly. Ms Sonia Gandhi, opposition leader in the Parliament and Congress President was present at Badshahpur on 20th with a contingent of high congress stalwarts and gave some charity to the hapless people but refused to instruct her party cadre to see to it that no dalit or any person from minority community is killed afterwards in any part of the country. BJP being a party to this inhuman act had no face to meet any dalit in Haryana.

Our demands:

1. A high level enquiry by a sitting judge of Supreme Court should be held and this mockery of enquiry by a bureaucrat should be stopped. To carry on any impartial enquiry there should be immediate suspension of the police officials on duty that day.

2. Next of kin should be adequately compensated and one member from each affected family should be given a job in the Govt.

3. The Chief Minister is under oath to protect life and property of each citizen of his state and on his failure in discharging his duty, he should be asked to tender unqualified public apology to the people

of Haryana.

4. Non-Hindutya forces should mobilise and educate people and isolate these stinking and violent communal criminals.

[Report released by Janhastakshep]

Panipat (Haryana)

Convention Against Increasing Caste Oppression

325 people gathered at the Ambedkar Dharamshala near SD College in Panipat (Haryana) on 29th December 2002, for a Convention against increasing caste oppression organized by CPI (ML)-New Democracy. The audience was drawn from Punjab, Delhi and a large section from Panipat town and surrounding villages of the district. This was the first open meeting on this issue in this district after the Jhajjar incident on Dusshera day and the subsequent incident of beating up of two dalit youths who were skinning a dead calf on Diwali day, in this district itself.

The Convention was conducted by Com. P.P. Kapoor, Secretary of the Panipat District Committee of the Party. Introducing the topic, he related the main aspects of the Jhajjar incident and highlighted caste oppression as a feature of Indian society. The first speaker was Ram Kumar Bajaj (District President of Dalit Sena), who in his brief speech stressed that the poor and deprived should get full rights. Com. Kulwinder (CPI (ML) - New Democracy speaker from Punjab) briefly described various fighters against casteism and pointed out that despite all reformists, caste oppression remains a reality. The crux is who has control over the means of production. The issue of feudalism itself was not even discussed at the Dalit Sammelan organized in Bhopal. The question of land distribution was raised by the struggles of Telangana and Tebhaga where among dalits too, so

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many leaders came to the fore in struggle. He criticized the Hindutva Govt. and the 'New' Economic Policies, which were bringing down the economic status of dalits, removing hospitals and education even further from them by privatization. He said Dullena was a very big incident, which should have been the issue of struggle and discussion by the whole country, but those who have a monopoly of Dalit politics betrayed their supporters. He again reminded the audience that the question of caste oppression can not be fought without touching the core issues of land and egalitarian society.

Pran Ratnagar of the Dalit Nyay Andloan congratulated the Party for this 'historic' meeting. He explained the issues of reservations and pointed out that only upper caste Hindus attacked the Mandal recommendations in the name of being 'deprived' while minorities did not. He asserted that the minorities and the dalits and poor will ensure that India remains secular and will not allow Togadia's dream of a Hindu Rashtra to come true. Shri Batla of Rashtriya Garib Dal asserted the importance of struggle in his brief but topical speech.

Com. Ashish M'ttal (Secretary, UP State Committee of CPI(ML) - New Democracy) pointed out that Hinduism is the only religion within which there is birth based categorization. Focusing on the experience of BSP rule in UP, he said it must be assessed if Dalit Govt. means liberation for Dalit masses, and asserted that such a liberation is not possible without changing the system.

He gave several examples of violence on dalits under Mayawati Govt. and said she had helped landlords by decreeing that no cases would be booked under Harijan Act except in rapes and murders. Complaints of dalits are not recorded at police stations in UP. They have no better political rights than in other parts of the country.

When Mayawati was striving for power, she raised the issue of govt. land being dalit land and emphasized education, unity and struggle. Dalits responded, because she was well aware these were their needs. But now that BSP is in power it has forgotten the land question and only emphasizes on attaining state power. The BSP programme specifically attacks communism saying some people believe it is the answer but it will not succeed in the country of 'manuwad'. He emphasized the need for land struggle and for general struggles including against caste oppression.

Shri Fakir Chand Lahore, a BJP member who resigned from that Party due to its stand on Dullena spoke about his experiences. Shri Anil Chamadiya (Janhastakshep member and Journalist) gave powerful expression to the complexities of the question. He spoke of the Dravid struggle of Tamil Nadu and said after 50 years the result is that dalits still can not wear chappals in some parts and now conversions are banned. The sole Hindu Rashtra in Nepal is the poorest country in the world, dalits still do not sit on beds and dalit Nepali women are forced into prostitution. This is the face of the 'Ram Raj' of Hinduism. He pointed out that if we fail to understand the importance of Dullena we will miss the essence of fascism – that the death of a cow was created where only a dead cow existed and 5 people in police custody were handed over to the public for lynching. The central Govt.'s enquiry team implicates only the police and the state Govt.'s team absolves it. Only one officer has been transferred for that incident and the truth about the 'arrests of the guilty' will soon be clear. He said the biggest section of dalits was the landless and agricultural labour and those who advocate reservations to end caste oppression never speak about the peasantry. The economic basis of caste oppression must be discussed, but when it is discussed dalit leaders say they 'smell communism'. We must remember that a dalit representative is not necessarily the spokesperson of dalits. We must know that the maximum number of dalits who died in struggles were communists, the maximum people who died in struggles for dalits were communists and the maximum struggles for dalits have been waged by communists.

Local dalit leader Ravinder Punia spoke emotionally about the Panipat situation and asserted that today's battle was between the rich and poor. Other important speakers were Dharmpal, Secretary of Dalit Sahitya Academy and Shri Nagra, ex-MP, from Lok Samaj Party who described his own experiences in Jhajjar after the lynching. Shri Jaspal Singh Siddhu (Janhastakshep member and journalist with UNI) criticized the bogey of terrorism under which all movements were being crushed by Hindutva forces.

The last speaker was Com. Aparna (Secretary Delhi Committee of the Party). She stressed the importance of Jhajjar incident in aiding us to outline the entire Hindutva ideology with its anti-woman, anti-minority, anti-dalit and anti-democratic content. She also showed

how the imperialists were abetting these Hindutva forces that were dividing and attacking the people while pushing through an imperialist agenda. Hence there was need for solidarity of struggles of all sections against these fascist forces.

She pointed to the need to explain the content of the so-called 'Dalit Samaj' – that over three-fourth of it was the landless and poor peasantry of India and the working class in the cities. For them the central question was of land and the struggle against feudalism. The Mandal Commission's first recommendation on land distribution and land reforms as central to ending dalit exploitation is never mentioned by any forces other than communist revolutionaries. It was Telangana and Naxalbari that put the question of land on agenda and these struggles empowered the dalits and girijans. Land reform laws were pushed on agenda only due to these and yet only 1.2% of cultivable land has been distributed.

She also pointed out that the Indian Constitution upheld the right of private property, and the reservation it speaks of was earlier being implemented by the British. While struggling against caste oppression, while demanding arrests of the guilty of Jhajar and opposing caste exploitation, it is the revolutionary peasant movement led by CPI(ML) which can ensure land, and a new society – both of which are prerequisites to end caste oppression.

The venue and the route were decked up with red flags and party banners as well as several posters. All participants left the venue enthused and also educated by the various aspects touched upon by the speakers.

Oppose Conspiracies for US Attack on Iraq

American imperialist rulers are itching to attack Iraq. This is the next phase in America's 'war against terrorism'. By attacking Afghanistan and installing the Karzai Govt. after removing the Taliban Govt., America has already made clear the aim of its anti-terror war. Under the flagship of this 'war' America wants to establish its military bases in every corner of the world and to impose regimes of its choice on third world countries which do not dance to its tune.

The real aim of American conspiracies to attack Iraq is to gain control of this oil rich country. Iraq stands second only to Saudi Arabia in having the biggest sources of oil. Not only that, the cost of oil extraction in Iraq is the cheapest in the world as the oil is not very deep down. The conspiracy to attack Iraq is part of the attempt to establish US control over energy resources in the world.

Baseless allegations

In order to attack Iraq, the American rulers are fabricating tales. Destruction of Iraq's 'weapons of mass destruction' i.e., atomic, chemical and biological weapons, is the excuse being given to legitimize an attack. Those powers who have a treasure-house of atomic, biological and chemical weapons do not have the moral right to raise this allegation, but in the international policy of imperialism, strength is the sole parameter of morality. On its strength, American rulers are indulging in baseless propaganda against Iraq.

US rulers are not only crushing underfoot Iraq's right to keep weapons it needs for its own self-defence, the fact is their allegations against Iraq are baseless. The "Weapons Inspection Committee" of the United Nations searched the whole of Iraq for many years, but could find no clue of any atomic, chemical or biological weapons. The then President of the inspection committee had himself certified that there was no possibility of Iraq having weapons of such nature. Then on what basis are American rulers levelling these allegations? Even otherwise, in the past decade, America and UK have repeatedly bombed Iraq and spread devastation and have clamped inhuman trade restrictions against Iraq.

The American rulers are also propagating that Iraq is a threat to

its neighbouring countries. For a time span longer than the last decade, leave alone any act of aggression, Iraq has not even uttered any threat against its neighbours. Few decades earlier, the Iran Iraq war had lasted for eight years and America itself had kept extending support to Iraq in that war. The condemnation by all of Iraq's neighbours of American preparations for an attack on that country itself establishes the baselessness of American propaganda.

Another aspect of the American propaganda campaign is that the Iraqi people must be 'freed' from the rule of Saddam Hussian. This is itself an example of the 'power politics' of the imperialist superpower, that it arrogates to itself the right to decide who will rule and what kind of rule there will be in any given country. The people of Iraq are with Saddam Hussain and the Govt. of Iraq because both are fighting against the conspiracies of US imperialism to capture Iraq. While America wants to remove Saddam Hussain, the representative of the Iraqi people, on the other hand world over there are military dictators hated by the people of their own country, but who are dear to American rulers. Let us look among our own neighbours – the military ruler of Pakistan, Parvez Musharaff, is their 'confidante'; America is supporting King Gyanendra of Nepal. This is the real face of their 'democracy' and 'human rights'. Whoever opposes the designs of US imperialism is a dictator and a terrorist and whoever prostrates before America is a democrat and an anti-terrorist.

Wide-spread opposition to American Preparations for Attack

Not only third world countries but even other imperialist countries are the target of American conspiracies to attack Iraq. That is why America's war campaign is facing widespread opposition in third world as well as in imperialist countries.

