

# for a proletarian party

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## Nandigram: An Analysis

When the armed CPIM hooligans and party-chieftains were celebrating their 'victory' over Nandigram, their hired-hooligans and armed-cadres were celebrating victory in their prolonged war of capturing Nandigram by jubilantly raping women, killing, maiming persons and razing, burning down houses after houses for some days, the question that vexed the struggling workers and peasants and revolutionary activists is: What will happen to Nandigram, next? If any definite answer is unavailable, this question will naturally give rise to some sort of haunting pessimism, even though hidden, like: "*Then... is Nandigram finished!*" To get a definite and also correct answer, we must start with another question: What is really meant by 'Nandigram'? For which 'Nandigram' are you concerned or worried! The reason behind this *troublesome* question is that during the whole of the Nandigram episode the view of bourgeois media, be those in favour of CPIM or those against CPIM, had a sway; revolutionary communist viewpoint was markedly missing even among the so-called Communist Revolutionary [henceforth 'CR'] Camp whose 'mass' influence is infinitesimally tiny; and these led to immersion or submerging of CR activists in swarming media-propagated notions.

The media, both pro- and anti- Nandigram struggle, portrayed Nandigram struggle as a fight for 'area grabbing', naturally for 'electoral gains', between CPIM and TMC (or TMC led bloc). As evidence they could illustrate # the fleeing of CPIM leaders, activists with family from Nandigram, and then fleeing of BUPC supporters from the other side of the 'border' or 'line-of-control'; then, # TMC's active help and role behind the fighting platform of Nandigram, i.e., the BUPC, to the extent of even well-nigh usurping 'control'; plus, # the continuous battle between armed cadres [and CPIM-hired hooligans] of both sides that naturally hints at active and regular supplies of arms and ammunitions from two warring parties, both TMC and CPIM. There were media stories hinting involvement of the Maoists too in the battle there after the March 14 incident. But nobody, even none of the parties or organisations mentioned above, tried to show and emphasize that *it was those rebel 'ordinary villagers' who really fought the **decisive battles** in Nandigram and most crucial results were decided by those thousands of 'ordinary' rebels themselves; and so, that organisation argued, for the sake of further development of their struggle the toiling people should come up to take steering wheel of its own struggle and organisation in their own hands, they should take their destiny in their own hands!!*

As for example: ■ Consider the very beginning of the battle, January 1st week — Who made Nandigram a virtual fortress digging up roads and pulling down bridges? How many tens or hundreds of thousands of man-days could it take to achieve such a feat what those 'ordinary' folks did in a single day? More importantly, just think *can any party of establishment and their leaders ever dream it or dare to instruct the masses for such an act?* No revolutionary party/group was there at that time, neither any of them could imagine such a step at that time. Then, who 'designed' such a move and how was that achieved? It is those ordinary masses of toilers, scores of thousands, who themselves summed up the 'lesson of Singur' in their own way and thought of obstructing the brutal anti-people state machinery, the govt forces, from entering Nandigram. ■ CPIM leaders are still trying to befool or baffle the 'intelligentsia' saying 'why did nobody

of them tell anything about *our* [i.e. CPIM's] evicted people!' We are not going to the *mess* the CPIM leaders made about their 'own' evicted people by continuously giving totally different numbers of the latter, but rather an unpleasant counter-question: why were the CPIM people 'evicted' after *7th January*? *What CPIM did there on 7th January*? Who killed those three first martyrs of 2007 in Nandigram and under whose instruction were they killed? Dare Karat-Yechuri-&-co answer this? Didn't this brutal act of CPIM led to bursting of mass-anger and hatred against them in Nandigram? Who continuously threatened Nandigram that land will be forcefully grabbed there for 'industrialisation' before and even after CM's 'withdrawal gesture'? And finally, why CPIM didn't let most of those evicted CPIM persons go back when situation for that was ready, i.e., by May-June'07? Was that not for the single purpose of using them only as 'trump-card'? x Consider a *least media-focused episode*, that of the 16th March. CPIM party thugs and state police forces together attacked Nandigram on 14th March; mass-carnage, gang rapes and ... what not followed that raid! The Governor, and a good section of intelligentsia too, felt cold shiver of ghastly terror; members of intelligentsia took to streets on protest.... Everywhere, in all discussions, the violence, state-terror etc filled all the space. Nobody could imagine a 'fight back' to be at all possible. But some 35-40 thousands of those rebel 'ordinary villagers' spontaneously got organised by snowballing from funeral march of a few, and the mournful funeral march 'suddenly' turned into a double-quick resistance march of tens of thousands seething in wrath that overwhelmed police forces and CPIM cadres camping in Sonachura — Nandigram was 're-liberated' within 48 hours of the state sponsored massacre! Again think: who 'decided' that course of action; who 'organised' and 'led' the masses? TMC? SUCI? BUPC local-leadership? Maoists? ... No. Nobody could think of such a measure that time. But that materialised, and the architects-cum-labourers of this move were the masses of toiling people themselves. ***Everybody seems to have forgotten that masses of people, i.e. workers and peasants can think out and do things themselves. Everybody chose not to see that history in its remaking is giving birth to struggles "from below" [and organisations "from below" too in some places]!***

Then why didn't we see any such 'mass spontaneous action' during the gory assault of CPIM in the first two weeks of Nov? Why Nandigram couldn't remain the same, i.e., the indomitable fortress of BUPC? What happened to the 'spontaneity' of the masses? [Of course anybody will admit that 'spontaneity' is not a mechanical thing that can show the same repeated reincarnations time and again like, say, a perfect 'simple harmonic motion' or a 'looping'. Though, even so, there remains the question: why we saw totally different mood of the masses in 7-11 Nov, from what it was 10 months ago, during 7-11 Jan!] What affected them? To understand the reasons we are to diagnose of first 10 months of Nandigram Struggle and look into some factors that influenced the process: (■1) *The internal factor* — but actually we'll see that there were 'two' different crucial internal factors: (■1.A) the factor connected to the 'war', as the battle, a literally speaking 'battle' was going on there for almost ten long months; and then (■1.B) there was the factor connected with 'peace' or the non-war activities of the leadership of both local level BPPC and TMC, etc 'outside' forces; and both these had 'effects' on the 'masses of people' there; in practice these two factors worked hand in hand, they were interconnected; but we'll discuss these

separately only for the benefit of better understanding. And, (■ 2) *The external factor, i.e., the 'environment' within which Nandigram had to fight.*

(■1) As we wrote about the feat of those rebel 'ordinary' village toilers in our editorial < **Nandigram: Some Aspects Seldom Discussed** > in April '07 issue: "During the January-March period ...the Nandigram fighters showed extraordinary (in today's standard) *organised* behaviour and also during their fight *they could cast aside their (old) party-identities*. Months of resistance and the fight back on 16th March shows their organised way of acting evidently, and indeed by their March 16th they overshadowed March 14th." What Nandigram showed on the 1st week of January and 16th March *were not* their exceptional 'behaviour'; spontaneously arranging peoples' night-vigils for months where each day hundreds participated in turn and the striking "Sankh-and-Ajaan" phenomena [Sankh means Conch-Shells the sound of which symbolises start of a puja and Ajaan is prayer call from mosques — these two were used by Nandigram masses to summon people for urgent quick mass-assembly of thousands ready-to-fight] had been continuing there for a long period. *But both the internal factors of 'war' and 'peace' were conducted by the leadership in such a way consciously or unknowingly that led to dampening of the spirit of the masses, the spontaneity, let alone any effort for organising-and-educating the spontaneous 'mass in action' to form a formidable mass-force.*

(■1.A) Nobody saw that there was any conscious, unwearied and continuous attempt on part of the 'leaders' or 'armed-fighters' there to help the struggling masses there to become conscious 'actors' and help them organise, if needed and possible, a peoples' own 'forces'. Rather, what they did de facto meant: making struggling thousands dependent on perhaps a few dozens of 'armed-fighters', and ultimately putting 'arms' *above* the people. Roughly from April till September, a long period of 6 months was there when the 'battle' was confined in a narrow zone, and in that narrowed battle too there was no part for the people. People were taught indirectly that they had no 'business' with the matter of border-war; neither they have any 'business' in policy making. People were taught indirectly that it was better to think of the next election [of Panchayat] where their role would be to 'vote out' CPIM; *people were relegated to the role that parliamentary democracy permit people to do* — but these belong to the 'peace' part. But people knew that the 'border-war' was important for the survival of Nandigram and for that 'important' thing they should recognize the 'beneficial' role of 'external' human agents who 'managed' the supply-lines, who 'train' and/or 'lead' the 'platoon'... the 'beneficial' role of the 'armed-fighters'... the 'beneficial' role of those through which 'aids' were coming... *even the 'benevolent' role*, as some of them told a workers delegation that visited there on May 1, *of the 'intellectuals' who were bringing media limelight to the erstwhile dark Nandigram* [most villages of Nandigram are without electricity] — it is really interesting, the people were tutored this way in our society! *If really the Maoists were there and had some 'command', they too cannot evade responsibility of all these.* And CPIM cunningly, patiently continued the border-war to help the process of making the people reliant on 'external' benefactors, few 'leaders' and 'armed personnel', because they knew ultimately CPIM goons could overwhelm Nandigram only when the masses of people would not repeat another early January or 16th March!

(■1.B) TMC, naturally as a bourgeois parliamentary party, cannot want to see its grip loosening over masses turning anti-CPIM, never can want to see workers-peasants masses leading their own struggle and organisation. *But TMC was not the sole factor there.* The most important factor was 'the masses themselves' who are coming out of the shadows of the past, the habits of the past like that of depending on 'external' 'educated' 'ladies and gentlemen' etc, ***but still couldn't make a decisive break with the past, still the 'old' and the 'new' are mingled inside their consciousness.*** We'll look into this factor again later. The other determining factor was CPIM, who continuously made armed attacks for 2 reasons: the best possible result for them was to 'recapture' Nandigram and keep Nandigram under its boots; the worst possible result for them was that due to continuous armed assault by CPIM the masses there would be compelled to solicit 'armed' help from external forces like the TMC, then the masses will come under TMC's grip which is better than masses building up their own fight and organisation, and if CPIM can portray the Nandigram struggle is a fight between two warring parties or blocs where 'masses of people' have nothing to obtain than sufferings, then that will help CPIM to move closer to its desired best result.

But have 'the masses of people' totally succumbed to dual pressure of TMC and CPIM and became 'just TMC men' or pawns? Certainly No. Then? Firstly, the continuous battle engaged their mind awesomely; plus, they couldn't believe in 'promises' of a Chief Minister that the proposed Chemical Hub will not be set up there, because the govt and CPIM behaved so wickedly that no one can put faith on its promises. Without direct backing of thousands of toiling people there it was not possible to maintain an effective 'line of control' by a handful of armed fighters. Secondly, none of those working as the local level leadership that time could grip with full seriousness the necessity of 'organising and educating' the masses, always keeping them conscious and ready, etc, which eventually made the masses of people disarrayed, or better to say 'passive', for so long a period, at least in the vital May-to-Sept period which gave somewhat a 'breathing space'. But it was *not only readiness* to fight that matters, also, and more importantly, there was the necessity of bringing the masses to 'control' the fight *and* the organisation. Barring a small revolutionary organisation that incidentally had no 'say' there, nobody gripped the theme of reawakening of the workers-peasants masses and the necessary agitation-propaganda thereof. Thirdly, the disarrayed-ness or passivity of masses of people increased with increased 'division' of masses-versus-leaders that was natural to grow due to the role of the not-so-conscious leadership, especially if the leaders enter into the domain of 'governmental administrative activities' generating bureaucratic tendencies among them, obviously keeping the masses at backyard. The peacetime activities of some of the top/middle ranking BUPC leadership also estranged the people. Fourthly, the TMC, either unwittingly or being 'befooled' by CPIM govt, thought and *propagated within the masses in those crucial early-Nov days* that an honourable 'settlement' had been reached, 'we have won', etc; which resulted in further disarrayed-ness and a major section of the masses were taken aback by the sudden high-pitch assaults of CPIM! Though it must be mentioned that in one particular sense, i.e., regarding "the necessity to prolong the 'battle' or keep intact the 'free-of-CPIM zone' at least till next summer", the frame of mind of the masses and the plan of TMC coincided, because, the masses too

believed that keeping their bastion intact *means* keeping CPIM from regaining Panchayat-administration there; and that was due to, what we mentioned earlier, the frame of mind of the masses who *still couldn't make a decisive break with the past, still the 'old' and the 'new' are mingled inside their consciousness*, who still thought and measured win-or-loss mainly in parliamentary-political terms.

(■1. A+B) Ultimately the local leadership had to go to the masses, ultimately again two demonstrations were there on both of which CPIM fired; but it was too late, and the Nov 2nd week demonstrations didn't had the 'mood' of 16th March one. When a rally of some ten thousand went to Nandigram Police Station and urged their help, their presence, with the rallying masses towards interior [which the police declined] — the incident itself portrayed the stark difference of early-Jan-&-16-March with early Nov. May we call it spontaneity 'chained' and 'dampened' for time being due to various factors!

(■2) Now lets see the 'external' factor(s): Nandigram was an isolated rebellious island amidst a sea of enforced-peace; but then their situation *was not as difficult as that of workers of Hindustan Unilever [Garden-Reach, Calcutta] in the late-1980s* in the sense that rebellions amongst workers have in the meantime started, new fighting organisations have cropped up, albeit in a small number of factories, and lately the trend of rural restlessness breaking into rebellion has started too. Recent months showed many cases of rural revolts, and not surprisingly, many such rebels warned the village vested interest nexus: 'We'll make Nandigram here'. It also compelled CPIM to show workers and peasants at large that 'CPIM can crush Nandigram' to frighten the people least they dared to rebel. Any way, the 'environment' is not that favourable for Nandigram that they can depend for help from the quarters of rebelling workers and peasants. The Nandigram rebels' battle for carrying on the fight depended almost solely on themselves. If there were a strong current of 'new' struggles of workers and peasants, if Nandigram got active help from them, Nandigram could found itself on more favourable ground, and would not have to depend on forces 'external' to them. In other words, mainly by extending the area of 'new' struggles and organisations, by broadening the rebel bastions and by intensifying fights, the 'external' world could help Nandigram effectively. But anyway, the situation right now is not like that.