People's resentment against America's belligerent stance is widespread in third world countries especially in the Arab countries. Iraq's neighbours – including Saudi Arabia, till recently a reliable ally of America – have severely criticized America's war attempts and have refused to allow their own territories to be used for an attack on Iraq. Another neighbour, Iran, (which is part of the 'axis of evil' identified by America) has also severely criticized America.

American war designs have been openly opposed by other impe-

ria ist countries, especia y France and Russia. In the past years trade relations have been developed by France and Russia with Iraq and many long term trade agreements have been made. Germany and also other European countries have also opposed American policy. Massive demonstrations have been held in various cities of Europe against the threatened attack on Iraq. More than 1.5 lakh people participated in an anti war March in London. Many members of Parliament as well as ranks of the ruling Labour Party in Britain are opposing this impending war. The number of participants in an anti-war demonstration in Florence c . . . taly ran into a few lakhs. Anti-war marches have taken place in virtually all major cities of Europe.

Many massive anti-war demonstrations, where participation was up to twenty to fifty thousand people, have taken place in America itself. People in New York, San Francisco and other major cities have held demonstrations against war on Iraq. There is agreement among the leaders of America s two main ruling parties Republican and Democrats – but a big section of American people are opposed to this war.

Despite init ally stoutly opposing the option, the worldwide oppo- sition to its belligerent schemes finally forced the American Govt. to go to the UN Security Council. There, France, Russ a, China and other members opposed the Anglo American proposal. This proposal gave America the r ght to attack Iraq. The proposal remained stuck for many weeks. Later the Security Council passed a resolution for investigation of 'weapon of mass destruction in Iraq. This has many vague provisions. The resolution passed by the Security Council is openly violative of Iraq's sovereignty and reflects the current status of inter-imperialist contradictions – that is, that their contradictions do not develop to military confrontations. China, w h calls itself socialist, has also supported the Resolution. Where s other impe- rialist forces are not capable in stopping America, there they try to ensure their share in spheres of influence and in loot and plunder of third world by becoming parties to the attack.

Oppose American conspiracies for Attack

While worldwide opposition has weakened American conspira- cies, the clouds of war continue to threaten Iraq. This time America

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aims to remove the Iraqi Govt by its attack, which means a large scale ground war entailing the probability of casualties in large numbers. The power of Iraq's weapons is nothing compared to America's military strength, but the people of Iraq are ready for every sacrifice to defend their country's sovereignty against American attack. Secondly, American rulers will face opposition at home if the number of American casualties are high. Where the American rulers have a treasury of weapons there Iraq has the organization and mobilization of its people. This war, which is being launched by the American rulers, is totally unjust, inhuman, and expansionist while the war that Iraq fights against the American attack will be human, just, and necessary.

Not only are the Govt and people of Iraq fighting for their independence and sovereignty, their fight is an integral and important part of the struggle of the world people against US hegemonism. Indisputably the people of Iraq will have to face widespread devastation and give immense sacrifices in this war. Their sacrifices will not be for Iraq's independence alone; rather their sacrifices will be in the interest of the people of the third world and of the justice loving and peace loving people in all countries of the world.

It is in the interests of the people of India to oppose America's attack and to support the Iraqi Govt. and people. The grip of imperialist companies on the country is tightening. The numerical strength of American military personnel and military advisors in our neighbouring countries is increasing. In the name of 'joint exercises', the pro-imperialist Govt. of our country has allowed the entry of American military and navy onto India's land and seas. South Asia is a major target of American military domination. It is necessary and in national interest to stop America's aggressive campaign. We must extend every possible support to the Iraqi people who today are standing against this campaign. Every patriotic Indian must speak out against this war. Only those can rejoice in this war who are itching to lick America's boots, to whom the freedom of the country neither counts now nor counted earlier. Today it is such forces who are heading the Govt. in India. The people of India will also have to oppose betrayal of the country and the conspiracies of these American stooges.

Peasants' Struggles in Punjab

Agriculture in Punjab, once projected a model of "Green Revolution", is now under severe crisis. With the implementation of policies of globalization and WTO, this crisis is getting more accentuated. In order to face the challenge of this situation, AIKMS (Kirti Kisan Union) took initiative to unite the peasant organizations on a single platform. A joint platform consisting of five peasant organizations – Kirti Kisan Union, Kisan Sabhas of CPI and CPIM, BKU (Ekta) and Punjab Kisan Union – came into existence and had led important struggles in the past two years. This process got interrupted due to the last assembly election. During the intervening period, BKU (Ekta) and CPM's Kisan Sabha met with splits. AIKMS (KKU) once again tried to unite all the organizations on one platform. But the Kisan Sabha aligned to the official group of CPM and a section of BKU (Ekta) took a sectarian attitude and refused to join hands for building a single joint platform. However, ultimately these consistent efforts of KKU fructified and a platform of seven peasant organizations came into existence. Seven organizations are leading a militant peasant struggle in the state.

State Level Rally On Drought

This year, in the whole country agriculture was badly hit by drought. This added to the difficulties and hardships of the already economically-hit peasantry of this century. The ruling classes' Govts. at the Centre and in the states put the entire responsibility on bad and erratic monsoon. But all the well aware people know that monsoon has always been erratic. Drought, like flood, is no more considered a natural calamity, but a man-made calamity. This fact is proved as the drought is hitting those states, like Punjab and western UP, where extensive irrigation facilities, both canals and tubewells, already exist.

To agitate and get relief for the peasantry, five peasant organisations – AIKMS (KKU), BKU (Ekta - Ugrahan Group), Jamhoori Kisan Sabha, Punjab, All India Kirti Kisan Sabha, Kisan Vikas Front – held a joint meeting at Ludhiana on 8th August, and formulated a Demand Charter containing 22 demands, including demands concerning drought-relief and Punjab State Electricity Board

(PSEB).

Basing themselves on past experience, the peasant organisations also formulated certain work ng and organizational guidelines, dec ded to publ sh a leaflet in thousands to widely publicize the demands and also appealed to peasant organizations st ll working outside the joint framework of the five peasant organizations. For launching the struggle, a state level joint peasant ra ly was decided to be held at Ludhiana on 2nd September. Thousands of peasants participated in this rally Speaker after speaker strongly criticized the anti-peasant policies of Central and State Govt. and warned the Congress Govt. in Punjab that if electricity bills on irrigation pump sets were reimposed it would be strongly resisted. They demanded that Punjab be declared a drought-hit state, a relief of Rs. 12,000 per acre be given where no crops have been sown, Rs. 15 000 per acre be granted where dried up crops had to be ploughed, Rs. 5,000 per acre be given as compensation for add t onal expend tures incurred due to additional diesel-burning, Rs. 2,400 per month be given per agricultural labourer family as job-loss relief, and Rs. 1,000 per cattle per month t ll drought conditions are over, cattle fodder subsidised depots be opened in villages for agricultural labourer families, uninterrupted power supply in a day be given for agricultural sector, Rs. 5 lakh be given as compensation in cases where death occurred while deepening the bore for electric motors or during agricultural operat ons like threshing etc., and in cases of suicide due to indebtedness etc. This ra y and demonstration was led by a Presidium composed of provincial Presidents of the five organizations.

Effigy Burning, Demonstrations at District Headquarters

After 2nd September action, peasant organizat ons decided to hold Govt 's eff'gy burning and demonstrations at all the district head quarters on 16th September. These demonstrations were held at Ludhiana, Moga, Gurdaspur, Amritsar, Jalandhar, Nawashahar, Sangrur, Kapurthala, Ferozpur, Faridkot, Mukatsar Bhathinda, Mansa, Patiala and Ropar, in which even common peasants a so participated in good numbers. These rallies and demonstrations were led and addressed by the state level and district level leaders of these five organizations.

State Electricity Regulatory Authority decided to reimpose the

electricity tariff on tubewells of farmers and sent this proposal to the State Govt. To protest against this these five organizations decided to stage a dharna in front of PSEB at Patiala, the home town of Punjab CM, and impress upon the Central Govt. to decide the minimum support price for paddy and other demands. This dharna continued for three days. Meanwhile, BKU (Ekta - Pishaura Singh Group) conducted a week-long dharna at Chandigarh with formal support of both the Kisan Sabhas. Five organizations, especially KKU leadership, made repeated appeals to form a common platform to continue the joint struggle which were positively responded to ultimately. BKU (Ekta - PS) and Punjab Kisan Sabha belonging to CPI, agreed to join the five organizations. Thus a seven organizations forum materialized.

Struggle for Minimum Support Price of Paddy

Though arrival of paddy in market started from 15th September, the Central Govt. did not declare the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for paddy and the Govt. agencies did not start purchase of paddy. After the effigy burning demonstration, the Govt. declared that the last year's MSP will continue. But five peasant organizations rejected this declaration and decided to block rail traffic for demanding increase in MSP of paddy. The peasant organizations decided to block rail traffic on 30th September throughout the state. This rail roko action was successfully implemented between 11 A.M. to 2 P.M. at various places including Phailaur, Amritsar, Dhillwan, Ajitwal, Sahnewal, Gurdaspur and Dagro (Moga). As a result of this consistent agitation the Govt. was forced to increase the MSP of paddy by Rs. 20 per quintal.

The seven peasant organizations met on 3rd October, and decided to hold demonstrations at district level and gherao the district DC offices there. On 14th October, DC offices were gheraoed and demonstrations were held at district headquarters throughout the state. These gheraos were made at Amritsar, Gurdaspur, Kapurthala, Jalandhar, Nawashahar, Ludhiana, Moga, Sangrur, Mukatsar and at other places. The peasants who gheraoed the DC office at Gurdaspur were lathi-charged, where many protesters were injured. But the brave peasants held their positions well. These rallies and gheraos were led and addressed by the major leaders of these organizations.

Acting on the recommendations of the State Electricity Regulatory

Authority, Punjab Govt decided to reimpose electricity tariff on farmers. Opposing this, seven peasant organizations gave a call for Punjab Bandh for 29th October. It was decided to close all institutions till 12 noon and to block rail and road traffic between 12 noon and 2 P.M. Barring Congress, Akali Dal (B) and CPM, all other political parties lent support to the Bandh.

While implementing the call, the seven organizations blocked rail and road traffic at Gurdaspur, Amritsar, Kapurthala, Jalandhar, Nawashahar, Moga, Ludhiana, Sangrur, Mukatsar, Jagraon, Ajitwal, Chajali, Rampura-Phul etc. While Congress and Akali Dal (B) are shedding crocodile tears for the hard-pressed peasants due to their narrow political interests, the seven organizations' joint platform is rekindling new hopes in the peasants' thinking.

Punjab Students Union Marches Ahead

Punjab Students Union (PSU) gave a two-days effigy burning call on 8 and 9 October throughout Punjab against the Punjab Govt.'s attitude and against privatization, commercialization and saffronization of education and for other students' demands pending since long. These demands include the restoration of student bus-passes in the kilometre-scheme buses, 95% grant to the aided colleges to stop shift-system in Govt. Industrial Training Institutions (ITIs), to fill up vacant posts in educational institutions, etc.

According to the reports, the effigy burning actions were held at Nawashahar Patiala, Punjabi University Campus at Patiala, Rajpura, Devigarh, Nabha, Pattern all in district Patiala, Sauaur, Bardwal, Malerkotla, Mastuana all in district Sangrur, Ferozpur, Pojewal (Nawashahar District), Ludhiana Mulanpur etc.

These protest actions and rallies held on thus occasions were led and addressed by PSU Provincial President Mr. Rawinder Singh, PSU General Secretary Mr. Kulwinder Singh Chahal, Provincial Committee members Mr. Biral Bala, Mr. Gurmukh Singh Mann, Mr. Rajbir Singh, Mr. Dharminder Singh, Mr. Firoze Khan, Mr. Sashi Batsen and others.

A state level Rally by PMU at Jalandhar

A state rally and public meeting was held by Pendu Mazdoor Union (Rural Labourers Union-PMU) at Desh Bhagat Yadgar Hall, Jalandhar on 2nd December 2002. Thousands of agricultural workers from all over the state attended. The public meeting was held in the open ground near the Hall. This rally was held to remind the Punjab Chief Minister, Capt. Amrinder Singh, of the promises he made during the assembly election.

Addressing the rally, leaders of PMU explained that during the last 55 years since the demise of British rule, agricultural workers are condemned to live in abysmal conditions. Social and economic equality, progress and prosperity still remain dreams for them. Many of them are facing conditions resembling bonded labour. They continue to face social oppression. Social boycott in village Punia (Patiala) and Todarwal (Kapurthala) are telling examples of it. In the rally, there were people from Amritsar district whose houses had been locked by the landlord because, despite the whole family working for the landlord, they remain indebted to him. Administration is also helping these feudal elements.

Comrades explained that with the 'New' Economic Policies dictated by imperialism and WTO education, health and other public services has gone out of reach of the agricultural labourers. Ruling classes, in order to divert the people from the path of struggle, are resorting to communal frenzy as in Gujarat. In a separate resolution, Repression against dalits in Dullena in Haryana was also condemned. The rally was addressed by Com. Gurdev Singh (PMU President), Avtar Singh Dhaliwal (PMU General Secretary), Tarsem Peter (PMU Secretary) and other leaders of PMU.

Later demonstrators marched through the streets of Jalandhar and submitted a memorandum to the state Govt. Demands in the memorandum included guarantee of work throughout the year and unemployment allowance based on minimum wage linked to price index, free domestic electricity supply, remission of loans, dwelling plots of 5 marlas, old-age, widow and handicapped pens on equal to minimum wage, abolition of *siri* system, provision for special loans and stoppage of oppression and repression against dalits etc.

Labourers harassed to get housing land vacated

The incidents of atrocities on the labourers who are occupying the shamlat and lal lakeer land have been increasing by the day in the villages of Doaba and surroundings areas. With the real estate prices in rural areas on the upswing, the shamlat land on which these labourers have set up jhuggies and cowsheds etc. is inviting the ire of the well-off who want to grab such land. Shamlat and red line land do not belong to any individual but various government agencies can use these as per their need. Otherwise, such land remain unoccupied. But in most of the rural areas, the landless people have set up their dwellings of such lands.

Ten such cases of atrocities on the dalits have been reported from Jalandhar and surrounding areas during the last four to six months. They have sought the help of the Pendu Mazdoor Union which is planning to organise a statewide protest on the issue.

In Jalandhar district, Parjyan, Maheru, Adramann, Kangniwal, Bhikhanagal, Puniya, Todarwal, Sangowal, Talwan and Saiflabad are the villages where such incidents have occurred in the recent past. In these villages, the landless were removed from the shamlat land on more than one occasion. Reports in this regard have also appeared in the media.

Tarsem Peter, the general secretary of Pendu Mazdoor Union, explained that rising real estate prices in the rural areas was attracting the attention of the village elites. Tarsem Peter alleged that the police in fact was hand-in-glove with the unscrupulous elements who wanted to grab the land. He said that the administration should take action under Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes Atrocities Act, 1989.

According to a report, in Talwan village, the landlords allegedly even tried to arm-twist the labourers who refused to go away by denying them any work in the fields owned by them. One of the complaints registered with the police had alleged that graveyard used by dalits in Sanghowal village had been vandalised after the appreciation of value of the land in the area.

Rohtas (Bihar)

Killing of Com. Devmuni Ram by Armed Squad of Liberation

The sound of gunfire resounded in village Kharhana of Kargahar block at around 3 pm on 13th October 2002. It was the armed squad of Liberation along with armed rural landlords trying to kill the AIKMS village leader Comrade Santan Ram. Members of CPI (ML) - New Democracy and of AIKMS quickly assembled to retaliate under the leadership of Com. Devmuni Ram and to chase the aggressors out of the Dalit Mohalla. The Liberation attackers were led by landlords Vipin Patel and Virender Yadav. Around an hour and a half later, the attackers were chased away but while going they targeted Com. Devmuni with rifles and killed him. Earlier Liberation had declared intent to kill both Com. Devmuni and Com. Santan Ram.

Hearing about the murder, thousands of people from nearby villages collected at Kharhana by morning despite pouring rain. However police of O.P Sidi had taken the body to hospital the night before. It was later handed over to the Party and the last rites were held on the banks of the river Sone.

Liberation has been active from the very beginning to stem the growing mass base and movement of CPI(ML)-New Democracy in Kaimur Tarai and Rohtas. When party began anti-feudal struggle in Nokha block in 1985-86, then Liberation, working as IPF, tried to misguide the people and also tried to influence people in various villages, but the masses did not respond. At that time, working in the name of IPF, Liberation tried to make landlords sit along with landless and poor peasantry, calling the landlords 'farmers'. Leaving Mao Zedong Thought and implementing Deng Xio Ping's revisionist line they began applying bourgeois parliamentarianism and began distorting the slogan of 'land to the tiller'. Due to the intensity of the land struggle under our leadership in this area, class lines were clearly drawn and hence Liberation could not succeed here. Rather many of its activists joined ruling class parties.

In 1995, party intensified struggle for distribution of surplus land

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of Murlipur Math in Kaimur Taluka. Liberation incited the local landlords, the Mahant of the Math and local anti-socials against us. It organized some lumpens of Murlipur and over night seated a new Mahant, thus trying to put the surplus lands' ownership into dispute. However this attempt failed as people of the area gathered and handed over the false Mahant to the police, chasing away his armed lumpen backers. Liberation also made unsuccessful attempts to defeat the land struggles in Lehri and Arang.

Liberation and CPI also had a hand in preparing the prelude to the tragedy at Panapur on 31st December 1999. Our cadres had failed to recognize this in time. It was later found that people of Ravidas caste were being instigated by Liberation and those of Paswan caste by CPI. CPI leader Rajvansh Paswan, who planned the paddy loot of 26th December, joined Liberation and again tried to confuse the Paswans in the area. Liberation is now quite perturbed by our success in sorting out the issue and the resumption of land struggle under our leadership in that area.

Liberation suffered a setback when in 2001 our party started struggle for the land appropriated by Dayal farm and the family of absentee landlord Dayal. Liberation had started struggle for distribution of 302 acres of land of this landlord in 1982. It organized 8-10 villages. But Dayal sold this land to local landlords who in turn approached IPF, promising to give them some land. Betraying hundreds of landless, the IPF Liberation leaders reached a settlement with the Dayal family, in which IPF leader Surender Singh played a prominent role. Many senior bureaucrats also bought land in the name of their families. Some unproductive land was given to some landless under direction from IPF-Liberation, and they frightened the rest into silence.

In this area Khushwaha caste is in majority and dalits and other backward castes rank second in number. When this struggle began one section of Kushwahas joined IPF; those who bought land were also small landlords of this caste. Thus not only did Liberation leaders get free land here but also a base for their electoral politics among the Kushwaha landlords.

Four years after this betrayal in 1995 many important activists of the Dehri Anchal Committee of Liberation (including a Dist Commit-

tee Member) and some peasant leaders left Liberation and agreed with our ideological and political line. We launched a struggle for distribution of Dayal Farms surplus lands. People of Batoranpur, Jainagar, Govardhanpur, Supabegaha, Lalkiahri, Bishnubigha, Chapainpur, Chandi etc. villages again joined the struggle. The villagers quickly forgot their terror of Liberation. A section of the landless of Kushwaha caste also joined us. The situation is that today Liberation is the leader of the landlords and lumpens of the area whereas we lead the landless and poor peasantry. Around 150 acres of land has been freed from the clutches of landlords who are supporters of Liberation. Last year, two anti-socials and one landlord—all criminals—were killed at the hands of the people. After this incident, Liberation tried to glorify these elements.

Seeing the landless uniting in large numbers under our leadership for the demand of distributing Dayal farm lands, Liberation started contacting the landlords of the area. Last year they tried to solve the issue of occupation by landless of 22 acres surplus land of Bihar Govt in Nuao village of Chenari block by contacts with the landlords. When the villagers proceeded to capture the land disregarding Liberation, they sat on Dharna in favour of land mafia leader Shiv Pujan Sharma at Chenari block and demanded arrest of our activists. They later started disruptionist activities at Kheri village where the landless were with Liberation for 20 years. There were 15 acres surplus lands here belonging to landlord Bindeshwari Singh. Seeing our land struggle in surrounding areas, in 1999, the landless here joined our organization and in 2000, fighting against the landlord, they captured these 15 acres. This year, after the transplantation of the paddy crop in July, Liberation, along with Bindeshwari's son Shankar Singh, tried to loot this paddy by pretending to do weeding of the farm. Armed goons of the landlords and Liberation's armed squads surrounded the land. Instead of cashing we intensified propaganda. There was no effect of the condemnation by the landless of the village on Liberation.

On the night of 14th Sept 2002, in the presence of armed squads of Liberation, lumpens abused our activists and when Gandhi Ram and his old father Dhanraj Ram protested, the lumpens fired at and injured him. On 16th September, local Liberation leaders took a young girl to the police station to lodge a report of rape against our activ-

ists. However no report was registered as the girl did not lie. Liberation leaders are naming Gandhi Ram and his 70 year old father also as the accused. On 19th September, 100 people were returning late at night to Kheri village after attending our demonstration, when lumpens of Liberation opened fire on them. The people then changed their route and also tried to lodge a complaint at Shiv Sagar Thana but the police did not file it. Next morning Liberation leaders reached the police station with another woman. Police lodged an FIR on the false story of rape of the wife of Suresh Ram (brother of Liberation leader Ramesh Ram, a stooge of Shankar Singh). Party called for a massive public meeting on 27th October at Kheri against the anti-people policies of the Liberation–feudals–police nexus. This led Liberation to announce a mass meeting at another village near Karhana on 10th October. A pamphlet was released with baseless allegations against our party and targeting two activists of Karhana village, Com. Devmuni Ram and Com. Santan Ram. It proclaimed Liberation's MLA from Karakat, Arun Singh, as the main speaker of the 10th October meeting.