(■1+■2) All these added up to become what it happened in the first two weeks of Nov 07. But we are to remember, Nandigram is not Keshpur-Garbata where the CPIM ousted TMC in area-grabbing fights between two established parties — Nandigram is in some sense a manifestation of the 'new' struggles of masses of people that are coming up. *Elements of 'new' and 'old' were admixed there with the 'old' in dominating position, **but the 'new' announced its birth, its presence there, its possible mightiness, through clarion calls.** So no final verdict can be passed on Nandigram for long term and even for short term.* And then Nandigram, as a rebel spirit is alive in the fights, in the rebellions of workers and peasants in general.

The relatively 'advanced' elements of rebel masses of people in Nandigram are surely summing up the experience of last one year, trying to learn from battles won and lost, and it is very important and vital. As we are finishing this notes,

indications obtained from there declare: contrary to media reports of CPIM 'triumph', 'recapture' and offensive, Nandigram's rebel spirit is still pulsating; they are in no 'surrendering' mood in many villages and that made CPIM rather worried. It is the bounden duty of the class-conscious workers to help them in correctly summing up of the rich experience they went through.

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## **Editorial 2**

### **Asom: Massacre of Tribal People**

#### **Appeal to Workers, Peasants and Toiling Tribal People**

25th November saw the most ugly, most brutal assault and massacre of Tribe People in India 'Independent', and that outrageous scene was enacted in Guwahati, Asom (Assam). At least two hundred tribe people, mostly students and youth, many of them women, were beaten mercilessly in full sight of state police; girl students were paraded naked; many of those beaten died on spot; govt hospital were filled with dead and deadly-injured bodies – so ghastly was the experience that even an Ahomiya youth, who tried his best to rescue a tribal girl forced to run naked on the road in broad daylight, couldn't forget the traumatic experience of him, an Ahomiya medico ran away in frenzy from a govt hospital seeing scores of blood-littered smashed bodies of tribal youths pouring in the hospital....

What was their fault? Those tribal youth assembled and marched at the call of an 'Adivasi' students' association of Asom that organised primarily those who are known as 'Tea-Tribes' — a peculiar name indeed for Tribe People working in the Tea Gardens of Asom, many of them being Santhals (who are perhaps the biggest tribe in India with population of tens of millions) and Mundas, both enslaved and taken from Bengal in the British Period to work in the Tea Gardens. There were also other tribal people in the rally who also didn't get ST status in Asom; and they have been demanding govt acceptance of all Tribe People as 'Scheduled Tribes' and grant of trifling govt 'benefits' like 'reservation' in govt jobs as per constitutional norms. These Tribes, particularly the Santhali, Munda, etc people get that 'ST' status in all other major states barring Asom, and they demanded only that much 'justice' from the Congress led govt of Asom. For that 'sin' or 'audacity' they were taught well by well-trained thugs — *because it is unbelievable that ordinary Ahomiya (Assamese National) people committed such a barbaric act that even would make savages feel shy; and factually too it will be sheer untruth to say that ordinary Ahomiya people neighbouring that site perpetrated that crime even if a section of media propagandised the same saying '...infuriated by unruly attacks of thousands of armed tribal youth on shops, cars, etc the local residents hit back'. Those media-persons never bothered to think: If some 'thousands of armed tribal youth' had really any intention to 'attack', was it possible for their capital town to remain intact? What really happened was that a handful of non-tribal upper-caste miscreants, as part of a well-planned conspiracy, got into the rally of the tribal youth, and they started breaking glass panes of shops and cars etc; and another bigger gang of miscreants, they too were lads of upper-caste-and-prosperous Assamese, riding on motor-bikes fanned up anti-tribal frenzy, they themselves started the brutal attacks, coordinated the whole gruesome affair, while the state police forces acting just like*

onlookers, which proved beyond doubt the governmental instigation and conspiracy of the genocide.

***The revolutionary workers call upon the workers and all toiling people to condemn that barbaric attack on Tribe people; and not only that, they also appeal to the toiling people of Asom and mainland India to come forward in support of all just demands of the Tribal people and to protest vehemently any oppression of tribal people.*** The workers being the most revolutionary class of the society must stand solidly against all sorts of oppressions *including* those oppressions based on non-class categories like caste, nationality-tribe-language-culture-etc, religion, etc. Unless all oppressed people are liberated the working class cannot liberate itself from oppression. It is the bounden duty of the working class to lead the struggle of liberation of the humanity. Besides, it is well known to the workers that those assaulted Tribes in Asom are themselves workers and peasants too, i.e., many of them are our class sisters and brothers and many are our closest ally force in the revolution to come.

The revolutionary workers also call upon all Tribal sisters and brothers, *firstly*, to ponder whether a governmental sanction of ST status can at all alleviate the real socio-economic status of the Tribe people. Think, for example, the Santhals 'enjoy' that ST status in Jharkhand and West Bengal; but what that status meant for millions of them residing there? That ST status couldn't solve the precarious condition of the overwhelming majority of Santhals, that couldn't solve their educational problem, unemployment problem, most importantly their 'land' problem... and the problem of their communally used-and-possessed lands, forests and all natural resources which they 'enjoyed' for thousands of years before the advent of British Raj. Even the governments failed [and also ignored] to make necessary arrangements for education in Santhali language! They should contemplate that whether the problem of the Adivasis can at all be solved *without* a thoroughgoing change of the present 'system', the present 'rule', *without* the take up of the 'power to rule' from the landlords and capitalists by the toiling people of whom they are part and parcel, *without* marching towards 'communal (i.e., social) possession and rational use' of Nature. *It is heartening to find some workers' and peasants' organisations of Asom and Bengal starting revolutionary agitation-propaganda on this issue very promptly.*

*Secondly*, 'militant' form of struggle is not something new for the Adivasi people — they have literally fought for independence against the British rule time and again. How can one forget the glorious HUL rebellion, or great leaders of the battles like Sidho, Kano and Birsa!! In the so-called 'post independence' period too millions of Adivasis participated in all big peasants' revolutionary movements and rebellions. But, after the ignominious decadence and of the rotten 'left's surfaced, with the old dream of liberation lied shattered, an intolerable vacuum of revolutionary politics and Party being apparent even with naked eyes to the laypersons, curious distortions appeared in the arena of struggles: people have no revolutionary party to lead them and yet people cannot sit quiet with mounting pressure of oppression on them. The would-be or wannabe bourgeoisie of oppressed nations and tribes came forward to fill the vacuum along with other reactionary and reformist forces present in the society. The 'reformist bourgeois' within the mindset took the opportunity due to the weakness of the

'revolutionary proletariat' within. We witnessed militant fights, but this time well within the boundary of bourgeois constitutional parliamentary politics and never against the 'system' or 'Raj' that rules and oppresses: for example, take the most prominent of those fights — the protracted fight for a separate state (in the form of 'Jharkhand'). A separate state was won, but what change of material and spiritual conditions was achieved for the millions those who fought for it? The point is: the Adivasi people are never afraid to confront the oppressors in a militant way, OK; but for what end the Adivasi youth will shed their own blood and even face martyrdom?? Do some petty reforms worth those gallant fights? This question needs serious consideration, since each violent action of governments and oppressors creates ground for militant 'tit-for-tat' like reactions; and in this case, this massacre surely will motivate a section of Adivasi youth to take violent retaliatory measures to compel the violent govt to grant ST status.

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### **Editorial 3**

## **Significance of the Anti-POSCO Struggle**

The anti-POSCO agitation drew great attention not very long when the struggling people there took a challenging step by 'imprisoning' or detaining some South Korean officials of POSCO who dared to infiltrate within the area of their proposed 'site'. But, the anti-POSCO peoples' struggle took a grave turn with the pro-POSCO party-government lobby in Orissa led by the BJD-BJP alliance and particularly foreign capitalist friendly BJD Chief Minister and the local BJD MLA replicating the notorious 'Nandigram-recapture conspiracy' of CPIM in Jagatsighpur district of Orissa against the anti-POSCO agitators there. The bourgeois media took its investor-friendly role by highlighting the pro-POSCO govt-BJD sponsored attacks on the struggling people there as 'movement' by pro-POSCO 'people!' — as if the ongoing struggle is a fight between two section of the people there and as if a section of the people are in favour of the proposed project! But anyway, the ruling BJD is perhaps more 'wise' now after taking lessons from the Nandigram 'recapture' episode, they are utilising their governmental forces too by deploying armed police there together with BJD mercenaries. Certainly the revolutionary workers will stand by the side of the anti-POSCO struggle and the struggling people there. Certainly they will have to come forward to help the struggle. But apart from that there are some other features too that this struggle has objectively brought forward and those demand serious consideration.

It has been reported in the media that POSCO is going to invest Rs 510 billion or more than half trillion rupees. If that happens, it will be the largest single foreign direct investment in India. Showing the people this fat red herring, the 'prospect' of huge 'development', 'industrialisation', 'chances of employment generation' and etc the govt is giving away thousands of acre of land to POSCO of which there are 3000 acres of forest land! But not only that, the govt is giving away two iron mines to that firm from which they will have the right to excavate and export any amount of iron ore out of India. And the MOU (memorandum of understanding) signed between POSCO and the govt of Orissa permits the firm to export almost as much ore they will use here in the proposed plant, which is nothing but letting a foreign firm loot natural resources of this country! A source mentions that just from the 'ore export business' POSCO will profit at least 1

trillion rupees, i.e., twice the value of their investment here. So loot of natural resources will be twice the amount invested here for 'industrialisation', and our rulers call this brazen betrayal of national interest as 'development' and are trying to force-feed us their make-believe story of development!

But POSCO is not the exceptional case. Major part of India's mineral wealth is concentrated in Orissa, Jharkhand and Chattisgarh. And different state governments and central govt have given rights to many foreign and native Capitalists to loot this wealth through different MOU-s. Orissa is perhaps on the top of the 'hit-list' of these capitalists. Within next 25 years some big companies are going to loot 41% of Bauxite (Aluminium ore), 26% of Iron ore, 68% of Chromium ore and 20% of Manganese ore from this state. An organisation, 'LOKAPAKHYA' showed that the value of Bauxite to be looted from only Kasipur district is 2.88 trillion rupees as per current price and for that the govt of Orissa will get a ridiculously low royalty of only 12 billion rupees!! The looter company will pay the govt 0.6% of the value looted as royalty — and the govt calls this shameless loot as 'development', 'industrialisation'!!!

Alongside this veritably unhindered plunder of mineral wealth, some other 'projects' are in the pipeline in Orissa recently, of which the first name to come is that of a TATA project in Kalinganagar, and for the resisting the forced- eviction for that project 13 tribe people were killed by the police in early 2006. For all such projects mainly the Adivasi people i.e. the tribe people are to suffer the pain of eviction. Most probably there are two reasons behind the fact that the Adivasi people are mainly facing eviction. Firstly, the places with abundant mineral wealth are generally not much fertile. Fertile lands from the Adivasi people had been already looted in the past to settle other agricultural communities there, and hence the Adivasis had to flock in such well nigh barren and forest areas. Then, for looting of the mineral wealth, the Adivasi people will now to be evicted from such places! 73% of the tribe people in India inhabit Orissa, Jharkhand and Madhyapradesh — the most mineral wealthy states. Perhaps the second reason is that: as the Adivasi people are the most economically weak section and helpless, and so they were in the main targeted in all eviction-for-industry drives in the past. Adivasi people are only 7.5% of the total population of India, but among the 'displaced' or 'internal-refugee' population of India due to various 'development' drives from 1950s till 1990s the Adivasi people constitute 40%!! Among those evicted due to various 'development' projects in Orissa alone in between 1950 and 1995, 40% are Tribe people, 20% are Dalits and another 20% are OBC!! All these evicted people and people in general saw by their bitter experience that the 'promises' given by leaders regarding 'jobs' etc are hogwash. Hence, for every eviction-development program now we see resistance movements cropping up. Such a heroic fight we have seen in Kalinganagar; it was not a day's gallant resistance, but a protracted peoples resistance for months. People are getting organised, starting to fight other projects too like the anti-POSCO, anti-HINDALCO, anti-VEDANTA etc struggles.

Two characteristics of these struggles are highly important. Firstly, in most of such struggles we are witnessing that the people are distancing themselves from the established parties of various colours, as the people have become more or less disgruntled by the betrayal of all established parties, by their abject surrender to the liberalisation-globalisation bandwagon. Secondly, these struggles are

not going through the 'pattern' of movements that we see in case of so-called 'movements' led by the established parties and the media-adorned NGO-pattern: they are not going through tedious and protracted 'appeals' and other 'peaceful' programs, rather quickly they are turning militant facing the violence of govt-capitalists-parties combine and the state-terror that is being unleashed on them.

Though these struggles, the anti-POSCO, Kalinganagr struggle, etc are on the face of it struggles against eviction, but in reality those struggles are against the imperialist sponsored-dictated economic policies, against foreign and native capitalists, against the state that let the capitalists whimsically, outrageously, unlimitedly plunder nature. So, essentially, these struggles are part of or prelude to the countrywide revolutionary struggle of the working class, peasantry and all other toiling people towards establishing social control over economy, society and nature at large. Keeping that future struggle in mind the advanced fighters of the working class must organise itself as a class-conscious force; and alongside this they are to understand the significance of the struggles of poor toiling people of India including these struggles of the Tribe people, they are to stand by the side of these struggles as co-fighters.

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#### **Editorial 4**

### **Rural Bengal Blazing Again**

In our editorial "Recent Rural Restlessness In West Bengal" published in **October 2004** we concluded "... ..and the **sudden party-govt violence may pull a sudden break to the motion, the trend of the rural toilers for a time being**, for a few days or months, etc. But one thing they, as rulers, do not see — ultimately the people will reap. **That the three incidents of the AUSH GRAM villages show a trend, which may be feeble-but-emerging, was perhaps reaffirmed again by an incident in a nearby block within another fortnight.** The issue there was the same. **But the village poor are not just unhappy with the corruption in ration distribution — they are unhappy with 'everything going on', the hell-of-a-life which is turning harder and harder each day....** Revolutionary communists know that they *need not* 'ignite', need not 'hatch up' or 'plan' "peoples' movement" from above, 'design a movement' or something like that. ..."