The 10th October meeting was boycotted by the local people and no leader of Liberation attended either. Around 50-60 local lumpens and landlords were present. Local leaders of Liberation read out a list of allegations against Com. Santan Ram and Com. Devmuni Ram, condemned the land struggle and issued a call for killing these two activists as also other activists of CPI (ML)-New Democracy. When such a killing was done on 13th October, it became clear why Arun Singh and other leaders of Liberation did not attend the meeting on 10th October 2002. The Liberation leaders in our areas of struggle are renegades from struggle and they well know the real motive behind the 10th October meeting.

The killing of Com. Devmuni proves that Liberation has decided to begin armed attacks against us in order to stop the development of land struggles under our leadership. Before this Liberation had attacked us in other areas. Liberation is also attacking other revolutionary organizations. Liberation is wiping out activists of revolutionary organizations in a pre-planned manner or is foisting false cases on them and branding them as criminals. It wants to finish off the revolutionary movement and in the interests of its parliamentary game, wants to be known as the 'sole' CPI (ML).

The intentions of Liberation against us in our other areas of work are similar to that of the Ranvir Sena active against us in Nokha. The target of Ranvir Sena's Dhan Singh's statement on 13th October in Dainik Hindustan and of Liberation's pamphlet is CPI (ML) - New Democracy. In village Kheri of Shiv Sagar and Jagvalia, the supporters of Liberation are those landlords in whose houses Dhan Singh lodges along with his supporters and arms.

Actually after taking up a revisionist line, Liberation looks on the landless and poor peasantry only as a base for its electoral politics. We have always opposed Liberation's revisionism and class capitulation in the field of ideology and politics. But we have conducted an ideological political struggle and have not physically attacked any leader or activist of Liberation. Liberation, however, has taken the route of physically liquidating our organization. The aggressive policy they have adopted clearly shows that their charges against MCC and PWG are not principled but are opportunistic. Liberation should leave its self-defeating policy of liquidating communist revolutionary leaders and activists.

Public Meeting in Village Kheri in Shiv Sagar

The Shiv Sagar block committee of the party organized a public meeting on 27th October 2002 in which around 1000 men and women from surrounding villages participated along with several intellectuals. The main guest speaker at this meeting was Com. D.V. Krishna (General Secretary of National Committee of IFTU). Apart from him, many other leaders including Com. Ashok Kumar, Dist. Sec. and a state A KMS Gen. Sec., Com. Shankar Singh, Dist. President of AIKMS, and peasant leaders Rajesh Paswan, Dinanath Chowdhry and Ram Parvesh Bartha participated. The meeting was organized against the anti-people activities of Liberation in the area.

Before this, addressing a Press Conference in Sasaram, Com. D.V. Krishna spoke about the ill effects of globalization, against the American attack on Iraq, how imperialist countries are making comprador govts. like India's implement all policies they order, and how MNCs are entering agricultural sector.

Liberation made every attempt to make the meeting a failure announcing in the area that it would not allow the meeting to be held at

any cost. To this end many leaders of Liberation and its armed squad applied themselves for one month in the area. It is in the course of this that their squad had attacked our members in village Kharhana, in order to discourage the masses. They also took out a pamphlet acknowledging the Kharhana killing and further issuing death sentences against Comrades Santan Ram, Bhiga Ram and Arjun Paswan. The revolutionary people accepted Liberation's challenge and once more proved that all opposing forces pale before the steady unity of the landless and poor people.

Liberation Pronounces Death Sentence!

On 20th October 2002 a meeting was organized at Kharhana village to pay homage to Com. Devmuni and to condemn his murder by Liberation on 13th October. Around 600 landless poor peasants from surrounding villages participated. The meeting was organized by the Riva – Thorsan Panchayat Committee and addressed by District leaders of the party and by leaders of AIKMS.

Immediately Liberation took out a pamphlet against this meeting justifying the killing of Devmuni and terming it a 'death sentence'. It has further announced death sentences for three others. Liberation has stopped treading the path of the landless and dalits. The judges of Liberation could only fire verbal ammunition against the guilty landlords of the area but choose revolutionary activists for award of death sentences!

The progressive and democratic intellectuals of the district are astonished at how, without proving guilt, Liberation is reviving the age old feudal practice in the villages of awarding death sentences. Everyone is also astonished because its own organization in Rohtas district is filled with people actually guilty of the charge against which Liberation has pronounced the death sentence.

Struggles for harvesting

Struggle between landless and poor peasants and the landlords, their goonda gangs and private armies once again intensified around the harvest time. Landlords and their armed henchmen tried to prevent the landless from harvesting the paddy sown on lands occupied by the landless and poor peasants through their struggles. The

conflicts resulted in a number of armed clashes in the villages in different blocks. At several places armed squad of Liberation sided with the armed goondas of the landlords.

On November 5 armed lumpen gangs of landlords and armed squad of Liberation fired upon the landless in the 15 acres ceiling land in Kheri village. In the village Liberation activists approached our AIKMS village committee comrades through local leaders for joint harvesting of the crop, a proposal accepted by our comrades, but they stealthily cut the paddy crop when our comrades had gone to participate in a Dharna at district headquarters.

On November 17 armed clashes took place in three villages of Sasaram and Kargahar blocks over the paddy harvesting. In Khaira village, armed landlords gangs from several villages attacked the landless allottees of Bihar Govt. land. They were chased away by the people. On a land between village Jogpur and Tornai, landlords engaged a harvester to take away the crop planted by landless. Here too the brave landless chased them away despite being fewer in number and facing modern weapons of a private army of landlords. In this three village youth were caught by the landlord gangs and brutally tortured. In yet another incident near Chibili village, four lumpen elements, recruited by Liberation as their members, cut the paddy of the allottees of land. The local AIKMS committee decided to cut paddy from the land of these lumpens and this they executed despite attacks by these lumpens and their protectors - armed squad of Liberation.

In a number of villages land Mafia has come up under the patronage of Laloo-Rabri Govt. and utilizing the Govt. machinery to forcibly control the surplus ceiling land in a number of villages. In Lehri village police helped such a Mafia to harvest the crop planted by landless poor peasants. In another incident in Nuavillage in Chenari block, on November 26 police forcibly got the crop on 22 acres of Bihar Govt. land harvested by land Mafia Shiv Pujan Sharma. In this RJD Minister Chhedi Paswan acted as the patron of the Mafia.

Landless poor did not succeed in all the struggles. Yet they scored important political victory as class enemies and class collaborators are coming out openly to fight against them.

West Bengal

The Real Face of Mackinze Proposals and 'Left' Front Govt.

– Pradip Singh Thakur

The Bengali daily Ganashakti, CPI(M)'s Bengali mouthpiece, declared on 23rd October, 2002, "Subsequent to a thorough research for ten long months, Mackinze, a premier consultancy firm in the world, submitted its report to the [West Bengal] Govt." A US based consultancy firm, Mackinze, is reported to have submitted an investigative report on West Bengal to the state Chief Minister on 22nd October in a meeting of the State Investment Promotion Board. The firm is reported to have been paid a few crores of rupees for its 'grand' efforts. At a time when the state Govt. is in a 'dire' economic crisis, why is it spending so much for Mackinze? Questions also arise – What is this report all about? Who will gain out of it? Let us try to get answers to these questions.

What is there is Mackinze Repot?

This "premier" consultancy firm was given the responsibility in October-November 2001, by the 'Left' Front Govt., to investigate the prospects of agriculture-based industries and Information Technology-based industries in the state. The firm, while investigating these possibilities, had contacted several Indian and foreign investors in this regard. According to the report, the state has "immense possibilities" in agro-industries. The report claims to have established contacts with 65 domestic and multinational companies dealing in agro-industries and several other corporations for information technology, who would be interested in investing in the state.

The state Industry Minister, Nirupam Sen, stated, "This initiative is aimed at attracting national and multinational investors to the state. Mackinze has already established contacts with several such investors. We have received good response from them. **Now our plans and efforts should be commensurate with their requirements and demands**" (Translated from Ganashakti, 23rd October, 2002, emphasis added) Yes Minister, your statement answers why the 'Left'

Front Govt. should spend crores for Mackinze, for 'attracting national and multinational investors,' and should now proceed to cater to "their requirements and demand."

To push through their expensive consultancy report, Mackinze drew a glossy picture of the potentials of the industries in the state. They foresee the possibility of "West Bengal becoming the granary of India" and "One of the three leading states in Info-Tech by the year 2010." They claim that agro-industries and Info-Tech industries in the state would draw investment to the tune of Rs. 18 thousands crores and Rs. 70-80 thousand crores respectively. They would generate, according to the report, new employment for 10 lakh people in agro-industries and 35-4 lakh technologists in Info-Tech industries.

Transition from Agriculture to Agro-Industries

Mackinze's Report has made several recommendations to the state Govt. pertaining to 'developing' agro- and Info-Tech industries in the state. It has divided the period from 2002 to 2010 into several stages and set concrete 'goals' for each of them. According to the report –

(a) The State Govt. during the 1st stage (i.e., 2002-2004), should try to draw maximum possible investment in agro industries. It should try to attract at least 10 out of the 20 big agro-based corporations in the country.

(b) The State Govt. should bring about appropriate changes in sales tax regulations, in order to reduce the cost of processed foods and raise their demand in the market.

It has essentially suggested abolition of the existing 10% surcharge on processed foods.

(c) In the 2nd stage (i.e., 2005-2007), the Govt. should build unanimity among various political parties to frame extensive laws and regulations regarding contract farming.

(d) In the 3rd stage (i.e., 2008-2010), it should try to establish a leading role in Asia. It should aim at entering the international market and attaining international standards and rates for its products. Export should be the primary source of income during this period.

Status of Agriculture in West Bengal

The West Bengal Chief Minister recently stated, “72% of agricultural land in the state belongs to poor and marginal peasants. This is a basic aspect of our success. Another basic feature is the fact that 15 lakh sharecroppers are now enlisted through Operation Barga. We have recorded and distributed 11 lakh acres of land since coming to power. ... Last year we came first in agricultural production, producing 138 lakh metric tones of food grains.” (translated from Marxbad Path, August 2002)

The real nature of CPI(M)'s claimed successes in land reform have been discussed in details on various occasions in our earlier issues. We would, however, like to substantiate the 'basic aspect' of the CM's professed successes through the following quotes.