In this October 2007, we can say that the mentioned "trend" surfaced again and the occasion now is the same: corruption in ration distribution. In 2004 the events took place in a time span a couple of weeks in Sept – Oct and in 2007 the first explosion occurred on 16th Sept, Sunday, and after 4 weeks, till this day in November [5th] there is no sign of abating of either the spread or the heat of revolts. **The incidents 3 years back also occurred in the same months — Bhadra & Ashwin, the cruellest months for the village poor folks as described in a more than four-century-old literature, and the festive season of Durgapuja of the Bengali Babu-s! 60 years of 'Independence', 30 years of 'Left Govt' didn't change the harshness of Bhadra-Ashwin for the rural poor of Bengal!!** In 2004, the spread of the revolts was just some villages in two blocks in a single district, Bardhaman. In 2007, revolts did spread like more rapid wildfire in south Bengal — from Bankura, then Birbhum, then Musrshidabad, and then Bardhaman, Nadia, 24-Parganas, then the revolt even penetrated Malda in North Bengal.... Perhaps rebellions

will expand more in coming few days and till the arrival of busy harvest season.

Everyone already knows events, however, to see some salient points of mass 'spontaneity' two events may be re-visited. On 16th Sept near Sonamukhi, Bankura, villagers went to voice their complaint to the Panchayat leader who happens to be a CPIM leader too about corruption of Ration-dealer and unavailability of food grains in Public Distribution System for months. But the CPIM Babu had no time, not a minute, for those rustic poor. They have more important task — their party conference was going on.... The CPIM men tried to chuck them out humiliatingly. The villagers already knew by their hard experiences that the rural moneybags are flourishing under the patronage of CPIM; a Party-Panchayat-Administration-Rich folk evil nexus is ruling Bengal villages. They met much maltreatment from the party bosses and rich folks since years. But this time this neglect, this utter disdain for the rural poor, made the mob infuriated. They attacked the CPIM conference, smashed and burnt down everything there, had the leader-babu-s beaten. The police came to rescue the CPIM leaders and battle between police and villagers followed. Canning, Tear-Gassing, even Firing... what not the police did! Two persons got bullet injuries. *The news of the revolt at noon reached villages after villages, courtesy the Media, within afternoon. And in the afternoon in a village in Barjora block of Bankura, thousands assembled to teach the corrupt dealers a tough lesson.* They knew what police would do. But they were not frightened. The dealer closed down his steel shutter gates and from inside his house opened fire on the mob. **Five persons got injured, but the mob didn't retreat an inch!** *As an activist who was later reporting telephonically commented: ...you can guess who are rebelling and which section is rebelling, standing in forefront just from the surnames of those injured: Bagdi, Ruidas, Das, all Dalits, all Labourers!* Police came, and seeing the mood of the masses, smelt danger. By persuasion through tender requests and arresting the culprit dealer on spot the police boss could calm the villagers. Then onwards the revolts started spreading to newer places and on the other hand police atrocities claimed two lives, the first martyr was poor toiler and flood victim Sheikh Ayub who just came to see whether any relief materials for flood-victims were being distributed from the Block-Office, a police bullet pierced his head. CPIM cried foul: 'conspiracy of opposition parties'! But the police bosses admitted: the poor villagers are rebelling themselves, not by any instigation of any party whatsoever, plus, things are going out of their hands! Yes, the masses while revolting didn't need a 'party', didn't wait for a 'party' of the toiling classes; in a condition of party-less-ness as far as a true proletarian party is concerned, after decades of forced-slumber courtesy the revisionists like CPIM, the masses are spontaneously deciding to rebel in their own way by shedding off their old party loyalties, because they cannot bear anymore the hellish 'life' with which the system has provided them.

Revolutionary proletariat know that they *need not* 'ignite', need not 'hatch up' or 'plan' "peoples' movement" from above, 'design a movement' or something like that. People, by their own, have perhaps taught the 'revolutionary' organisations working in rural areas that very simple truth, that they can do their protest movements by themselves; and those CR organisations need not bother about 'building up united movement against ration corruption' etc. Rather their task should be to concentrate on revolutionary agitation-propaganda among the rural poor. They should not think derive that the sole 'cause' of people's unrest

is corruption only in Public distribution System, because that was not *the* 'cause' but rather the 'occasion' or 'juncture' that provided the flashpoint, that led to outbursts of rebellion; in other words, corruption in Public distribution System acted as an effective spark-plug that ignited the inflammable minds of the masses; the village poor are not just unhappy with the corruption in ration distribution, they are unhappy with 'everything going on', the hell-of-a-life which is turning harder and harder each day. The govt is just playing with the poor, it is evident from their BPL scheme that excluded many poor from the governments' 'BPL list of poor', that have placed a sizeable section of the poor in APL category as if they are poor no more, rampant corruption of govt and party officialdom is eating up the paltry govt 'alms' or subsidies. [A topical report in Times Of India presented alarming revelations: # WB is second only after UP in PDS scam; # ration-scam in WB alone is in the tune of Rs 19,000 million (about \$ half billion), and so on! A startled reader exclaimed, '*If they pay just 1% of that to the party as protection money, that will mean \$50 million 'donation' a year for Bengal CPIM from this sphere only!*'] The governments are depriving the poor of basic amenities of civilisation. On the other hand the wealth of the prosperous people is increasing, vulgar show of affluence is blatantly demonstrating the ever-widening social cleavage. For this the toiling poor are getting alienated from the party, for which, in the past, they have done so much! *This doesn't, of course, mean an alienation from parliamentary politics as such.* For gyrating, gravitating the consciousness of the rural poor towards revolutionary politics, the revolutionaries, *particularly revolutionary workers' teams, need to conduct intensive and extensive revolutionary agitation-propaganda in rural areas.* This is becoming extremely important, more so because the masses of toilers have started throwing off the shackles of submissiveness.

People have taken up whips in their own hand — and that should be congratulated, encouraged. Fights and fighting unity, organisation of rural toiling people can only come up from below; people should take control over their destiny, which in the ultimate sense means not only taking up whips in their own hands, but also taking up the rein, the 'control', in their hands. This theme should be taken to the rural toiling poor with utmost urgency.

It should be utter foolishness and also betrayal to the cause of revolution if any revolutionary group jumps on the situation with the narrow interest of increasing own organisation 'utilising' this rebelling mood of the masses by putting up slogans 'to fight corruption' under its own banner or under a so-called 'all-party' assembly, slogans for 'monitoring committees', etc. And it should also be treacherous if few 'super-active' cadres take things in their own hands keeping the villagers as 'admiring [but passive] onlookers' and distribute stocks confiscated from dealers!

Rural poor, i.e., agricultural labourers and toiling peasants, will have mainly two types of opposition in this fight of theirs. **(1)** The ruling party, CPIM and its govt and armed machineries of party and govt will start a two-pronged effort: **(i)** starting to 'regularise' ration supply a little, giving 'token' punishments to some topmost corrupt dealers, perhaps a couple of petty govt officials too, starting to distribute few more breadcrumbs through 'relief', '100-days-work' type programs, some token helps for poor households if they can, etc to placate the rural poor; **(ii)** with vengeance let loose their 'terror machine' on some troubled

villages to 'spread' their lesson. **(2)** The opposition parties, particularly the TMC led by Ms Mamata Banerjee, will jump on with eyes fixed to their main target: cash-in the mood of the masses in the next panchayat election, then next snap poll that might come. Repeated demands of CBI enquiries is a way to dissuade the masses from taking up the cudgel in their own hands, instead sit idle putting faith on some tiny machinery of the present state-power. In the final analysis all of those parliamentary parties will target first to 'disarm' the masses.

But what are the 'arms' or weapons that the rebel rural poor have at their disposal and are using too? Those weapons are **(A)** their unity cutting across their 'old' party-allegiance *and shedding, throwing off their old party loyalties*, **(B)** their resolve to fight back, their unwillingness to tolerate this hell like life of theirs, the arrogance, highhandedness of the party-panchayat-govt-babus, the utter contempt these latter show to the poor in everyday experiences, and **(C)** their effort to take the whips in their own hands. This is the 'new' trend in which further lies their urge to have the "rein", the "steering wheel" too in their own hands. Revolutionary activists must spread this message that *the rural poor should never abandon these weapons* — If the rural poor put faith on some party or other, give up their whips to the leaders, that will mean surrendering their weapons, and they will again be deceived, cheated. Haven't they been cheated enough by the CPIM by putting faith on this party for so long!

Perhaps this spate of revolts will subside within next month [Aghran] or so by the arrival of the busy harvesting season. But the spirit will not die. The people have shown their trend, taught lessons to all concerned in the society including revolutionary groups; the rebel people are also learning lessons — how different parties are behaving, how the CPIM is guarding the ration-dealers, *even defending 'corruption' on the plea of 'very small commissions' [!] that dealers get*, and so on; and what is more, they will remember how they 'enjoyed' this taking up of whips in their own hand, how the village bosses were frightened and also yielded at some places, how ration regularised only by pressure from below. Even if rebel villagers seem to 'go back to the fold' of CPIM in terms of 'voting' or by not joining any opposition party/group, everything *will not be* the same. That's true and sure!

However, working class activists and organisers should keep in mind that the rural toiling masses, particularly the agricultural labourers and poor peasants have some *extra* difficulties in building their own organisations; because unlike workers, who intrinsically has the tradition of TU organisation and struggle, the village poor have no such tradition; neither they constitute a homogeneous class, nor they are objectively 'organised' by the production process itself. In the internationally revolutionary days after the Soviet Revolution, during the early days of 3rd International, the extreme difficulty of forming agricultural labourers' organisation even in highly developed capitalist country like Great Britain [which had 'no peasantry', only capitalist farmers and labourers] was observed. But then, the people have almost a century's experience more at present; they saw rise and fall of the peoples' powers, rise and fall of parties that led revolutions, they suffered the great Defeat. Now, in a party-less condition they have started to rebel. They are showing unconsciously what they have in store inside their own 'sum-up' of the past. It will be imprudent to chalk out *innovatively* some organisational form subjectively. We need to study the objectivity of the

new movements. If the masses are able to form some sort of organisation of their own independently, that will provide lessons too. Let us emphasise again — all these rebellions are taking place *in the period of defeat* and *in the condition of party-less-ness*. Therefore, the old, habitual ‘pattern’ of thinking of providing the people with the “peasants’ mass organisation *under* the party”, the percept of trying to ‘fit’ the rebellions and rural rebel-toilers in the so-called ‘mass organisation’ framework of the revolutionary groups, etc will not only be non-functional and unworkable *but also disastrous for the whole development of struggles of the people and more importantly the organisations coming up from below*.

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### Editorial 5

## “Save RAMSETU” versus “SETHU SAMUDRAM Canal Project”

It’s not ‘like a bridge on the troubled water’, rather it’s like a troubled ‘bridge’ under water, the mythical “RAMSETU” or “Adam’s Bridge” that is obstructing the Govt of India’s and DMK’s or DMK supremo and Tamilnadu Chief Ministers Karunanidhi’s dream project of Sethu Samudram Canal, the canal that will, as they claim, join India’s East Coast with West Coast, save time for vessels from Europe and Africa to reach eastern and south eastern ports of India, particularly Tuticorin and then Chennai, business around Tuticorin and overall in TN will thrive... and will harvest good revenue that will cover the construction and maintenance [mainly dredging] costs, yield profits... etc. But neither DMK nor the Congress can claim to be the first to conceptualise that project — almost two centuries ago, in the early 19th century, some British naval ensigns and officers started thinking about this probable passage-way to avoid sailing around Sri Lanka [see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rama%27s\\_Bridge](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rama%27s_Bridge)]; and in the recent most phase, the BJP led NDA govt masterminded the project in 2001 and in the same year that project was there in the list of ‘pledges’ in election manifesto of the now-opposition party of TN, the ADMK led by Mrs Jayalalitha. Surprisingly BJP & ADMK made volte-face and opposing the project; though it is not at all a ‘surprising’ behaviour as far as all the Indian Parliamentary Parties are concerned: they somersault easily to opposite positions when in ‘power’ and when out of it. But some things that happened in this process and regarding this project are very interesting, and noteworthy too for the revolutionary proletariat. Let us go straight to the points.

When the project went for a judicial ‘review’ to the Supreme Court, suddenly many things sprang up in the media. Some arch-Hindu, or one may incline to use adjectives like ‘cunning, fraud, pseudo-scientific imperialist-sponsored Hindu fundamentalist’ Internet media who always try to put a quasi-scientific label to all religious mythological *puranas and epics* stepped up a propaganda: the RAMSETU of Hindu legends or Adam’s Bridge of [linguistically] Semitic legends is actually a *non-natural* bridge *made* about 1.75 million years ago that purportedly coincides with the era of Ram’s reign and that’s conclusively proven by some NASA photographs from their orbiting satellites. It ignited the minds of all fundamentalist Hindu organisations who in turn intensified their media hypes against the governmental intention to break apart some metres of the bridge built by the monkey-fighters by blessings of Lord Ram, a bridge bearing his

name, and what an audacity it is that the govt in its affidavit to the supreme court dared to write that there is no historical proof regarding that structure was built by Ram's military!! So, though in the meantime NASA spokesperson denied that they share the opinion allegedly bearing their organisation's name though the picture was definitely theirs, and even clarified that no such opinion regarding how the underwater structure was built or created can at all be formed from a satellite picture taken from a distance of hundreds of miles; though many historians, geographers, geologists declared that structure to be a naturally-formed one, that there is no scientific proof of human civilisation in that part of the world before that supposed 1.75 million years — the govt of India rushed to 'repair' the 'damage' caused by 'hurting sentiments of Hindu people' and totally withdrew its own affidavit from the supreme court praying some time to produce another. In the past too we saw many such fabrications from many Indian sources and also some foreigners to put 'scientific' tag on all Hindu Myths, who can forget the great fraud Eric von Daniken and his notorious book 'Chariot of Gods'... ... we also saw strong rebuttal of all these rubbishes by many scientists including eminent ones like late Prof Meghnad Saha and among the contemporaries Prof J B Narlikar etc. But anyway, in India, the so-called fifth largest scientists-and-technologists hub of the world, those rubbishes fill the bookshelves of libraries and stores and really scientific refutations of those rubbishes sell too little! And why not: you'll find astrologer's stone-ring clad fingers keying sophisticated computer programs, Idols regularly visiting temples, some space scientists too were caught red-handed by reporters while praying at Tirupathi temple for successful launch of rockets ... and matrimonial columns full with proud announcement of 'caste's of 'foreign' trained or 'foreign' dwelling professionals... etc. And so the Govt of India, at this 21st century, while planning for a 'lunar voyage' by 2010, vaunting atom-bomb bursts as back as in 1974 and then again in 1998, and always boasting of scientific achievements, couldn't stand by the side of science, couldn't dare to show a scientific, rational outlook, let alone the two centuries old radical French temperament!! The BJP and all of Sangh Parivar became full of glee, again they could come in the forefront in Media, perhaps they will get some extra points more in the next snap election then... etc! It shows how much 'mass base' still Ram and his today's followers holds in India, how much muck has accumulated through ages in the minds of the toiling people, and also how much load of the almost unfinished democratic revolution in India, in the cultural-ideological field too, is to be borne by the revolutionary proletariat to lead the masses towards a thorough radical change of this unjust, prejudiced, oppressive society.