“It is therefore no surprise that growth rate in agriculture has been slowing down. Cereal production rose by 28% between 1985-86 and 1990-91. In the two successive five-year periods that followed, this particular growth rate fell to 14% and then 11%. Similarly the growth rate of total agricultural output fell from a high of 15% and 16% (over the periods 1985-86 to 1990-91 and 1990-91 to 1995-96, respectively) to 9% over the period 1995-96 to 2000-2001. Indeed one might expect, in the absence of further innovations, agricultural growth in West Bengal is heading where other successful states like Punjab and Haryana have ended up – in a plateau of close to zero growth.” (“Strategy for Economic Reform in West Bengal”, Economic and Political Weekly, 12-18 October, 2002)

An ex-Land and Land Revenue Minister of the state, Surya Kanta Mishra, had recently confessed – “Wages and workdays of agricultural labourers in the villages during 1990s have remained static and mid-1990s onward the real wages have actually come down” (“Land Reform in Contemporary West Bengal and the Duties of the Left”, The Marxist, July-December, 2001). He also stated there that for the agricultural labourers “There is deprivation as far as adult literacy, attendance of schools by children and health care facilities are concerned”, “There emerged a new class of rich villagers in the post land reform period” and “A new type of usury has replaced the old usury.”

The above quotations are enough to expose the masked "successes" of the 'Left Front Govt. in the agricultural sector and let us now see where these 'successes' are heading to.

The Planning and Development Ministry of the West Bengal Govt. had submitted a Draft Agricultural Policy on 21st May 2002 for approval. Some of its noble suggestions – "The State Govt. should take appropriate measures to take advantage of globalization in agriculture"; "Agriculture in the state should be re-oriented from production of food grains to production of cash crops"; "Agro-Industries should be developed and made export oriented"; "Agricultural export zones should be developed."

Alongside these recommendations, the draft also points out – "Over the last 10 years agricultural production in the state has either remained static or gone down. Its agricultural scenario is full of problems, contradictions and obstacles. The production of the principal food grain in the state is less than the requisite" This same draft calls for "contract farming" too.

Note the striking similarity between the draft Agricultural Policy of the 'Left' Front Govt. in the state and the new Agricultural Policy of the BJP led central Govt. Both the policies call for "Taking advantage of globalization in agriculture", "Transforming food grains-oriented agriculture to cash crop-oriented agriculture", "Producing crops that are in demand in the international market", and "Developing agricultural export zones." The clarion call for cash crop and export-oriented agriculture is being given by both govts. at a time when production of food grains is less than what is required. While the present population growth rate is 1.9%, the growth rate of production of food grains is 1.7% only. At the present rate of growth, West Bengal will produce 147 lakh metric tones of food grains in the year 2006-07, while the requirement would be 174 lakh metric tones – a deficit of 27 lakh metric tones. Under these circumstances, reduction of land area under food grain production would be overtly suicidal.

Open criticisms of the Draft forced the State Govt. to withdraw the Draft Policy and bring a second Draft of the Policy in August the same year. Extreme care was taken to blur the overt similarities between the agricultural policies of the Central Govt. and of the state

Govt. Presented in a completely different tone, the second Draft said – “Export-oriented agriculture will aggravate the struggle for existence of poor peasants, because price of agricultural products is going down in the world market. [It wil] significantly affect self-dependence on food grains. ... Market-oriented agriculture is pro-rich and will intensify the struggle for existence among small peasants.” The second Draft calls for “An alternative course of agricultural development in view of national crisis and imperialist onslaught” to be developed

A smart presentation indeed. The question, however, is – Did the Mackinze Report find out the coveted “Alternative course of agricultural development in view of national crisis and imperialist onslaught”? Moreover, if the lessons portrayed in the second draft indeed reflect the understandings of the Govt. and its ministries, wt y does the Industry Minister talk of plans and efforts “commensurate with their [national and international investors’] requirements and demands”?

Some Relevant Notes

It will not be out of context to point out that, unlike the tropical countries, western countries, because of cold climate, have a limited scope of agricultural production. They have only one harvest season, while tropical countries like ours have two and are rich in bio-diversity. In order to diversify and enrich their agricultural pattern the imperialist countries have tried to utilize the agricultural diversities of countries like ours. They always wanted that such countries should produce catering to their (imperialists’) needs, should make agriculture export-oriented. This has a far-reaching consequence. This re-orientation of agriculture (in third world countries) leads to the following chain consequences – reduction in land area under food grain production and gradual increase of land area under production of commercial crops – reduction in production of food grains – dependence on imperialist countries for imports of food grains to meet the deficit in domestic food grain production.

Since 1990, it is noted that under the pressure of globalization and liberalization, agricultural land area in our country has been steadily decreasing, particularly land under food grain production. This is true for West Bengal too. Even Surya Kanta Mishra in his

article points out – “Another notable feature in the state is the increasing tendency of shift over from production of food crops to production of other crops. Transformation of lands meant for production of food crops into tea gardens in North Bengal, pisciculture and tree plantation in previously food crop producing lands in districts of South Bengal are generally observed. New policies must be enunciated to solve this problem since cultivation of non-food grains would endanger the food security of poor families” (“Land Reform in contemporary West Bengal and the Duties of the Left”, *The Marxist*, July-Dec. 2001; stress ours)

Another reason why the imperialist countries want reduction in land area under food grain cultivation in our country (and other third world countries) is to create a market for their own over-production of food grains. Imperialist countries consume only 66% of their own food grain production (80% of their own wheat production). Mackinze’s recommendation for “Transition from agriculture to agro-business” is actually meant to create this condition in the semblance of ‘development’. When Mackinze sets an “Aim at entering the international market” or the ‘Left’ Front Govt calls for appropriate steps for taking advantage of globalization in agriculture” – all these are done keeping in mind the conditions imposed by WTO, and in the background of the situation of today’s world market.

To meet the conditions of WTO, subsidies in agriculture in our country have been brought down from 10% to 3%, while imperialist countries themselves offer 40% subsidies in agriculture, and even 90% in some cases. USA used to give subsidy in agriculture to the tune of \$30 thousand crores, which has been recently raised to \$47 thousand crores, an amount more than the annual income of the entire population in India, and this subsidy is being given to their 27 lakh peasants!

Moreover, quantitative restrictions on imports in our country have been withdrawn – 1429 items, more than 150 of which are agricultural products, are now freely flowing in from outside. It is anybody’s guess what will happen when such highly subsidized products enter Indian markets.

For those who feel that India will gain prosperity through export, we would like to remind them that 80 countries like ours export agri-

cultural products to imperialist countries. Moreover, these imperialist countries are least interested to import agricultural products, by imposing 173% to 288% levy on import of such products.

Lenin in his book "Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism" said –"The increase in exports is connected with just these swindling tricks of finance capital, which is not concerned with bourgeois morality, but with skinning the ox twice – first, it pockets the profits from the loan; then it pockets other profits from the same loan which the borrower uses to make purchases from Krupp, or to purchase railway material from the Steel Syndicate, etc." (Selected Works, p. 253)

Today's world market and imperialist countries are going the same way. On the one hand, they are introducing their products in third world markets, after huge subsidies to the products, in the name of free-trade and on the other hand imposing huge import levy on products from countries like ours so that they cannot enter their markets.

That is not all Yet again "Consumers in the rich countries are increasingly reluctant to eat anything that is not guaranteed to be 'safe', meaning that their production has taken place in highly monitored environment. Lobbyists and spokespersons from import-competing industries in these countries are always happy to push for even tighter regulations of imports of edibles, for obvious cynical reasons. ... It is foolhardy to think that a local firm (or a cooperative, according to the Govt.'s plan) will be able to compete with these farms to get access to these markets. Just imagine what would happen to exports from West Bengal if someone spreads the rumor that the local farm is growing fruits on arsenic-infested land." ("Strategy of Economic Reforms in West Bengal", Economic and Political Weekly, 12-18 October, 2002)

Such attitudes of consumers from imperialist countries, which have been developed by the MNCs have been institutionalized by WTO through its stipulations. According to them, agricultural products in the world market should satisfy the quality requirements, should satisfy health requirements, should not be produced utilizing child labour and should not affect environmental conditions.

When the Left Front Govt. is talking of taking "appropriate measures to take advantage of globalization in agriculture", developing "agricultural export zones", transforming food grains-oriented agriculture into market oriented agriculture, it cannot be accepted through any logic that they are unaware of the directives from WTO. Today's globalization is an imperialist globalization, a globalization against the third world.

So Mackinze's Report (and also the Agricultural Policies of Govts.) cannot go beyond the WTO directives and the requirements of the imperialist forces. Naturally, they have to talk of concepts like "re-orientation of agriculture", and "agricultural export zones".

Mackinze's Proposals Unmasked

We have already mentioned that Mackinze's report is trying to make us dream – dream of a state devoid of hunger and unemployment, a role-model state for other parts of the country to emulate. It hardly deserves mention that these dreams have no objective basis. It is only a ploy – a ploy to get us carried away by the wave of imperialist globalization, a plot hatched by the MNCs and the big bourgeoisie of our country. It would be interesting to note that similar rosy sketches are canvassed for time and again for our country as well, including India becoming a superpower.

Another notable aspect is the harmony in the tones of the various agencies of policy making. The IMF, World Bank, and WTO call for an "overall policy agreement" among the political parties on privatization and liberalization in economic policy. Similarly, Mackinze Report proposes developing "unanimity among political parties to frame extensive laws and regulations regarding contract farming".

To comprehend the Mackinze Report properly one should examine their interim reports too. The interim report proposed changes in labour laws to draw investments: (i) Alteration of Shops and Establishments Acts to facilitate super-markets dealing with agro-products remaining open all days of a week, (ii) Changes in Contract Labour laws to facilitate easy engagement and dismissals of contract workers if and whenever necessary, (iii) Revaluation of the time limit of issuing notices of strikes, (iv) "Zero labour problem" and (v) Revaluation of Industrial Disputes Act, regarding the scope

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of issues it can address. All these are evidently aimed at establishing an agro-based industry absolutely free from labour problems – no strikes, no labour disputes, no permanent workers, no liabilities and workers' entitlements, and not even weekly holidays.

While the CPI(M) and its trade union front, CITU, 'vehemently' oppose the New Agricultural Policy of the Central Govt., as well as the changes in labour laws, they are eager to accept the same changes in policy and laws, as proposed by Mackinze Report, in West Bengal. Surprised? Not really. There is, of course, a difference in the two policies, we must agree. While the New Agriculture Policy talks of "corporate farming", as dictated by WTO, 'Left' Front's Agro-Policy talks of "contract farming" – a difference in words, not in essence.