However, subsequently, entered the arena our Hero Mr Karunanidhi brandishing seemingly a Dravidian sword, almost reminiscing iconoclast leader and ideologue of DK movement late Periyar. He not only asserted loudly enough that Ram was only a mythical character, not at all a historical one, and Ramsethu and whole of the Ramayana are nothing but Aryan Hindu fable; but also he made 'ignoble' comments about Ram which he got, as he said, from the original Balmiki version, even questioned Ram's educational qualification!! And all these infuriated the Arch Hindu fundamentalist Ram Bhaktas to the extent that the Ayodhya Monks Assembly issued a FATWA — any person who'll get the cut-off head of the Ram abuser will get Gold equal to his body weight!!! So now the Hindu Fundamentalists, who until now did hate-campaigns against Fatwa issuing Mus-

lim Fundamentalists, are themselves issuing death warrant Fatwas with lucrative prize for the killer!!! But this is India, the own land of Ram, and so those monks can remain unpunished, even not booked by the state police-administration led by Mayavati! But by now the old Dravid passion, the old bitter memories of being maltreated by north India, by Hindi-Hindu domination, by the *Caucasian Aryans*... etc all came back igniting vengeance, and DMK supporters ransacked some BJP offices in TN. The BJP being a parliamentary, i.e., a vote-calculating party, apprehend trouble. Vote-Pundits started making a new TN model with ADMK and BJP in slippery grounds of going against Tamil national feeling and Dravidian sentiment. On the other hand, some members of intelligentsia, emboldened by Karunanidhi's Ram-blasting even started dreaming and declaring TN to be the secular answer to Modi's Gujarat... and what not. [For example see "Chak De Tamilnadu!" By Arasu Balraj at <http://www.countercurrents.org/balraj260907.htm>.] How easily these people forget quite recent antecedents of DMK and Karunanidhi, that this party, this same fellow, were partners of BJP led coalition!! DMK and its archrival ADMK almost alternatively become one an ally of BJP and other an ally of Congress! Further, in this period of imperialist led and blessed WTO-globalisation-liberalisation-etc, these two parties are nothing but Twedeldee-and-Tweedeldum, it is well nigh impossible to find any remnant of anti-Brahminical or anti-Manuvadi ideology inside them that may debar them from allying themselves with BJP. The Periyar-ite reincarnation of Karunanidhi is devoid of any 'essence' within, it is only in appearance; his anti-Ram tirade or fracas is just a deceptive ploy to pull TN people with nostalgia of the old DK movement. Moreover, revolutionary proletariat of TN and India as a whole cannot forget or neglect another fact: the old anti-Brahmin-hegemony Tamil movement under its elite leadership could not reach even the first step of its logical culmination, i.e., towards "abolition of caste system altogether"; and so we see that Dalits in TN do not fare better than their counterparts in Kerala and also in Maharashtra even in dry statistical counts. But anyway, TN is in still in the ripples: a bandh call by DMK, Supreme Court's banning of the bandh, withdrawal of bandh call by Karunanidhi but protest fast by DMK leaders and virtual bandh, ADMK indication violation of SC ruling by DMK govt... .. and on the national scene Congress is trying to get through with the SSCP managing "Ram-sentiment" ... etc.

Nevertheless, despite Karunanidhi's battle against Hindu myth and for the canal project, the Sethusamudram Canal Project [SSCP in short] is not flawless; rather the SSCP raised many doubts. From financial angle, this SSCP was proved to be unviable: as the projected construction cost plus maintenance cost cannot be covered form expected revenues as calculated by Jacob John in his article that appeared in Economic and Political Weekly July 21, 2007, pages 2993-2996. According to him, "If ... the company charges the total savings made by the ship (around \$ 4,000), the pre-tax internal rate of return (IRR) of the project falls to just 4.5 per cent. On the other hand, if the SSCP charges 50 per cent of the amount saved by these ships, the pre-tax IRR falls to just 2.6 per cent!" Jacob also cited the fact that no big name in shipping has shown any interest in the canal. He showed that a better way, or viable way, of attracting ships to Tuticorin or Chennai would be to give away some subsidies to the Shipping companies, which will certainly be less costlier than the project. Then, the SSCP is designed for ships of dead-weights less than or equal to 20,000 tons only,

whereas famous and big names among ocean liners are continuously moving to bigger ships and already perhaps most of them exceeds that tonnage. Apart from financial aspect there is the environmental issues too. Jacob didn't mention those in his essay, as his colleagues in the forthcoming book on this subject, of which Jacob's article is only a chapter, will cover those parts. But many questions arose: What will happen if the marine biosphere of the region around that place, including the coral reef, is destroyed first by the making of the Canal and then by movement of ships even if we disregard phenomena like oil-spills for now? What will be the changes in the behaviour of Bay of Bengal currents and winds, say during east moving low-pressure formations, or during a Tsunami like incident, when the Bay gets connected to the Arabian Sea through the Palk Strait and Gulf of Mannar by a narrow and shallow channel? And Indian Govt had not at all tried to study impacts on the Sri Lankan side! Though we are not environmental experts or geographers, from writings of several environmentalists, hydrologists etc it is obvious that there are points of serious concerns and consequences. [Interested readers may see, for example, "Sethusamudram Technical Issues" at <http://manisanga.blogspot.com/>.] Bourgeois liberal economist columnist like Mr Swaminathan Ankeleshwaran Aiyer [Times Of India] also raised objections referring to Jacob's article, objections that are on financial *and* environmental grounds. And if the govt makes such an economic and environmental mess, it will surely put more pressure on the economy and Nature, and that will, in the ultimate analysis, hurt the toiling people. So, there is no question of supporting the SSCP even if standing at poles apart from BJP like oppositions to the SSCP.

But a question remains: why the BJP led govt in the past and the Congress led govt of today are so keen in constructing a white-elephant like economic-waste-project SSCP? What is their real intention? Is there something related to some *non-economic* calculations or designs? Many Indian war-ships, perhaps most of them except aircraft carriers, fit in the less-than-or-equal-to 20,000 DWT category. *Does the Govt of India have any military plan in which taking navy vessels quickly from east coast to west coast and vice versa, and that too not around Sri Lanka but all through running well inside Indian sea-borders?* And is that the Real Intention behind SSCP? This question too needs serious probe, because this angle perhaps got no attention from any quarters. It is all the more important that the Indian ruling class, sponsored by Imperialists, are trying to emerge as the 'Guardian Angel' [plainly speaking the regional super power] of this part of the world including the vast open of Indian Ocean, and of course the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal — the 'golden field' of oil & gas that is evoking more and more Corporate greed and capital. Imperialists are worried about future terrorist naval attacks. They want India to police Indian Ocean including commercially crucial Malacca Straits. Companies will have to pay for the 'security' they get for their oil rigs and fields in the Arabian sea and Bay of Bengal, marine transport, etc — already declared an Indian govt official!

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### **Editorial 6**

## **Come Forward in support of Struggling Asian Workers in UAE**

Asian immigrant workers in the Middle East 'paradise' UAE, particularly in and around wealthy tourists' hotspot Dubai, revolted against the ever-increasing as-

saults of the bourgeoisie there. With very scanty info available in Indian English Media today [1st Nov 07] it can be safely guessed that literally thousands and thousands of construction workers took part in a 2-day strike on 27th and 28th October and assembled at a protest meeting or something resembling that. Their action was 'illegal' as per laws of the United Arab Emirates. The very name of the country, above all the word "Emirates" suggests that the idea of 'democracy' is scarce there as in other desert-covered oil-rich Arab countries ruled by Kings and Emirs. Hence, workers' basic rights and actions like organising and fighting Trade Union struggles, strikes, etc are unimaginable and unpardonable there. But the workers were in a defiant mood being hard-pressed by, for example, gruelling workload at a temperature as high as 45°C [113°F!] under the sun, and ever-decreasing wage + benefit, as for example, staying in shared shanty shelters lacking in many amenities and getting just Rs 6500 a month in all [roughly Rs 250 per day assuming one rest day per week] which is a microscopic quantity, almost a nothing, in that expensive kingdom. The mood of the workers can be guessed from the fact that many workers were spotted by police as 'rioters' who threw stones at police, smashed police-cars, etc; *it is indeed a noteworthy matter as immigrants, 'poor foreigners', generally don't dare make such scenes in an unknown land so far away from their native country, especially a country under despotic rule and oppressive environment.*

So at least 4500 workers were jailed. One can easily imagine the number of police personnel employed to round up 4500 workers, and they were not totally 'peaceful' then!

Media reported cases of such workers who came back earlier facing so difficult a working condition at so low a wage at so far away place — one construction worker from Kerala came back disillusioned from UAE and joined a construction site at North East India; though Dubai is perhaps not much far-off than Dibrugarh if measured from Thirubanthapur, but anyway it is in home country! Usually persons not getting employment with a 'decent' wage in India dreamt of going to 'Arab World' to send money back home and return as a well-off after some years, even after deducting compensations for the passage money and payment of job-agencies. What a piece of bad-luck these Globalisation-days begotten! That dream lays shattered. This phenomenon of exploitation of immigrant workers from India or other 'poor' countries abroad is not new and startling in the sense that, for instance, already in July '05 issue we presented the case of the Indian workers suffering in 'slave labour' like condition in Malaysia in a piece titled "Slavery in the Global Factory: From Durgapur [West Bengal] to Kota-Tingi [Malaysia]". *But what is heartening is that revolts of Indian and Asian workers have started, and that too in a difficult, stuffy and oppressive social-political environment;* we have also witnessed fights of immigrant workers developing in American continent in recent years, not only in the USA like that prolonged and victorious fight of Mexican Immigrant agricultural workers working in the Tomato fields, but also in other 'comparatively richer' Latin countries like preparation of fights of Bolivian garment workers in Buenos Aires in Argentina.

And what a contrast! By extracting surplus labour including super-profit from workers like them, more so from immigrant workers, the super-rich capitalists made Dubai a wealth-man's paradise and still making superb structures, enor-

mous wealth and a skyline that evokes “western world’s envy”!

Among 4500 jailed workers, barring the ‘rioters’ or mutineers all were sent or forced back to work; 159 workers face ‘action’ that may amount to a jail-term and deportation at the end of that term! The Indian government’s Embassy was ‘very kind’ enough to ‘look at’ the case so that the deportation-waiting Indian workers don’t have to spent days in Jail before being forcefully sent back to India!!

Revolutionary workers of India salute the fight of Asian immigrant workers in UAE, voice their protest against the authoritarian regime of UAE, protest any punitive measure taken by employers and government of UAE against fighting workers, demand workers’ rights to organise and fight TU struggles in UAE and support their demands of better wages, benefits and better working conditions.

PS: Condition of Indian workers in UAE came again in the Media in early November. On 8th Nov a flyover under construction collapsed killing some 10 Indian construction workers on spot and injuring many. This incident brought home the terrible working condition sans safety measures in which the immigrant workers are to work.

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### **Editorial 7**

## **Nuclear Treaty & the “Left”**

The parties within the left-front are now quite elated with their ‘victory’. And in not it justified? The U.P.A government of Manmohan Singh were going to sell off the ‘sovereignty’ of our nation through the Indo-US Nuclear Treaty and they had been able to resist it! According to them, the ‘sovereignty’ of our nation is now on the whole as safe as it was before this deplorable act of Manmohan. At this moment of their ongoing ‘victory celebrations’ will it be too impolite to raise the question whether there is any reason at all to assume that the Indo-US Nuclear Treaty has been abandoned? The position spelt out by the government is that the proposed talks between I.A.E.A, Nuclear suppliers group and Indian government have been *deferred* only. How can one conclude from this that such talks will not happen at all, or, the treaty will be abandoned? Furthermore, will it also now be too inopportune a moment to remind them that all the treaties like ‘New structure of Indo-U.S. Security Relations’ that the ruling class of India have forged with U.S. Imperialism in the past few years are still fully operational and there has not been even an infinitesimal deviation from the ever-increasing tendency of the Indian ruling class to bow towards the U.S. imperialism. In these respects, how superfluous the left-front ‘victory’ is, is quite clear to the advanced proletariat and not the principle matter of analysis for them.

For the sake of discussion, even if we assume that the ‘left’ through their ‘struggle’ became able to get the nuclear treaty discarded, on even more, if we assume that the ‘pressure’ of the ‘lefts’ force the Indian ruling class to abandon all the treaties of military relations, like the new structure of Indo-U.S. Security Relations, that they have undertaken with the imperialist powers; will then the ‘sovereignty’ of India be assured? CPIM and its friends are trying by all means to convince that these recent treaties are all the causes of concern, as if before them, our country was truly ‘sovereign’! They are lamenting so pitifully about the tendency of the Indian ruling class to discard the past principle of ‘non align-

ment' and getting aligned more and more with the U.S. imperialism, that it will seem that in those day of 'nonalignment', the Indian ruling class were following a principle independent of any imperialist influence, control or arm-twisting. *The 'lefts' are not trying to pull this bluff for the first time. Since 1947, they have been trying to convince the working class and other toiling masses that though the internal policies of the Indian ruling class, or particularly of their chief representative that time, the congress party, were anti-people, their foreign policy were independent and progressive.* All their laments are for the abandonment of that so-called independent foreign policy by the ruling class and they are still deceiving the working class and the toiling people that the main duty of them is to bring back that era of 'nonalignment' principles.

The advance guards of the proletariat must not nurture the faintest of doubt regarding the fact that pursuance of the non-alignment policy by the Indian ruling class did not in any way imply its freedom from influence, control or arm-twisting of the imperialists, or the fact that its domestic or foreign policy were not independent of the influence and control of the imperialist powers. In 1947, the big bourgeois of India came to power by making a compromise with imperialism. Direct rule of the British imperialism came to an end, but nonetheless, exploitation by the imperialist capital continued, on the whole undeterred, and imperialist control, influence and domination remained rooted. Then the ruling big bourgeois undertook the programme for the capitalist development depending upon the imperialism. All the programmes they have taken since the inception of the 5-year plans, were taken depending upon the imperialism, and through these the dependence upon imperialism have continued to increase. In this period, as a consequence of the policy pursued by the ruling class, penetration of imperialist capital has progressively increased, and so has imperialist debt, various 'aid' –through which imperialist control over the principle fields of Indian economy has increased. Alongside this increased of imperialist control over the country, economy, as a natural fallout, control and domination of imperialism, particularly U.S. imperialism, have increased in different spheres, including politics. Right from the large projects undertaken under the 5-year plans, to the nuclear programme or the program of green revolution in the 1960s – examples of imperialist control and domination over the programs of the ruling class are many and varied.

At that time, however, the ruling class of the third world countries like India has an advantage. Opposed to the alliance of the western imperialists under the leadership of the U.S. imperialism, stood the so-called 'socialist' block under the leadership of Soviet Russia. These two blocks were engrossed in competing with each other to extend their domination with the aim of conducting exploitation and repression throughout the world. As a result of the contradiction between these two blocks, ruling classes of several third-world countries, including India, got the opportunity of bargaining with them to some extent, though remaining within the influence of this two power groups, i.e., remaining within the influence and control of imperialism. It was with this aim of conducting the bargaining process that the ruling class of the third world countries adopted the non-alignment principle and grouped together in it. Hence, the adoption of non-alignment policy by the Indian ruling class did not imply that they were pursuing a foreign policy independent of the control and influence of the imperialism. India was not truly sovereign then, nor did Indian ruling class have an independent

foreign policy. Hence, those who are clamouring vociferously today as if Indian is suddenly going to lose her sovereignty today are actually obscuring the fact that real sovereignty cannot be achieved without eradicating completely the exploitation and domination of the imperialist capital. And, imperialism can be eradicated from the countries soil only through the peoples' democratic revolution under the leadership of the working class. Of course, it is natural that those who are working not in favour of this revolution, but against it, those who have become sentinels of the existing system instead of its demolisher, cannot do anything but what those 'lefts' are doing. Is not it so?

The next question is, is it possible for the Indian ruling class of today to revert back even to that so-called independent foreign policy non-alignment? Did the Indian ruling class shifted from its policy of non-alignment of its own free will, that they can now, if they wish, revert back to it? As a consequence of the programme of capitalist development depending upon imperialism, that they India big bourgeois ruling class pursued from 1947, the dependence upon imperialism went on increasing, so also increased the burden of imperialist debt. At the beginning of the 1980s, the ruling class took a large loan from I.M.F. for the first time, following which they took the line of opening up the country to the conditionalities imposed by the imperialists. The scope for bargaining with the two imperialist groups was also lost after the fall of Soviet Russia in the end-1980s. At the time, the Indian ruling class was compelled to take a larger loan from the I.M.F once again and initiated the new economic policy. We all know how the control of the imperialist capital has gone on increasing in the Indian economy. The direct consequence of all these is that in various fields of Indian society, including the politics, the control and domination of imperialist powers, specially their band-leader U.S imperialists, have increased manifold. In these circumstances it is only natural that they Indian ruling class will not be able to continue their so-called non-alignment policy and will tilt more and more towards U.S imperialism. It is only this truth that is being experienced through the "non-military nuclear treaty", "new structure of Indo-U.S security relation" etc.

To put in a nutshell, a large-scale change in the national and international situation has forced the Indian ruling class to abandon their so-called 'independent foreign policy' and found themselves in more and more closer ties with U.S. imperialism. Hence, just by wishing to do so, they cannot revert back to their old 'non-alignment policy' or the so-called 'independent foreign policy today'. What is more important is that reverting back to that old 'non-alignment era' can not be the objective of the proletariat, the objective of the proletariat is the complete eradication of the exploitation and oppression of imperialism and thus achieve true 'sovereignty'.

The 'left' parties of India, under the leadership of CPIM are trying by all means through their concerted clamour about the nuclear deal to prove that they are working as the untiring sentinels of Indian 'sovereignty'. But, what has become as apparent as daylight in the past 15 to 16 years is that they are second to none in going begging at the feet of imperialist capital to call invite foreign capital and opening the gates for plunder. On one hand, imperialist capital will be granted the most gratuitous reception, 'while on the other, the 'nation being sold to the imperialist' will be opposed! What castles in the air are the 'lefts' building? Undoubtedly, they are trying to convince us that there is no relation be-

tween investment of imperialist capital and increase of imperialist control/dominance in political sphere. But is not this effort of them simply an exercise in obscuring the fact that the prime objective of imperialism to establish its control and determination over a country is to facilitate the unrestricted investment of imperialist capital and thus plunder the resources of that country? If need be, for that purpose they don't even hesitate to lay seize of that country, to colonise it. More over, the control of imperialist capital over the principal fields of economy and the octopus-like grip exerted over a country by the imperialist debt also progressively increase the imperialist control over the political field. *Hence, whatever the 'left' try to teach us, it remains true that economics and politics are not disassociated entities to the country, they are closely interrelated and fundamentally, politics is controlled by economics. By extending gratuitous gracious welcome to the imperialist capital anything except opposing imperialism can be done.*

Truly, the lefts' objectives are not to oppose imperialism. They have drummed up the recent clamour to showcase their 'hold' on the congress-led U.P.A government at the centre, which, though dependent on their support to stay at power, is still paying no heed to them in taking a number of decisions, one after another. This is in no way connected with real anti-imperialist struggle. The proletariat can organise with the aim of complete eradication of imperialist exploitation only by liberating itself completely from the fake anti-imperialist politics of the 'lefts'. Only then, can emerge the real path of struggle against nuclear treaty and various other treaties like it. [1st November 2007]

**Addendum:** When this article was going to press, it emerged that the 'left' parties had given the control government the 'liberty' to further their negotiations with I.A.E.A. The way in which this signal was given by CPIM following the barbarous genocide by the murderous gang of CPIM in Nandigram, has led to musings whether this barter of 'concession' or a 'deal' was made between Congress and CPIM over Nandigram. We must also not overlook that meanwhile quite a few representatives of the U.S. imperialism have had their 'discussions' with the 'left-leaders'. So whatever be the reason behind this 'concession-giving mood' of the 'lefts', this once again serves as a blatant pointer to the falseness of the 'lefts' anti-imperialist postures. [20th November 2007]

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## Articles

### “History” as per SSKU Leadership: Incomplete & Unsafe

S. Das

#### **History of Workers' Movements, if written with Insufficient Experience, Comprehension and Vision can only Create, at best, Dangerous Confusions**

SANHATI is an effort by many students, researchers and in general the Intelligentsia, which describes its effort as “Fighting Neoliberalism in West Bengal”, and SANHATI (available online at [www.sanhati.com](http://www.sanhati.com)) is doing a good, credible, sincere and arduous job indeed.

In the WebPages of SANHATI an article appeared recently — “A Brief History

of Workers' Movements in India, with focus on Bengal" (available at <http://sanhati.com/front-page/347/>). As author of that article we found SSKU, and SSKU is a Trade Union organisation working in Hindustan Motors (in popular parlance HINDMOTOR). It seemed to us that the article which aroused much expectation due to its Heading is poorly written in some parts, and what is more, as the Sub-Heading above says: History, if written with insufficient experience, comprehension and vision, can only create, at best, dangerous confusions. In other words, that article could be described as "How Not to Write History of Workers' Movements". Therefore, we were compelled to write at least this urgent and brief rejoinder to that article. But we request the readers to go through the SSKU article if possible before reading this rejoinder.

### **The Authors couldn't grasp especially the Emerging 'New' Trend, and generally, the trends**

The jolt starts from first or introductory Para and that gets substantiated in the concluding five Paragraphs. And that's a crucial or one of the most crucial things indicating the trend(s) emerging from the present day workers' movement.

#### **The first or introductory Para is:**

"This history is by SSKU, an independent, non-party affiliated trade-union working at Hindustan Motors, West Bengal. Such unions which are free of party allegiance and government interest have often been successful in representing workers' rights and bettering their conditions, for example the Chattisgarh Mukti Morcha of Sankar Guha Niyogi. For SSKU's recent activities, click here. For a summary of the condition of factories in West Bengal, government corruption, sellout to big capital and illegal mass usage of industrial land for real estate, click here."

#### **And the last five paragraphs are:**

"The decade of eighties of the last century in this state witnessed a new turning point as regards the workers' movement. The workers of different factories of West Bengal started revolting against the anti-Labour move perpetrated by the Central Trade Unions. As a result, the revolting workers started organizing themselves into new consolidations. This process of consolidation gave rise to two distinct trends:

- (A) Spontaneous revolts, followed by clashes and violence, that ended sadly in the withdrawal of the movement, and
- (B) Initiating organised, unified and protracted movement that culminated in a new form of struggle.

The first trend was embodied in the spontaneous revolt by the workers of Victoria Jute Mill in 1992 and the recent workers' uprising in the Tea Gardens in North Bengal, where a CITU leader was burnt to death by the angry workers. The second trend was heralded by the victorious workers of the Hindustan Livers. The movement of the Jute Worker of Kanoria Jute Mill in the 90s of the last century had taken the issues and just causes of the workers to the society at large. The message of this trend of movement was taken up by a large number of workers in various factories of the state of West Bengal. The movement of the workers of the Mathkal, Garden Reach Ship Builders, Bauria Cotton Mill and others were the representatives of this trend.

Against the prevailing trend of surrender to Capitalists and the Bureaucratic functioning of the central trade unions, this new trend of workers' initiative (of which SSKU is

a successful instance) is holding high the banner of internal democracy, honesty and fighting for the just causes of the workers.

The same trend is continuing today and against the real threat of de-unionisation of the workers, the banner of struggle is still flying high. Against the all-round pessimism gripping the Indian society of today, against the virtual acceptance of the globalisation as a *fait accompli*, the workers are struggling to occupy the driver's seat to bail out society from the clutches of the capital to usher in a more equitable and egalitarian society. However to make this happen, oppressed and conscious people from all strata have to join hands and call for the day..."

**And here the article finished abruptly.**

So what we get from the above quoted parts of SSKU article about SSKU itself and the emerging 'new' trend of workers' struggle? We get: "***independent, non-party affiliated trade-union ...unions ... free of party allegiance and government interest ... successful in representing workers' rights and bettering their conditions, for example the Chattisgarh Mukti Morcha of Sankar Guha Niyogi***" AND THEN ... two distinct trends: (A) Spontaneous revolts... and (B) Initiating organised, unified and protracted movement that culminated in a new form of struggle... **The movement of Kanoria Jute Mill ...had taken the issues and just causes of the workers to the society at large. The message of this trend of movement was taken up by a large number of workers in various factories ... e.g. Mathkal, ... Bauria Cotton Mill ... || ... this new trend of workers' initiative ... is holding high the banner of internal democracy, honesty and fighting for the just causes of the workers. ||** The same trend is continuing today ... **the workers are struggling to occupy the driver's seat to bail out society from the clutches of the capital to usher in a more equitable and egalitarian society...**" [Bold ours]

Many questions may crop up: **[1]** Should the new trend be characterised only by "*independent, non-party affiliated trade-union*"; "*unions free of party allegiance and government interest*" or by success "*in representing workers' rights and bettering their conditions*"? [Astonishing comment indeed! In these hard days when in many cases they are being compelled to retreat in a disarrayed manner facing ruling class' assault, in some places the workers are fighting mainly to resist the onslaught of the capitalists, and only in a few places they are getting bits of success in those fight of theirs, the SSKU leaders are talking generally about success in betterment & etc based on a tiny sample!] Or can the new trend be characterised solely or mainly by the qualities like "holding high the banner of internal democracy, honesty and fighting for the just causes of the workers"? **[2]** In what way do "*the Chattisgarh Mukti Morcha of Sankar Guha Niyogi*" and the Jute Workers' rebellions of the post-2002 period belong to a single trend? **[3]** Can that work of the activists of Kanoria, who "had taken the issues and just causes of the workers to the society at large", at all be called a *trendsetter for the 'new' type of movement*, which, they supposed, workers of the other factories did follow? **[4]** And lastly, "the workers are struggling to occupy the driver's seat to bail out society from the clutches of the capital to usher in a more equitable and egalitarian society" – what does that really signify and how that fits in within the bounds of what they described as "*independent, non-party affiliated trade-union*" or "*unions which are free of party allegiance and government*"...etc "!! **But we shall refrain from chasing each and every question that may come up for the sake of brevity and go to our salient**

**points.**

***Just immediately before the line*** "The decade of eighties of the last century in this state witnessed a new turning point as regards the workers' movement..." ***the SSKU should have written WHY that said 'new turning point' appeared or developed;*** they should have written ***what was turning to what and how;*** because, after that line ***they didn't answer those pertinent questions;*** they only wrote, again just as an event, immediately after that sentence that "The workers of different factories of West Bengal started revolting against the anti-Labour move perpetrated by the Central Trade Unions." It's amazing. ***How can they at all be able in understanding the essence of the 'new' 'emerging' trend when they don't answer what was the 'old', why a departure from the 'old' became particularly necessary? Moreover, without taking into account the role of 'old' parties that controlled the 'old' unions, how a study of new emerging trend can be done?***

Because in that very history written by themselves, so far, i.e. until the arrival of the line containing this *cause nowhere* there was any sign from where one can get a clue of WHY or HOW the 'Central Trade Unions' suddenly 'perpetrated' those 'anti-Labour move'. ***Till that point their 'history' was just plain and simple narration of events of workers' struggles*** that they thought 'glorious', 'historic', etc against all odds, oppressions and etc. As for example just read the preceding three paragraphs that came immediately before the paragraph starting with "The decade of eighties ... witnessed a new turning point as regards the workers' movement":

"The workers of the organized sector (government and semi-governmental offices) started a wildcat strike from the mid-night of July 11, 1960. The police took recourse to terrible repression; several rounds of fire were targeted towards the striking workers, five workers became martyrs, 20 thousand workers were arrested. 2.5 million workers of the Central Government sector joined a strike in September 19, 1968.