Conclusions

'Left' Front Govt.'s Agro-Policy and Mackinze's Report, when implemented, will imply opening up the doors of agricultural sector in West Bengal to the entry of the imperialist forces. Contract farming would lead to larger number of landless peasants, who would then work as contract labourers helping in the production of high quality rice to be exported, and themselves spending starved and semi-starved days, months and years for want of some ordinary rice.

Anil Biswas, a prominent leader of CPI(M) in Bengal, commented "Our state govt. is going all out for investments from foreign MNCs and monopolies for the development of the poor and the middle class." (translated from Ananda Bazar Patrika, 25th October 2002) Have 'biswas' (faith) on them? Another CPI(M) stalwart, Biman Basu, said in connection to contract farming (Chukti Chash in Bengali), "Some find chukti (contract), some others mukti (freedom)" in it. These Basus are among the "others". Yes you are right, Mr. Basu. Larger number of peasants will get 'freedom' from land, at the behest of imperialism. Ganashakti also speaks in the same tone as the "bourgeois" newspaper, Ananda Bazar – "It [Mackinze's Report] is a major milestone in the effort of West Bengal to turn around, strong and stout." Yes your 'Sonar Bangla' has 'turned around', and would go further. So why worry, sing in chorus with your 'comrades in arms' – "We are in the same boat, brother."

Privatization of Irrigation Sector and the Inside Story of Pani Panchayat in Orissa

– Bhala Chandra Shadangi

Most of the poor people of this poor state live in villages and are dependent on agriculture for their livelihood. As one of the natural resource rich states of this country, Orissa has plenty of forest and mineral resources. In addition to that it has a vast storage of water resources. Notwithstanding the gradual decrease of the annual rainfall year after year because of deforestation, Orissa is still considered to be one of the highest rainfall states. The rivers like Mahanadi, Brahmani, Baitarani, Subarnarekha, Budhabalanga, Rushikulya etc. are very notorious for the havoc they create during floods. The amount of underground water stored in Orissa is much more than the national average. Still it is a well-known fact that many parts of Orissa suffer from drought every year. Despite plenty of water resources most of its cultivable land is rain-fed and with much difficulty cultivators could hardly raise one crop a year. This is mainly due to lack of proper utilization of existing water resources. In the post-1947 era govt. after govt. have been making promises, but the result is that hardly a little more than one-fourth of the state's agricultural land is irrigated.

Orissa's water resources constitute mainly all the existing underground and over ground water sources. Since it is a high rainfall state, the scarcity of rain water is not there. Even the annual rainfall in regular drought prone districts like Kalahandi, Bolangir is more than that of many Indian states. In rainy season a large number of streams come out of the hilly regions of the state and they continue to flow for 4-6 months. Thousands of tanks and ponds present in the villages and towns become full in rainy season and are being used for drinking, bathing and irrigating. There are many perennial streams and small rivers that are used for various purposes. Apart from these over ground sources Orissa is having a vast storage of ground water. As per the Central Ground Water Board, the total storage of ground water in the state is nearly 2330 crore cubic meters.

Population Dependence

86% of Orissa's total population lives in rural areas which is more than the national average of 74.28%. Nearly 64% of the total population and 74.6% of the total work force in the state are engaged in agriculture. Since the state's agricultural prospects depend on the availability of water system, the importance of management of water resources is more vital for the economic growth of its people. Besides this, the state's total population is dependent on these water resources for their daily needs. The growth in the field of animal husbandry, electricity production and industrialization is strongly dependent on the proper management and utilization of these water resources.

Resources Status, particularly of the last 10 years

Though Orissa is having a vast ground water reserve, much of it is not utilized for irrigation. According to the Reserve Bank of India Report, while Punjab is utilizing 95% of its ground water in agricultural activities, Orissa is hardly able to utilize 0.5% of its total ground water reserve. Due to lack of emphasis on lift irrigation system, most of our land is rain fed despite having plenty of ground water. The Orissa Lift Irrigation Corporation (OLIC) which is in charge of state's ground water facilities development has provided irrigation facilities to only 3.23 lakh hectares through its 14,779 lift irrigation (LI) points. Due to lack of proper maintenance, rampant corruption and vested political interference, the OLIC is on the verge of bankruptcy and many of the LI points in the state have now become defunct.

Till 1951, Orissa had two major irrigation projects whose irrigation capacity was 1.76 lakh hectares. But today the state has 19 big and 51 medium irrigation projects most of which are completed. The total irrigation potential of all these projects is estimated at 39.49 lakh hectares against which 10.68 lakh hectares has been achieved till the end of eighth plan. However, in most of these projects, water does not reach the tail end of ayacut area due to lack of maintenance and other defects. Apart from this there are many minor irrigation projects which contribute to some extent.

Policy changes in the wake of Globalization

Since the very beginning World Bank is prescribing the theory that the misuse of water should be checked to overcome the future water crisis. It can be done by commodifying water. Even people are willing to pay for regular and quality water service. But the govts. are not willing to charge. To achieve this goal, the Govt.'s control over water resources should be withdrawn and be opened for private sector. The World Commission on Water, in its latest choreography called "Water Vision", expresses that the single most immediate and important measure that we can recommend is the systematic adoption of full cost pricing for water service. After the beginning of globalization process in our country this prescription of World Bank is being implemented World Bank and Govt. of India's Joint Report shows the naked design for corporate control over water in our country Starting from drinking water to irrigation, all aspects of water management are analyzed in the framework of market and in the language of profit. World Bank and Govt. of India in their publication "The Irrigation Sector" prescribed the following steps to hand over the irrigation sector to market forces.

Step 1: Establishment of Water Users' Associations (WUA) at grass-root and unbundling of Irrigation Sector

Step 2: Shift the responsibility of collection of charges to these Associations.

Step 3: Encourage WUA through incentives for recovering operation and maintenance costs.

Step 4: Subsequently increase the water charges and create conditions for attracting private investments in water schemes.

Step 5: Finally hand over the operation to private operators.

Following the footsteps of Central Govt., Orissa Govt. has also being implementing its reform agenda under the guidance of World Bank. Instead of developing the existing irrigation facilities in an agricultural state like Orissa the State Govt. is moving towards squeezing and making costlier the present irrigation facilities. It has decided to withdraw all its responsibilities and to stop further in-

vestment in irrigation provision. On 26th Feb. 2001 Orissa Govt. has launched a World Bank funded Rs 4000 crores project called Biju Krushak Vikash Yojana in the name of increasing capacity and efficiency of irrigation in the state. Under this scheme the farmers of an irrigated area have to form WUA or Pani Panchayat to make the irrigation system more efficient and farmer friendly. The Govt. has the argument that, since in the existing set-up farmers are not getting proper irrigation facilities due to lack of proper maintenance and necessary funds, Pani Panchayat will be able to overcome these problems and ensure proper supply of water.

Inside the sugar coated “Pani Panchayat”

The Pani Panchayat concept, first launched in 1972 by the Grama Gourava Pratishthan in Maharashtra, was to prevent the waste of scarce water resources through unjust and ecological destructive practices. The idea behind this project was that in a drought prone area no individual should be deprived of a rightful share of limited water resources on which life and livelihood depended. But today the Govt. and its advisor World Bank are using the same terminology for an entirely different purpose. The present day imperialists are habituated in using some highly value-loaded terms like globalization, liberalization, reform etc. to carry forward their sinister designs. The word “Pani Panchayat” has an inbuilt sense of justice and thus urges people’s participation. Taking this advantage the Govt. and the ruling class media are propagating it as a revolutionary step by creating illusion among people. But this sugar coated “Pani Panchayat” concept is the mask for World Bank prescribed WUA.

But people’s participation or ‘making efficient’, whatever the plea the Govt. is taking, in a globalized economy when the state is dismantling its welfare concept and shedding all its responsibility for welfare, the World Bank sponsored Pani Panchayat is nothing other than a step towards making profit from water. Besides Karnataka and AP, the Orissa Govt. has amended the Orissa Irrigation Act 1959 to withdraw all the subsidies given in this sector to the farming community and for opening the door for privatization. That is why the Govt. has declared that Pani Panchayat will be the WUA where the members have to pay the users’ charges towards getting irrigation facilities instead of getting water at a subsidized rate as earlier.

As per Orissa Govt.'s resolution No. Irr-1-WB(FOT)/38/2000/387 III dated 26.9.2000 all the Pani Panchayats or WUAs will be registered Associations under the Society Registration Act 1860. All the farmers under the irrigation area of a minor/sub-minor Canal or Lift irrigation point would be members of this Panchayat. It will be an elected three-tier institution and regarding its rights and duties it has to make an understanding with the Govt. Though the Govt. is saying much about the rights and duties of a Pani Panchayat, it is revealed from a detailed study that there is not much right for the members in the Pani Panchayat. Instead the Govt. has handed over all the duties and responsibilities regarding irrigation to Pani Panchayats keeping all the rights in its hand, making it a rightless and duty bound body.

Firstly the Govt. will have full control over the dams and their head regulators but would give the maintenance and repairing section of the Canal system to the Pani Panchayat. In Sec. 1(a) the Govt. has the exclusive right over how much water is to be discharged from the dam. Secondly if the WUA demands more water, the Govt. has the capacity to sanction or dismiss the demand. If the Govt. is not supplying the additional water asked by the WUA then it will not be responsible for the losses caused to the farmers of WUA. According to the understanding, the Govt. will be the sole Authority to decide the water cess from time to time and the Pani Panchayat will only implement it without questioning. Previously the Govt. was bearing all costs of maintenance, repairing and construction of irrigation structures. But in this scheme the Govt. will not take these responsibilities. Only it may arrange the necessary amount of loan from the lender agencies like NABARD, World Bank and DFID. So, now the farmers or the members of Pani Panchayat will have to pay the additional charge of maintenance and repairing along with the regular water cess fixed by the Govt. By this the Govt. is withdrawing its responsibility in providing water to farmers at very low cost and paving the way towards an irrigation system based on profit. Under the Pani Panchayat if the canals and distributing structures are not properly maintained the Govt. has the power to stop water supply in that area by giving a 15 day notice. This is a part of the Govt.'s motive to privatize and commercialize the farming sector. Under the dictation of World Bank, the Pani Panchayat scheme is

created by the state Govt. to make profit. The enhanced water cess from time to time will attract private investment. After this phase the Govt. will hand over the head regulators of all the dams and irrigation structures to private parties. The Orissa Govt. has already implemented it by increasing the water cess regularly. Recently the water cess has increased to 250%. As per the World Bank's prescription of unbundling the irrigation sector, the Govt. is planning to close down the OLIC and to down size the existing Irrigation employees through retrenchment and VRS. Actually, a major portion of Rs 4000 crores of this so-called mega-project will be spent for VRS. Baring few technical and managerial staff, almost all the necessary manpower for irrigation will be appointed by the Pani Panchayat on casual and contract basis under their own responsibility so that their salary or wage will also be paid by it.