"CITU was founded at Lenin Nagar, Kolkata during the period May 28-30, 1970.

"The historic railway strike took place in May, 1974, which shook the entire political fabric of our country and ushered in a new tide of movements throughout the country."

***And this is one of the major failings in their history writing – failing to notice, to realize the 'defeat' of the world working class movement and to learn from that – naturally the first thing to find out and learn should have been then 'why our old organizations, parties, unions all got rotten' 'why we were defeated', 'what were our weaknesses'.*** And as they could see what was decaying, dying they couldn't realise what is taking birth and in what condition the 'new' is emerging. They didn't realise, *and we don't blame them for that – rather their inexperience and the general state of muddled observations, theorisations stemming from muddled realisations of past communist movement that is still dominant in the so-called communist revolutionary camp of India* — they didn't recognize and grasp the 'defeat' that surfaced very nakedly in 1990-91, and consequently, they failed to see, feel and realise the ways in which the workers are slowly coming up from the ashes in the form of 'new'. How then can they appreciate the 'new' trend with such a major gap in their analysis?

Certainly we shall deal with: **(1) the defeat**, the weaknesses within the past workers' movements those contributed to the defeat and were glaring after the defeat even to some extent to the rebelling workers, not only their advanced few; and **(2) the 'new' trend** that is emerging, and the characteristics of the new trend so far as revealed by the new struggles and by the aspirations of the rebelling workers who are trying to advance. But before going to those points **one thing we would like to tell workers and activists of the 'new' struggles**: Apparently, to the outsiders, these new fights and organizations may seem to be **'non-party-affiliated', 'non-govt', etc — but don't be deceived by such labels, fashionable though they are to the Bourgeois Media, NGO-s, post-modernists, etc** — these *not at all represent most essential qualities of yours* [i.e., new fights' and organizations']. Rather, those labels can create at best: enough confusions; and at worst: *derailment from the track of the reawakening of the working class movement*, though all of your comrades might not be fully aware of that track right now.

### The Defeat, the Decaying 'Old' vs. the Emerging 'New'

In not a few of our past literatures we dealt with the two questions mentioned above, and so we would appreciate if the observers from outside please go through them and in this way we can avoid repetitions or quoting a lot from what we already have said. [Here is a short list of such items appeared in the print version of our journal and available in the web version too: (A) A lengthy article that analysed the peculiarity of the present day Jute Workers' Movement with historical context, and readers can also get some understanding about the general scenario of workers' movement from that article: "Recent Movement of the Jute Workers – A Review" appeared in May 06 issue; then (B) "Workers Against Unilever" – a short piece which analysed the Hindustan Lever (Garden Reach) workers' fight and organization, appeared in Feb 04 issue; (C) "The CESC Contract Workers' Fight & New Organization Formation", that appeared in Apr 07 issue.] Anyway, let us start afresh while keeping in mind that we are to avoid repetition. In the past we have seen many fights and unions led those fights; the SSKU gave many glorious examples of such past fights. But though those unions were called workers' unions, workers had no control over them. The outsider leaders, babu-s [gentlemen] controlled the unions. Is this a recent fact? No. But had these unions always betrayed, always did treachery in the past? No, that of course is not a fact. When these unions came into being in the 1940s and 1950s, they were standing on the active support of the workers and enough spontaneity of workers. That time those unions fought somewhat in the interest of the workers. **But their fights and functioning of leadership were such that these didn't contribute to the development of consciousness among the mass of worker-members** as much could have been done if the unions had been truly working like, as Marx used to say about trade unions, 'school of communism'. The leaders and activists of the 'left' parties associated with these unions were not rotten as they are now. But at that time too — the 'control' of the unions were in the hands of the outsider leaders and party-babu-s. The common workers never took the reign on their hands, never tried so; and the old union leadership too never tried to educate and motivate the workers to take the control on the workers themselves. Workers got the idea from them that a union-leader should be learned, efficient in writing answers to management in

English, proficient in Negotiations... so how can the rustic, unsophisticated 'labour' be a union-leader!

Anyway, the changing or **somersaulting of the "left" parties and unions gained speed from the end-1970s**, from when the "left" parties formed government. As the workers had no control over the unions the owners could easily buy the leaders. So from "leaders' union" we got "owners' (pocketed) union". **But even during the fighting years of mid 1960s those 'left' unions and parties betrayed the working class very cunningly and that was not visible or understandable to the workers.** Remember how during the Engineering Workers' [the traditionally used term in Bengal for the Metalworkers] movement in the 1960s the Engineering Workers' Unions' leadership [composed of leaders of the so-called 'left' parties] made the First Engineering Agreement acceding to separation, segregation of workers on the 'basis' of 'big', 'medium' and 'small' firms just depending on the number of workers in a factory? How struggles of Jute, Engineering, etc workers were never actually merged? How those leaders kept the contract, casual and permanent workers in watertight separations among them in struggles and organizations, which actually harmed the development of class struggle? How long lasting became the scars of those divisions that till today cause itches, that till today we couldn't erase even in the factories where we, the revolutionary communist activists are working in unions!!

We could extend this above list of questions, but that's not the point; the point is: Does a revisionist-reformist party at all organise workers in real 'proletarian schools of communism'? Rather they organise workers in 'bourgeois petit-bourgeois schools of reformism'! When they flatly mentioned the formation of CITU in their history in a single-lined sentence have the SSKU activists pondered over that? Are we not witnessing the massive dead weight of reformism still acting as a bulwark against the development of consciousness?

**Internal democracy was impaired, or better to say, was never there — but that is not the fix, not the stumbling block, rather that is a manifestation of the politics inside.** One may, particularly at the beginning, start from the manifestation, but from there one has to move forward to the matter inside that manifests as lack or absence of democracy. Formal democracy, as a set of democratic rules of functioning, means nothing if the 'substance' of politics of working class struggle is not there. In other words, even with very high degree of democratic set of rules one may arrive in a reformist mess. Those who do not essentially, in essence, give supremacy to the 'working class', do not believe by their heart that this class, through its class struggle, class leadership, class party, class hegemony, class dictatorship (state) ... through revolutionary changes, approaches the abolition of classes, but rather believe that this class, being objectively the most organised and radical, is an instrument in the hands of some 'conscious leaders' in changing society towards 'betterment', of course 'for the sake of the workers', can easily arrive to such a reformist mess in the name of 'socialist' or 'communist' politics and/or parties.

The SSC (Sramik Sangram Committee) published a pamphlet in early 1994 for workers when the first wave of rebellion in the post-defeat post-Globalisation period was vividly witnessed in West Bengal. The title of the pamphlet was: "Not

only Rebellion – Need New Organizations; No more Hoodwink – Need New Way”. Interestingly that was the time when Kanoria Jute Mill was in the media lime-light and its news reached some hundred thousand bourgeois-media readers every morning; and the echoes of explosion of Victoria Jute Mill workers’ rebellion had not yet died down; when news of newer events came pouring within the activists working in workers’ belts; and that pamphlets in Bangla, Hindi and Urdu were bought by the factory workers, much more than fifty thousand copies were bought by workers at different factory gates and workers’ quarters of Calcutta and adjacent four districts only. The first part of the Title and also the pamphlet dealt with the rebellion against old established rotten undemocratic traitor “leaders’ trade unions” and the necessity of building up workers own fighting organizations, workers own unions ruled by the workers themselves. To start with, it may often happen now that the thin layer of the ‘advanced’ section of the rebelling workers are not yet ready to run the organization themselves and need the help of non-worker activists, and it should be the duty of the latter ones to help the ‘advanced’ section of the workers so that those workers can learn how to control, how to lead the union and how to draw close the relatively backward section of the rebel workers too in union works. But the pamphlet didn’t stop there at that point, didn’t deal that aspect only. The second part of the Title and also of the pamphlet dealt with the question of policies to be followed as against the policies that ruined us, deprived us even of having our own organizations; our unions became capitalists’; naturally the question of ‘alternative’ policy came up — the writers of the booklet tried to explain lucidly (as much their ability and wisdom that time permitted) the politics of ‘class’, the ‘class line’ obligatory for these new organizations to be formed as opposed to the politics of class-compromise and surrender of the old established unions. **All these was for a simple reason — the workers’ revolts have started, new organisations started taking shape, AND all these are happening in the situation of Party-less-ness, which is imparting new features in the arena of TU struggle!**

That a new is germinating was known to the writers of the pamphlet or to the activists spreading those literatures. Already in 1989, an article had been published in Sandhikshan (Bangla) titled ‘End of the Old – Birth of the New’ analysing the workers struggles in the very late 1980s. Though we must add here that although till the almost mid-1980s we saw some ‘last ripples’ of the past movement in the form of say the Bombay Textile Strike, the British Miners’ Strike, the US Airline Strike, etc, the rest of the 1980s, especially the last half, was marked with what we called “very low ebb of workers struggle” and marked with series of three-pronged attacks of capitalists: [1] Decrease in Wage & Benefits, [2] Decrease in workforce by forceful ‘voluntary’ retirements and retrenchment, and lastly, [3] Increase of workload. The SSC also predicted the violent nature of the first would-be outbursts observing and analysing the very-brief rebellion in Fort William Jute mill in very early-1990s where interestingly the things first targeted by the angry mob of workers were the CPIM and CITU led party office, union office, the leaders’ motorbikes and the turncoat leaders too. The SSC was awaiting the revolt; their 1990 pamphlet titled “If Today is of Surrender, Let Tomorrows be of Resistance” called upon workers to fight to end the years of agonising surrender by betrayer left leadership and ended with a long and famous quote of Eugene Debbs predicting workers rise from the ashes again and again

after setbacks; and the pamphlet was greeted by a large mass of industrial workers.

But is the emerging new flawless? ***Isn't there a remnant of the 'old' still dragging it behind from within the 'new'?*** Of course the 'new' is not free of remnants of the 'old' movement. Elsewhere we commented on the characteristics of the 'new' and the inauspicious influence of the 'old': "If we observe the arena of class struggle very closely and deeply we shall see that the emerging new trend of rebellion against the 'old' is emerging from within the general condition of 'defeat' of the international working class movement and the general scenario of the still continuing low-ebb of the working class' struggle. *What are the salient aspects of the 'new' struggle today? The fights of the workers are mainly in the plane of 'practical economic struggle'; but then, through the summing-up of past by themselves and through the interaction with communist activists regarding the summing-up of past struggles, defeat, etc a very weak, so to say, 'struggle' through 'theoretical-political' discourses is also going on in the 'realm of ideas', which has also bearing upon the realm of practice in the form of taking and not taking certain decisions, tactics, etc; and surely there is the objectivity that today even these TU level fights are bringing forth, bringing in forefront, some questions related to Globalisation, policies of imperialists and governments, etc which are also giving some 'political' tinges to these 'economic' struggles."* Hence, overall the 'New' trend is characterised by # rebelling workers trying to take control over their destiny, over their fight and organization, learning to take charge of their own unions, # learning, realising the situation of 'defeat' of the past movement and why we were defeated, starting from simple questions like 'why and how our old unions, then the parties, leaders went astray...' # learning from the assaults of parties-governments-capitalists-imperialists the politics of Globalisation-Liberalisation etc and the politics necessary to combat it, # learning to look into the very slowly emerging country wide counter-offensive, the ground of which is created by the concerted attacks of the capitalists-governments-parties, and how to build up a unity from below, how to prepare for the future battle... .... And then we wrote, "But the dominating factor still now is clearly and naturally the 'old'. So contextually this emerging and still weak 'new' has many remnants of 'old' intermingled within. **The conscious activists of the working class can and should try their best to boost the 'new' and fight the 'old' components within each such fights, each such fighting organizations. And conscious bourgeois, petit-bourgeois activists, leaders can do the opposite, can cling to the 'old', pamper the 'old', take advantage of the 'old' within the 'new'.**" We didn't write what a confused activist will do, but you may well guess that.

The intermingling of the 'new' and the 'old', the remnant of 'old' in the 'new', etc are more starkly revealed by the "Third Trend" mentioned in "The CESC Contract Workers' Fight & New Organization Formation", that appeared in our Apr 07 issue. If you look closely in the Toyota Workers' struggle or the Hero Honda Workers' struggle in early 2006 you will not miss to see the blatant contradiction: A CITU or AITUC affiliated union in its fight is crossing the LAKSHMANREKHA, crossing the prohibitory chalk circle drawn by their traitor and utterly reformist leadership, the struggles are going out of the legal-official-governmental barriers... but the workers were still upholding the 'old' banners, re-

maining in their old union organizations — in content (in the sense of their fighting spirit discarding the so long practised decent trade-unionism) these workers veered to the 'new' while at the same time remained in the 'old' form (in the sense of outward appearance). This contradiction cannot stay for long; though this still-very-weak current of class struggle may permit this contradictory conduct for some time in future as a 'trend', as for example this trend was somewhat manifest in some smaller factories in U.P. in recent times, and hence we mentioned it as a trend.

### Why the SSKU History authors didn't see and study all these

*Inexperience* is a main cause as we said in the subheading just below the title of this piece, but that is not enough to explain — because the peculiar experience of the comrades there also influenced their logic. We hope that the SSKU comrades will ponder over, reflect introspectively. We just give a single hint here. When SSKU was formed in Hindustan Motors didn't they, the SSKU leadership, compromised too much with the 'remnants of old' to the extent of having as SSKU president a well-known MP, 'renowned' established-trade-unionist leader, of utterly revisionist-reformist CPI? Didn't that also reflect their confusion regarding the 'new'? We are not saying "No Compromise" because there is remnant of the 'old' in every 'new', and you must get in if you are to help it change, help it fight. But compromising with the old habit of relying on 'expert' MP of established parliamentary party and TU leader with 'connections' to 'higher levels'... etc: isn't that too dangerous a deviation at the very beginning? Don't their day-to-day activities and the way in which they conducted the past HM movement, the programmes they chalked out still bear much dead weight of the 'old' way of thinking, the 'old' way of conducting union movement? Then, consider the apparent media-craze and ardent desire of taking, in Kanoria style, "the issues and just causes of the workers to the society at large" where 'society at a large' means in this country and at this time nothing else that the petit-bourgeoisie, giving that more importance than propagating the news of the fight and the necessity of rebellion and fight in more number of factories to the 'workers at large' — what all these show? Kanoria showed brilliantly many things that are not to be done and that includes one of the first of their leaders' senseless decisions, of course 'passed' in the 'union general body' by 'voting' in a perfectly 'democratic!' manner, the colour of their flag: Maroon & Green — we never mind colours of banner of a TU if there was no hidden intention, but why it was done there? Was it not done in an effort to 'invite' and 'accommodate' all shades of politics — to the detriment of the very essence of the 'new' trend!

See comrades, nobody of us who are trying to develop into Bolsheviks in the true sense are totally free from all the unhealthy influences of our 'past' movement — we must be sincere in introspection, in study, before embarking on such important a project like writing History of Workers' Movements. Rhetorically speaking: If we try hard we may not be able to help the workers advance by, just one millimetre — because the situation is very hard; but if we try in a wrong way we can unknowingly make easier a retreat of a few kilometres — because at least a few workers arisen through the rebellions, through the 'new' trend, have put faith on us.

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## The 'New' BPL & 'Fights' Centring BPL Issues

J Biswas

### BPL: Redefine Poverty and Reduce Poverty Figure, Just That!

No one guessed that before the BJP-led NDA regime: *How easy it is to reduce poverty!* Researchers in this country once put their faith on National Sample Survey Org as there is an extreme poverty of somewhat reliable statistical data in India. But belittling that faith, the NSSO statisticians, in the reign of the BJP-led govt, changed their definition of poverty or in other words the 'measure' of poverty to satisfy their 'employer' i.e. the govt of India! And quickly poverty count dropped in India and in all major states that were burdened by masses of poverty-stricken people! As for example 'poverty' stat for WB had poverty mark reduced from almost 55-60% of the population to nearly 30% within a span of 2 years! [Footnote 1] This was simply done by taking account of 'Monthly Per capita Consumer Expenditure' or MPCE for past 30 days... etc and setting one MPCE grade as poverty level. Many competent statisticians and economists totally rejected the newly computed figures as baseless and the method applied as irrational. But the then BJP led govt was deaf to those criticisms. Even CPIM led governments 'accepted' the new norms in spite of protests by CPIM intellectuals-academicians! However, governments are still dissatisfied, and spending some sleepless nights on how to reduce further the 'burden' of state subsidies for the paltry breadcrumbs doled out to persons with 'lucky' BPL tag, the govt statisticians invented a way-out again to reduce further the number of poor!!

This time the governments, including the apt and able govt of WB, sent circulars to all Panchayats, all Block [Mandal] offices and all concerned — *someone not figuring in the BPL list must challenge with counter data to prove her/his worth as a poor*, the counter data will be given 'scores' according to a given 'Table of Scores in Various Aspects' highlighting 12 different aspects of life with different 'qualities' with different scores ranging from 1 to 5; and *if that person gets a score less than 33, only then s/he can claim to be a poor!*

It is very difficult to print a Table with of 13 rows and 7 columns, where all field are textual and not just arithmetic figures, in a magazine of this size. But we must give a picture here in order to form an idea about the *difficulty* in getting into the BPL list and the governments perception of what a 'poor' means.

Suppose you depict a person as a 'poor'. **1.** Say, he got a parcel govt 'vested' land courtesy the media-hyped 'land reform' of CPIM led WB govt and that land measures one-thirtieth or one-fifteenth of an Hectare [5 or 10 kottahs], as much an average 'lucky' poor in WB got. But 0.03 or 0.06 Ha is surely greater than 0, and so your sampled person gets 1 mark. [Remember, a village primary school teacher or a group C govt employee with non-agricultural fixed monthly income of above Rs 5000 and having 0.93 Ha of land, cultivates his land entirely by labourers, will also get 1 mark for his land.] **2.** Now that person has own mud-built kuchcha house with two rooms. So the mark obtained is 3. **3.** For clothing, that poor has 2 ordinary garments and 1 old ragged blanket too for winter that he got from govt 'charity'. Again 3 marks! **4.** That fellow gets 2 square meals a day, **though sometimes doesn't get that.** So add 3 marks. **5.** Unluckily that

person has an old cycle that runs with crunching noise *and* even a 'Made In China' FM radio worth Rs 40-60. Again 3 marks! **6.** Though that person is illiterate, the maximum 'educated' one of that family now studies in Class 6 — again 3 marks! Lest you forget to count, your poor fellow already scored  $1 + 3 + 3 + 3 + 3 + 3 = 16$ .

**7.** There is an adult male in the family for work, the person himself; add 3 marks. **8.** That fellow works in own land, remember that 0.03 Hectare, and also works as a labourer in his village. 2 marks. **9.** Educational standard of children in the family: One studies still in class 6 we know, another one not yet reached school age. Hence, there is no one to count as 'school drop out', therefore add 5 marks! **10.** Indebtedness: No, he isn't; who will give loans to such a family? Usurers are no fool; banks will not either, as that family has nothing to 'mortgage'! No indebtedness! 5 marks. **11.** The main earning member doesn't go out of village to work, where such a fellow will get work outside their village! Sad! 5 marks again! **12.** There is no handicapped person, no one suffering from cancer, etc diseases; neither is the 'main' earning member a female: again 5 marks.

The total score becomes: Carry  $16 + 3 + 2 + 5 + 5 + 5 + 5 = 41$ . But '41' is *far* greater than the needed 'pass mark' of '33'. Hence that sample person of yours is not at all a poor!!! Then what he is? He is Above Poverty Line or APL, that person is the same as an IT professional or a trader or a Doctor, or an AMBANI or TATA, etc in the eyes of government. So that person/family is not entitled for BPL rations, neither for free general/common blood tests at a govt hospital, nor for Annapurna or Antyodaya like schemes!

But you want to try hard to show that person as a 'poor' — so now you are saying that actually his daughter dropped out from school after class 6 and now she is helping in family work: then you can deduct 1 marks only as the girl is not hiring herself out for earning money. And then you say that person has Rs 500 as outstanding debt that he took from some neighbours for his family's medical need: then you can deduct 4 more marks. But still that poor fellow gets  $41 - 5 = 36$  marks which cannot prove him to be a 'poor'! But you keep on whining and nagging: now you're saying: that fellow goes out to work as a contract labourer for track maintenance in the Railways with a paltry wage [about Rs 60 or \$1.50 a day]; well, deduct 2 more marks. But again,  $36 - 2 = 34$ , *and still that fellow of yours fails to be a qualified 'poor'!* Just imagine: a village poor with insignificant [0.03 Ha] land, who goes out to work as a contract worker for the Railways or road-maintenance and does not get work regularly, whose kid dropped out from school after class 6 and is now helping in family work, who lives in a mud-built house with 2 'rooms' [and perhaps a kitchen space] only without any electricity connection and 'possesses' two sets of ordinary garments, one winter-clothing, a cycle and a radio, who at times has to spent starving, semi-starving nights, who has a little bit of outstanding loan [taken for family purpose], ...etc *cannot qualify as a poor!!!*

See, how very difficult it is in India to be a 'poor'! If only that fellow as re-described above regularly goes out from his village for working *as manual agricultural-labourer*, he can qualify as 'poor' *just standing on the margin of becoming non-poor* with 33 marks!

The picture shown in abovementioned lines is not the most important thing

that we would like to focus in this article; but we stated these [1] to acquaint readers with the 'new' BPL norms, and what is more [2] to reveal the brazen callousness of the govt, the governments' offensive way to deal with 'poverty', their attitude of taking poverty-stricken people just as playthings! The governments by their 'shrewd' measures have piled a large number of poor, countless millions, in the APL list.

### Regarding “Fights” on BPL Related Issues

Many a times we see some organisations known as 'communist revolutionary' groups or their peasants' wings thinking of fighting on BPL related issues; also they raise 'slogans', try to 'build up a mighty mass movement' and call upon the village poor to join those movements. Before going further to see what those demands generally are let us iterate: *mass movements, peoples' struggles etc are no manufactured items that can be 'made' by some 'plan' chalked 'from above' — mass-movements are created by spontaneous initiative of the toiling masses themselves. A party may conduct agitation-propaganda on some issues, may do the work of 'heating-up the soil' or 'preparing the soil' as called in common parlance, by raising some 'slogans' they may try to focus attention; but, we are repeating again, movements/struggles are created by spontaneity of the toiling masses themselves.* The toiling masses may or may not pay heed to the agitation-propaganda of that party depending on so many factors among which two vital ones are: continuity of its work among a large section of the toiling masses, particularly among working class; and helping a considerable section of the working class to become politically organised and active in their own class party. In such a situation the party's call becomes synonymous to call of a sizeable part of the working class, a sizeable section of workers and agricultural workers that is politically organised and active in the society. Can any group demand that such a party exists now in India? The toiling masses know the answer that is negative. And this phenomenon of party-less-ness influenced the toiling masses. That influence can be seen by peculiar 'new' kinds of struggles and organisations that are taking place nowadays. Anyway, we were discussing slogans and agitation-propaganda of the party and masses' response, and let us get back that context. A revolutionary party may [or should] conduct revolutionary agitation-propaganda, a revolutionary party may voice the wants within the mind of the toiling masses *in a revolutionary way, i.e., not in a way that may generate petty reformist aspirations as done by propaganda of the reformist-revisionist parties.* But a revolutionary party doesn't toy with slogans just to see if that clicks or not [always assuming, albeit unknowingly, the situation is 'ready' for a struggle to start]; rather the party studies hard the concrete condition, try seriously to make correct assessment, and based on that assessment of present condition formulates and shapes its agitation-propaganda. The fulcrum of agitation-propaganda is always to help the masses to raise their revolutionary class-consciousness and to raise the spirit of rebellion against this system. **Nothing in the name of 'tactical' line or measures is permitted which may harm the development of revolutionary class-consciousness or make realizations muddled.** Now let us see the demands commonly raised by our 'revolutionaries'.

We usually encounter demands like: “Make BPL Distribution Corruption-Free”, or “Publish Flawless BPL List Immediately” or “Incorporate Names Of All Poor

Peoples In The BPL List" which in other way demands enlargement of BPL list by amending BPL criterion, etc. We shall not be surprised if we see them demanding: "Amend BPL Criterion to .....", or "Increase BPL Provisions", or "Give Correct/Full and Edible and/or Standard BPL Provisions", or "Give More Benefits to BPL Card Holders", etc. All these give rise to just one question: have they at all understood the basic logic of the governments behind coining the term BPL? It seems they have not. ***Because such slogans firstly confirms that they have accepted the ruling class' definition of poverty, the BPL framework and the associated 'relief' programme, and also the whole logic of the BPL like relief-programmes.*** And that is why they can think out such slogans *as if they are raising slogans for some struggles of 'practical economic' nature of village poor for a bit improvement of their living standard.* We keep aside the sagacity or correctness of the very idea of "struggles of 'practical economic' nature of village poor" treating the village poor and the industrial proletariat at par, because that itself will be a lengthy discussion.

Why the govt coined the term BPL? Let us see in brief the history of 'rationing'. The British first introduced 'Rationing' in India during 2nd World War days, starting perhaps from the 'Bombay' Province; and the early-PDS was governments' response to dire scarcity of food-grains in the open market to provide food-grains at prices bearable by a large section of urban people in the 1950s. The govt jumpstarted the PDS or public distribution system mainly on two counts: [A] To pacify the poor and needy population, the bulk of which is constituted by workers and peasants, during the turbulent 1960s by setting up Food Corporation of India (FCI) and renaming 'fair price shop' or 'control shop' system as PDS; and [B] To show off its 'welfarist' image. From the inception of New Economic Policy in the early 1990s, from the onset of the globalisation-liberalisation-privatisation policies, much pressure was brought on all such govt measures. Dismantling all such previously operating paltry relief-measures at one stroke was difficult. So during their '2nd generation reforms' they framed some stages of the pull out. Previously in PDS we had two divisions: AR and MR, two quantitative rations *for citizens* in cities and small suburban cum rural areas respectively, assuming city dwellers cannot get enough food provisions first-hand and so need more rations. Now, in the Globalised era, they made two different divisions: APL and BPL, two qualitative divisions *for consumers* depending on the purchasing capacity of the consumer, in which the later, BPL, meant below the poverty line consumers who cannot buy sufficient food grains from the open market, for whom some amount of food grains and a little kerosene were provided at a 'subsidised' price; and for the former category, APL, those above poverty lines, the govt may not 'consider' any subsidies, but as a hang-over of the past PDS era the govt is still providing them with some trivial amounts at close-to-market-price to dissuade them from using PDS altogether. The next tactic of the govt was redefining poverty so as to reduce BPL population and thus PDS subsidies too. Other ways to debar people from entering the narrow BPL circle by some other paltry reform-measures like 'self-help' or 'swa-nirvarata', 'swarojgaar' type programmes which aims at helping poor to sustain their poor life with just crossing the BPL mark as maximum achievement, and then there is the 100-days work programme giving only maximum 100 days paltry wage at piece-rate manual works (yielding much less than \$2 a day) to each household that asked for it through written application *and not to each able person*, etc.