So, the much-published Pani Panchayat scheme in Orissa is nothing but a step to privatize the Water Resources for making profit over people. In the first phase, on an experimental basis this scheme is being implemented in four irrigation projects of Orissa with the active involvement of some NGOs. Already the farmers in certain areas have raised protests against this dangerous move. The recent hike in water cess has already generated a severe resentment among the farmers and triggered a fire for an all-Orissa peasants' movement.

UP: Struggle Forces Reopening of Sugar Mills

Major traffic routes were disrupted for almost a week over most areas in West UP districts and adjoining Uttaranchal to force the government to wake up to the sugarcane harvest this year. Sugarcane was burnt on the roads and in some fields. Ultimately the farmers won and the cane crushing season, which normally lasts about 4 months, has begun, almost 7 weeks late. Substantial loss has already been caused to the farmers, particularly the small and middle farmers who could not hold on to their produce till the end of the agitation and had to make distress sale of their cane at Rs. 35 to 50 per quintal. Farmers in UP have now been promised the statutory government rate of Rs. 95 and Rs. 100 per quintal.

These are unhappy days for the industry which is reeling under crises of overproduction and a corrupt government committed to implement WTO policy of importing agricultural produce even while no import is necessary. According to Union Agriculture minister, Shri Ajit Singh, sugar imported 3-4 years back is still lying unused in our stocks and we are not subsidising our sugar exports like the developed countries. There has been a fall in international prices of sugar due to devaluation of Brazilian currency and if even one and a half months back the centre would have taken a decision on the suggestion of export subsidy this problem would not have arisen.

Sugar is selling at Rs. 13 per kg as against Rs. 17 while jaggery is down to half from Rs. 14 per kg a few months back and there are enough stocks to last the year. In fact the industry blames the govt. for announcing its intention of withdrawing fixed monthly quota release system and the High Court order declaring monthly release quota mechanism as violative of the Constitution. The bigger corporate sugar mills with huge stocks from last year (120 lakh tonnes) had obtained the orders for free sale from the Court. This, according to the Indian Sugar Mills Association (ISMA), has led to the glut in the market, fall in prices and consequent inability of the sugar mills to pay the statutory purchase price to farmers. The ISMA has tried to solve its problem by targeting the farmers. It contested the UP government's right to fix cane prices and the High Court upheld its

claim. The judgement stands challenged and awaits finalization in the Supreme Court.

Actually UP Govt. was only utilizing the industry's protest to squeeze the farmers. After all neighbouring Haryana is paying its farmers Rs. 105 per quintal and crushing season has been in full swing there. Moreover even if the ISMA was unhappy with the rates of sugarcane and they were refusing to open their mills, the UP government itself owns a large number of the 110 odd mills and it should have opened these. The industry rues over fall in prices of sugar and high cost of sugarcane it cannot afford to pay because the crushing cost itself comes to around Rs. 1400 per quintal of sugar according to them. But the industry neither blames free imports nor does it blame the massive rise in cost of other inputs like diesel, lack of and irregular supply of electricity etc. Infact a section of the industry, the big operators, are happy with the chaos being created by the open market system. During this entire period two mills in West UP, one in Modinagar and the other in Baraut, began crushing work on time. These were the ones owned by Modis. They had cleared their stocks in time and they are not members of the ISMA.

These issues are major problems for the sugarcane farmers who have over the years had to spend a lot on irrigating their fields due to irregular and low voltage power supply. Despite this they have been made to pay minimum power tariff. Meanwhile electricity and irrigation charges and cost of diesel have increased rapidly. Govt. levies on sugarcane supplied to the mills have increased and farmers suffer massive corruption in the weighing process. Farmers are becoming increasingly dependent on cash crops to cope with higher cost of farming and debt burden is rising. In 2000-2001 UP produced 43.94 out of 185.11 lakh tonnes, i.e., 23.74% of the country's sugar and it grows almost 35.62% (1065.88 lakh tonnes out of 2992.12 lakh tonnes) of the country's cane, centred in Western UP and Terai. Once sown the land is stuck for at least two years.

The farmers also suffer at the hands of the industry because of non-payment of cane dues and in the past they have had to conduct big movements sacrificing many lives for recovery of dues. According to UP's Cane Development and Sugar Industry Minister, cane dues of last year alone are Rs. 387 crores or 7.69% of the total

dues.

It is obvious that both the Govt. and the industrialists want farmers to bear brunt of the crisis. Under policies dictated by the World Trade Organization the country is importing agricultural produce, bringing in foreign investment into agro-industry including sugar mills and is unable to sell its own surplus produce in the international markets due to stiff competition and monopoly of big players. Big corporates, in collaboration with MNCs, have favoured open sale of sugar without any quota system. They are also the main purchasers of the cooperative sector sugar mills being sold by the govt. They can monopolize the markets and outsell the smaller industry, creating conditions for further squeezing the farmers. Their plan is to do away with the monthly quota system completely and do forward trading in sale of sugar.

The government and its funding agencies are propagating diversification of crops as a solution for farmers. There is however no 'lucrative' crop which will sustain profits for the farmer. And once the cropping pattern is shifted away from basic food items, the farmers will become easier prey to the giant multinational companies and their Indian compradors.

Problems of Paddy Procurement

The WTO regulations prohibit assured sale of farming produce and remunerative prices. Their logic is that this mechanism harms the market forces. In one way or the other the government has been following this policy. While there have been a number of movements of the peasantry against this provision and for MSP (minimum support price) the government is wary of directly closing down grain procurement centres. So this year it has attempted a subterfuge in the case of paddy procurement also.

Normally the government procured only ordinary varieties of paddy. This year paddy MSP was raised by Rs. 40 per quintal – Rs. 20 as increment and Rs. 20 to compensate for the drought – from Rs. 510 to Rs. 550. In this way the government tried to keep farmers assured. But at the same time the minimum rice recovery requirement from 100 kg paddy was raised to 67 kg i.e 67% while it was 62% last year and even less before that. The humidity requirement of the grain has also been raised from 17% last year to 18% this

year. How can rice recovery rise suddenly without changes in variety and production methods and that too in a year of severe drought, the government alone knows. Under the pretext of this order, paddy is not being purchased. Varieties which give this kind of yield are much costlier than the MSP and do not sell in the government procurement centres. Varieties which the common farmers sow are not being procured now because they do not fulfill the above requirements.

The Govt. was careful not to announce this before rice was sown in June to prevent any flare-up of an agitation earlier on. Now the farmers who cannot hold on to their produce, the smaller ones, are making a distress sale of their paddy at as low as Rs. 400 per quintal. Gradually the middle ones too will be affected. These policies are affecting whole sections of the peasantry, not only by decreasing their savings through increased costs and low returns, but by wholesale destruction of their economy through such government created crises.

AIKMS has held a number of protests on the issue and farmers are beginning to understand the anti working people policies of the rulers and their foreign masters. The issues of assured government procurement, assured prices and timely declaration of the procurement price are catching up as is the issue of high input costs.

Assembly elections in Jammu & Kashmir

Assembly elections in Jammu & Kashmir are being portrayed as a 'victory' of democracy over militancy and a proof of Kashmiris' will to live in India. The elections were conducted under the guard of 400 companies of paramilitary forces and over 6 lakh troops stationed in Kashmir, that too in several phases to enable massing of security forces in the areas going for elections. And yet the elections in Kashmir were not radically different from the ones held earlier. A number of observers have held that elections were not free.

It has been the pattern of elections in J&K, particularly in Kashmir valley, that security forces coerce the people into voting through a number of mechanisms. As elections, whatever their result, cannot free the people from the acts of security forces, these intimidatory tactics succeed to a large extent, only they render these exercises bereft of any legitimacy in the eyes of the people.

As is usual in elections in Kashmir, the voting percentages were repeatedly revised ultimately to rest on a 'respectable' 44%. However a number of reports made it clear that there was a widespread boycott of elections in the Valley. But it goes to the ingenuity of the Indian election machinery that votes are cast in good number even if there are no electorates. A report wondered as to how over two hundred people could have cast their votes when they could not see any voter in the vicinity of the booth. As far as Jammu is concerned, voting has always been high there and this time too.

This time round, elections were held in the background of "war against global terrorism" being conducted by US imperialists in the subcontinent. This war takes into its fold all liberation struggles, rather these are its primary targets. Indian rulers have, since the beginning of this war, been trying to crush the struggle of Kashmiris for self-determination in the name of combating 'terrorism'. Pakistan is under the scanner of western imperialist powers as they target Islamic fundamentalists in this war. US establishment has been sending equivocal signals on Kashmir issue to keep both govts. of India and Pakistan on tenter-hooks on Kashmir issue and trying to carve out a role for itself in this longstanding dispute between these two neighbours. The rulers of both these countries are so subservient to

Organ of the Central Committee, CPI(ML)

imperialism that they rush to Washington with their report cards but do not wish to talk to each other on the issue. Hurriyat Conference too was subdued in their propagation of boycott this time round.

Just before holding these elections, Central Govt. had blessed the Kashmir Committee led by Ram Jethmalani which had conducted discussions with All Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC). This committee recommended postponement of elections so as to create conditions for participation of APHC in the elections. But the Indian Govt. did not want to lose time in holding these elections and J&K Govt. of National Conference wanted to anyway pre-empt any progress in that talks. The Govt. arrested many important leaders of APHC before elections on frivolous charges and the process of elections was gone through. Suggestions of involving independent observers were brushed aside by the Election Commission saying that it was quite competent to conduct them ignoring the fact that elections in Kashmir and Northeast particularly Nagaland have been blindspots with successive incumbents of Election Commission.

In the elections, the corrupt and incompetent National Conference was defeated. In Jammu region it was swept away while in Kashmir valley PDP of Mufti Mohammed Sayeed made significant dent securing 16 seats. A number of independents too won in the Valley. In Jammu Congress won and BJP was wiped out securing only one seat. RSS supported Jammu State Morcha too was routed.

With regard to the impressive show by PDP it should be borne in mind that M.M. Sayeed fought these elections on the plank similar to that of APHC i.e. vacating the state repression in Kashmir and unconditional talk with 'militants' and ultimately with govt. of Pakistan. To some extent PDP got the votes of anti-NC voters in the valley on this plank. PDP is coming forward to replace NC as the bet for Indian rulers and is pushing for some changes in the attitude towards the struggle of the people of Kashmir. National Conference has lost its credibility among the people of Kashmir for its unashamed tutelage of Central Govts. In fact the major questions of administration are decided upon by the Central Govt. and the state govt. has hardly any power over the Army which is stationed even in the interior areas. The fate of PDP will be no better as Indian govt. is unlikely to make basic changes in its attitude towards Kashmir problem and

the people there are unlikely to be wooed by cosmetic changes.

The verdict in Jammu is significant because the people of Jammu have rejected the stand of RSS for division of J&K on communal lines. For some time RSS has been propagating trifurcation of J&K and had floated Jammu State Morcha. BJP leading the ruling alliance at the Centre could not openly support RSS stand but viewed it positively. The drubbing received by RSS floated front showed that people of Jammu are against communal division of J&K. This is the positive side of the outcome of these elections.

The struggle of the people of Jammu & Kashmir continues. The Govt. is branding attacks on the security forces in Kashmir as 'desperate attacks' of militants after the successful elections in J&K. In fact the attacks and counterattacks are continuing and terming them desperate attacks does not change the situation one bit. With time, the Govt. will revert to old propaganda, from 'desperate' attacks to 'deliberate' attacks.

Elections of the kind organized recently will not be able to contribute towards solution of the problem. Indian ruling classes are well aware what would be the outcome of the elections in case really free and fair elections are held with the promise of the right to elected representatives to take decision with regard to the destiny of the Kashmiri people. That is why they keep the election process firmly in their control.

Govt. should neither delude itself nor the people that it can solve Kashmir problem by staging such elections. There is always the danger of propagandists being carried away by their own propaganda. But the harsh reality is bound to assert itself. Govt. should open dialogue with all organizations, representatives of all sections of people of Jammu & Kashmir. Only a substantial and meaningful dialogue involving govts. of India and Pakistan and representatives of the people of J&K with a clear understanding that the Kashmir issue will be solved on the basis of wishes of the people of Kashmir, can contribute to solving this longstanding problem. Indian Govt. is firmly set against this course and hence these elections will not basically alter the situation.

Death Sentence For the Victim

Is Capital Punishment Needed for Rape?

The issue of death sentence for rapists is once again being seriously advocated by the Central Home Minister L.K. Advani. Even earlier in the life of the current BJP Govt., he had mooted his convictions on the issue. This time he has spoken concretely about bringing a bill, saying that MPs are asking why rape, a crime 'graver than homicide' should be punished by a lesser sentence. Unfortunately a section of women MPs belonging to reactionary parties were asking such questions publicly and hysterically advocating such a sentence. Flag bearer of the fascist brigade, George Fernandes, is a step ahead – 'Shoot them down' is his position on rapists (as reported by Hindustan Times in November 2002). According to him this is how the Chinese deal with corruption.

A large cross-section of women commentators, organizations and activists, as well as newspaper editorials have responded with dismay, disdain and dismissal to this populist and fascist advocacy. The same day as George Fernandes espoused the gun, a gang rape victim of Bhuwaneshwar went public, condemning the 'publicity stunts'. She has echoed the words of all those who have spent time and energy seriously examining violence against women, especially rape – inevitability of punishment, not severity of punishment, is the need.

The immediate provocation for the current discourse was the rape of a medical student in broad daylight, at the centre of a busy road a stone's throw away from the office of the Police Commissioner in Delhi. A city with a 2% conviction in rape cases, witness to daily incidents of violent sexual assaults on women, this was the fourth high profile case over as many months in its daily record of a case or two. Around four months earlier, a student of Law Centre of Delhi University was forcibly pulled into a car with stained windows, within the campus around 7 p.m., again a stone's throw away from a police vehicle. She was gang raped and thrown out of the car, whereupon she went to the police. Awfully, it turned out that a similar incident involving the same boys had befallen her earlier in the campus, but

she had not dared to speak out. Police emphasized this aspect of the story; the girl, an outsider, fled the city after a few days. Students agitated and demonstrated for effecting arrests – the police sat pretty; the victim had 'gone', how was arrest possible? The students too sat silent after mandatory protests. Within days of pouring police into the campus for 'security' (but not for catching the culprits) another campus resident student caught her own molester – an off-duty policeman. The local police refused to register a case until she and other students shook up senior officers. Few weeks down, a young girl who performs in a dance troupe which amuses the city's rich and powerful at parties and weddings, was chased by six boys in a car at night. She was with a friend in another car. Her car was forced to stop, she was abducted and gang raped. She complained to the police. Newspapers recorded evidence of a local guard who saw the abduction. On her complaint, an ex-ABVP leader was arrested. The police state that in her high profile 'identification parade' when brought face to face with the politically powerful rapists, she refused to identify the boy, and the 'reality' is that she chickened out of a fixed 'deal' seeing the number of boys. Then the police kindly found her cellular phone which 'proved' she was not where she says she was.

Is there then any wonder that in the case of the medical student, she refused to give a statement to the police, she refused to take part in the identification parade? Though the police had an informal statement and a totally tell tale mark of identification, it took a rally of over 1000 students to ensure arrest of the rapist. Can campus law students forget Priyadarshini Mahtoo – a law student, harassed by an ACP's son, murdered by him despite publicly known complaints and a personal police security, but whose case fell through in court due to faulty police investigation?

The running thread through the cases in Delhi, which also fuels the fury of the noose advocates among middle classes, is the faulty police investigations and lack of arrests, leading to lack of conviction. The partially successful and biggest struggle in Delhi against sexual harassment was of a nurse by the Director of LRS TB Hospital, fought by the hospital employees of Delhi. Another successfully fought and won case was of sexual harassment of postgraduate women students of the LNJP medical college by a senior doctor –

but not before doctors' militant protests, with several criminal cases being registered against the victims and those who fought for them. The English media, the elite and of course the police do not like these cases, which upset their notions of the 'status quo'!

In fact the current case fanned and brought out all sorts of elitist prejudices, which cannot help the struggle against violence on women. The aspects were rather 'picture perfect'. The rapist was a young jhuggi resident – a section of students, the authorities of the hospital and police officers gave full play to their class prejudices. Safety lay in a 'closed campus' (while the rape occurred outside!), students should be separated by a wall from the employees' quarters complex; violence on women was perpetrated by employees, their guests and the dwellers of neighbouring jhuggis. Not a word of concern about growing joblessness, about the vast section of youth with no jobs, little access to education, but easy access to drugs, liquor, local Mafia, petty crimes, gambling – all of which the police is to stop. The whole city is alive with hoardings, pictures, commercials blasting out a crash commercialization of women's bodies; with such bodies popping out of advertisements of cars, tablespoons, pens and computers and even media – the "Aajtak" has several neon advertisements of a semi-clad woman sailing down a ramp to prove that it has the 'first eyes' on news.

A Delhi police survey published by a leading newspaper in the middle of all the hysterical outbursts against jhuggi dwellers' morals, soured the situation. It showed that 52% of eve teasers were businessmen, and that less than 2% of them were illiterates. A good majority was educated and moneyed. Interestingly, all the heightened police presence caught another eve teaser outside the same medical college – an engineer.

Within days of the case mentioned, a small report crept into some newspapers of a nine year old rape victim lying unattended in GTB Hospital of Delhi for a few hours, unconscious and bleeding. Her father was a poor worker, a jhuggi dweller. There were no parliamentary questions, no newspaper editorials and only few women's organizations condemned this situation. The point is clear enough.

The debate has, however, highlighted many serious questions that women's organizations have long striven to highlight. One is the

very definition of 'rape', which excludes several aspects of sexual violence. The second is of the sieve – like, insensitive, class biased, gender biased police investigations which result only in acquittals.

Speedy trials, defense of victim's identify, speed in recording of FIR, not taking the victim through several verbal rapes – all these are issues needing urgent redressal. L.K. Advani advocates 'hanging' – these are cases where the victim is often the only witness, and if conviction depends on her, what chance has she to escape murder? Secondly, convictions are even less likely than now, when the question of capital punishment is involved. Thirdly, who constitutes the rapist? Would LK Advani extend his anger to the bestial brutes of his Hindutva force in Gujarat who have not only gang rapes, mass rapes but several bestial sexual crimes adorning their anti-Muslim campaign?

The Supreme Court absolved four gang rapists – all policemen – over twenty years ago in the Mathura case – she was 'accustomed to intercourse'. On 12th Nov. 2002, the cabinet has taken a decision to make a long awaited amendment to the Indian Evidence Act 1872, "so that the previous character of a rape victim in her cross examination is no longer relevant." Rather than showing genuine concern by ensuring swift passage of this long overdue step, time is being wasted on populist, fascist posturing.

Why are they being termed 'posturing'? When large-scale bestial rape is allowed for politicians in the name of 'religious backlash' – can that society, system or party get away with any convincing position on women's rights? When power rape is the rule of villages all over India except where militant peasant movements defend women, can hanging a perverted jobless youth send the message of "no to violence against women"?

Women's organizations need to use every opportunity to carry the debates on rape and violence not only among women but also amongst the students and youth. Without exposing both prejudices and posturing of the ruling classes even reforms are not possible, leave alone actually fighting the forces of violence on women.

Kaloji Narayan Rao Passes Away

Prajakavi Kaloji Narayan Rao passed away on November 13th 2002 at NIMS, Hyderabad. He was 89 years old.

Prajakavi is the single title that captures the richness and variety of Kaloji Narayan Rao's qualities. A man of the people, a poet of the people His choice of language, form and subject matter, his very practice of poetry was integral to his commitment to the cause of ordinary people. His abiding sense of humour, his irony and his brutal insistence on honesty apart, He was deeply political and had been in the vanguard of many a protest and struggle.



Born on 9th September 1914, in Warangal, Kaloji as a student at the age of 16, he protested against Nizam's rule. He had practised as a lawyer but writing was where his heart lay. The first modern Telugu poet to write free verse, Kaloji's poetry (consisting of ten volumes) is a running commentary on the historical, socio-political and cultural aspects of his time. Kaloji

was at the forefront of all significant struggles that make up the history of the erstwhile Hyderabad state. His commitment to human rights made him an active member of the Tarkunde Committee. He contested elections thrice and once got elected as a member of the Legislative Council. His most significant contest was in 1977 from Satupally (Khammam) against Vengal Rao, then Chief Minister, who symbolized the 'emergency' rule in Andhra Pradesh.

Siricilla and Jagityal areas were declared as disturbed areas to suppress the Godavari valley resistance struggle. Kaloji had responded and helped to the movement. Whatever the form of state repression Kaloji fought against that to protect civil and democratic rights of the people.

<p>To, <u>Book Post</u></p>	<p>Rally Against Imperialist Globalization Hyderabad January 4, 2002</p>
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