The peddlers of Globalisation know that in spite of their much beloved 'end of history' the downtrodden and exploited masses may revolt, particularly with vengeance seeing the rocketing disparity of wealth and poverty naked in their own eyes in this era of Globalisation. So they were cautious, so they designed BPL even if trying to dismantle state-subsidy-regime, so they designed 100 days non-production-related job at least for a few persons in a village, so they gave Nobel Prize to Md Yunus... etc.

There is another aspect in many of these measures. It is *the 'mindset' that is cultivated deliberately and surreptitiously by the establishment through such programmes*. Yunus was really very cunning inventor indeed, he designed such a method which may get people just out of the narrowly defined 'poverty', but additionally, and that is the core, a 'gem' so to say, his method help impregnating and engraving capitalist categories like 'profit' within the mind of a poor toiler who from her 'business' gets 'profit' that is much less than a 'decent' wage! Whereas, the BPL system on the other hand, tries to engrave in and impregnate the mind of a BPL receiver a mentality of as if they are given 'alms', as if getting 'charity' at the 'mercy' of or 'benevolence' of the govt, panchayats, governmental parties ... etc who actually shows their 'generosity' from the tax-money which ultimately is borne by the toiling masses themselves! Simultaneously, the whole system portrays that it is the bad-luck or inability of the 'poor' that has made her/him a poor! *This is part and parcel of the BPL logic*. [While judging any of the govt relief or reform measures this aspect is also to be considered.]

According to this Globalised state-subsidy standard only BPL households will get less than nutrition-necessary food grains, a little kerosene at a 'subsidised' price; only they will avail the 'free' less-than-skeletal and terrifying govt health-care system where many items are to be bought and many tests are to be done even by the BPL 'consumer' from market at market-price [otherwise, for a CT or MRI scan the patient will have to wait for six months in queue sometimes]; only BPL households will be considered for Indira-Abasan type 'housing' programmes that provide to about 5 households each year among say a 1000 households a sum of less than Rs 10,000 (\$250) for house-building [!] after deductions by babu leaders etc ...!!! Then, ***as only a section of the poverty stricken toiling masses can have the BPL as per the new [and also the old] criteria, the poor will get divided***, and what is more, they will be at the mercy of the leader-member-officer clique that is in charge of distribution of the 'priceless' and 'scarce' BPL tags! This is the BPL logic, the BPL framework of relief operations. Can any 'revolutionary' accept this and demand fulfilment of the BPL scheme? ***Can any 'revolutionary' conducts agitation-propaganda in such a way that bolsters in the mind of the poor that very BPL logic, instils craving for paltry relief measures like BPL and does not reveal the plot named BPL, does not stir up hatred and wrath against this whole conspiracy called BPL?*** If they do so then that organisation can be said to be practising tail-ism of the establishment knowingly or unknowingly.

It may be argued that: in this or that locality the poor rural toilers are agitated over non-availability of scheduled BPL quantities, over corruption regarding BPL, etc, and so it is the duty of the revolutionary organisation there to see that a mass-movement is built voicing the demands of the poor... In such a case the arguer often fails to see many other closely related things, e.g., [1] the dissat-

isfaction, wrath, anger brewing in the minds of the poor regarding exploitation, humiliation, unemployment, hunger, succumbing to moribund health due to malnutrition and non-availability of medical treatment, etc and on the top of all these the ever widening social disparity — to sum up, the 'hell of a life'; [2] after a long period of fight-less surrendering years, after a long spell of passivity, hopelessness, confusions, disarrayed-ness the toiling masses are trying again to enter the arena of class struggle, and their desires and angers both are being expressed by them; [3] the dissatisfaction, wrath built up by getting mal-handled by the same party now in govt for which they once fought bearing so many atrocities, guarded and saved those leaders with whatever weapons in hand through so many sleepless nights, etc — this point is particular for CPIM run states especially West Bengal. All agitation and propaganda works, education-organisation works, are to be undertaken giving these pertinent points due importance. These points direct us to conduct revolutionary agitation-propaganda, and not anything that may harm the development of revolutionary consciousness, instils reformist longings. Abstractly-and-theoretically speaking, even if there were a situation where contents of these points mentioned above were absent, it is impermissible for revolutionary communists to carry on reformist propaganda *emphasising slogans of paltry reforms and not exposing BPL as a trifling relief, a dangerous trap fitted by the ruling class to placate a section of poverty stricken toiling masses and a cushioning tool to save the System, the Reign of the ruling classes. BPL is government's mockery in the name of alleviating poverty, it is a silly and cruel joke, and so it deserves a resounding rebuttal and remonstrance in the agitation-propaganda of the revolutionaries covering any or all of BPL related issues.*

**Note:**

[1] “If we look into the poverty-statistics of WB, we'll find that **in '93-'94, 40.8% of the rural population was under the poverty line** (i.e., who can not afford a per capita per day food intake equivalent to 2400 Calories) **In the year '98 that figure increased to 58.3%**. The governments (both of the state and the union) didn't like these figures. To please them *able* statisticians changed the way poverty is to be measured, and to their pleasure, found that **poverty has decreased suddenly within a year or so, in 1999-2000 the rural poor were only 31.85%.**”  
*From: West Bengal's Villages & Panchayati Raj... “For A Proletarian Party”, Oct '03*

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## **Venezuela: Economics & Politics of Oil (2007)**

**M. Pramanik**

This is a report and partial analysis of the events in 2007 in Venezuela pertaining to the “re-conquest” of the oil industry by the Venezuelan Government from the hands of the foreign multinationals and imperialism. ***The aim of this article is to try to find out exactly what are the changes and events that have taken place in this regard in Venezuela this year and what it signifies for the anti-imperialist and world socialist movement.***

The events that first made world news headlines was in May 2, 2007 when the Venezuelan Government took control over the installations of the petroleum companies (multinationals) in the Orinoco basin. Starting May 1st, PDVSA (Venezuela's state oil company) started controlling a minimum 60% of the shares in all oil operations in the Orinoco river basin. So far four joint companies have

been formed with multinational companies including Total, Sincor, Chevron-Texaco, Exxon-Mobil, British Petroleum and the German company Veba Oel. Conoco Phillips is the only company with operations in the Orinoco that has not yet signed an agreement with the Venezuelan state oil company.

***However, to properly understand the significance of these moves we must look back to some facts and figures relating to the role of the Venezuelan Government, the multinational companies, the PDVSA etc in the oil industry in the past.*** Venezuelan oil is geo-politically very important to imperialism: Venezuela is the third largest petroleum producer in the western hemisphere next only to USA and Mexico; *its PDVSA is now perhaps the third biggest petroleum company in the world; but Venezuela has the largest known- &-proven reserve of petroleum in the western hemisphere, and the third largest proven reserve in the world as a whole* — a world, which is leading to a supposed 'energy-crisis' within a couple of decades!

We are basing our facts on a document released by the Venezuelan Government viz. "A National, Popular, and Revolutionary Oil Policy for Venezuela" written by Minister Rafael Ramirez released by the Government on Thursday the 9th of June 2005 (<http://www.venezuelanalysis.com/articles.php?artno=1474>).

The first part of this document describes the process in which imperialism and the oil multinationals took control over the oil reserves in Venezuela. To quote the document: "...we have to say that in the present time the relationship between politics and oil has become even more closely knit than it used to be. The coup d'état of April 11, 2002 and the sabotage of the oil industry which took place during December of the same year both provide ample proof of this. What is more, I dare say that the very collapse of the Fourth Republic, and the profound crisis into which it plunged the country, are both intimately related to oil. Indeed, during the decade of the 1990s, the policy of Apertura amounted to a veritable assault on Venezuelan oil, an assault coordinated by some international institutions in oil consuming countries together with the big multinationals of yesteryear, all of whom, with the complicity of the self-styled oil meritocracy, and the ruling oligarchy and its political representatives, conspired against the Venezuelan state, prompting the crumbling of the latter and bringing about an economic and social crisis for our country."

### **Venezuelan Oil — 1980s & 1990s & Before**

The history of the petroleum industry in Venezuela in the 1990s is one of blatant thievery by trans-national companies (TNC-s i.e., MNC-s, henceforth mentioned as MNC-s or 'multinationals' as these terms are generally employed here in the communist circle of India) and imperialist countries. What is of much more significance is the fact that in the process the very sovereignty and political independence of the country was thwarted.

However, one thing should be made clear: under the reign of 'bourgeoisie' of one's own country, in a 'periphery' country, the terms 'sovereignty', 'political independence' etc are not to be taken literally; 'sovereignty', 'political independence' etc of such countries are very empty and fragile in this era of imperialism; the apparently 'nationalist' govt may somersault to taking totally opposite stances, as we shall see in the case of Venezuela. It would have been better if Minis-

ter Rafael Ramirez elaborated this point in his long essay. To understand the course of history we must first look at the process by means of which the imperialists and oil TNC-s gained control over the oil industry.

### **The State of Affairs Before the Advent of PDVSA—1960s**

In 1960, the CVP (Corporación Venezolana de Petróleo), an autonomous institute with a Directive council presided by the Minister of Mines and Hydrocarbons and an executive Board presided by a Director General, was set up to look after the oil industry.

In 1967, to further strengthen state control over industry an amendment was carried out to Article 3 of the 1943 Hydrocarbons Law. According to it, the state might carry out all of the petroleum sector activities by means of Autonomous Institutes and Companies fully owned by the State, and also authorized these entities to celebrate "agreements and promote mixed enterprises in which they could take a share, so long as the terms and conditions stipulated in each contract are more favourable to the Nation than those set out for concessions in the present law." It was also stated that the approval of all contracts was to be done by the joint session of the Chambers of Congress. Also it was settled that Venezuelan Law would settle all disputes and there would be no international arbitrations. Further provision was there that all the agreements would be fully published in "Gaceta Oficial" – the official gazette.

The intentions are clear: –

1. Exercise state screening and control over terms and conditions of all contracts and agreements.

2. Do not allow any "international court" (= imperialist dominated agency) to pass any judgement on disputes between Venezuela and multinational companies. In other words, as the oil belongs to Venezuela, so multinationals will have to go by Venezuelan terms and conditions to use it.

3. Make the terms and conditions of all such treaties and agreements open to the public for review (publishing in the official gazette).

It is amply clear from this amendment that the then government of Venezuela had taken an apparently "nationalist" stance, at least in the matter of oil industry. This was in 1967.

### **Enters the PDVSA & the 1980s**

However, the situation changed soon. The CVP was dissolved and nominally a new holding company, the PDVSA (Petróleos de Venezuela SA, a state venture) was formed in 1977 and oil industry dealings were to be made through it. On the face of it, this should not have been too big or significant a change. But in fact, the whole top and middle management of PDVSA was taken from the former employees of oil multinationals. So, as has now become clear, the PDVSA, since its birth, acted as agent of foreign multinationals – it undertook a process of changing the laws first, then taking advantage of the changed law it undertook a series of agreements and contracts with foreign multinationals whose terms and conditions virtually looted Venezuela of its oil wealth and bled the

country dry. Birth of PDVSA was preceded by a change in the Article 5 of the Hydrocarbon Law in 1975; that changed law became operational from the beginning of 1976 and through this amendment, in the language of Minister Rafael Ramirez, "...the door was kept open for private investment in oil, albeit only in association with the state oil enterprise." It should also be noted that the western media, including the Internet, most of the times present this 1975 step as a 'nationalisation' measure, a measure that 'benefited' Venezuela, etc and never mention the 1960 or 1967 enactments/amendments.

Let us look into history of operations of the PDVSA.

### State pricing of oil brought out of state control

In the beginning of the 1980s, global oil demands fell due to very high oil prices then prevailing. Taking advantage of this plea, the PDVSA started pressuring the Govt to let the PDVSA control the sale price. It is to be remembered that hitherto the Ministry of Mines & Hydrocarbons fixed the sale price. However, under pressure from the PDVSA, from **January 11, 1985**, it was resolved by the Finance Ministry that all prices declared by the PDVSA would be accepted. As a result of this, all throughout the next 15 years, there would be no control over oil prices whatsoever! The PDVSA would sell oil to its favoured multinationals at a huge discount, thus virtually giving away Venezuelan wealth for peanuts.

Recent studies of the accounts of the year 1983 to 2004 revealed that the opportunity costs of the discount granted by PDVSA to all its overseas affiliates averaged \$1.03/barrel totalling \$7.5 billions; when each item was calculated in terms of 2004 dollars this sum becomes equal to \$11.4 trillions!

### The acquisition of CITGO

**After 1986**, PDVSA started another strategy. It started partial acquisition of a U.S. petroleum company, Citgo's refinery system, leading to a full takeover some years later. Between 1986 and 1998, PDVSA invested \$4.5 billions in USA in this way. This 'capital transfer' abroad took place when Venezuela was undergoing one of its worst economic crises!

It may be argued that capital investment abroad is not a bad thing for a country, as it would eventually lead to repatriation of profits back to Venezuela. But the actual plan was totally different. It went something like this.

1. PDVSA will sell oil at a discounted price to Citgo. So, by Venezuelan accounts of PDVSA, its profit would go down. So the net income of both PDVSA and Venezuelan Govt goes down sharply.

2. Citgo makes higher profits due to input cost (oil bought at cheap rate from PDVSA). The US Govt taxed Citgo and gets a fat portion of the fattened profits as tax from Citgo. For example, in 2003, 193 MBD (million barrels per day) of crude were sent to Citgo's refineries at an average unit price of \$2 under the true market price, for a total discount of 394 million dollars *per day*! The total loss, as a result of this, to the Venezuelan Exchequer made up of forgone royalties and income tax came to \$253 millions. On the other hand, the US govt got \$0.89 million simply as income tax due to that additional profit!

3. THE MOST STARTLING FACT is this that, though Citgo made heavy profits, ***Citgo never pay any dividends at all to the PDVSA, or through it to the Venezuelan Exchequer, for the most part of the last 20 years!!!***

Consider as an example what happened when, in 1999, president Chávez demanded that Citgo declare dividends for 1998 fiscal exercise. One could have supposed that finally some justice would prevail and profits derived from price discounts would be repatriated. BUT NO! Citgo declared dividends of \$486 for that year, but according to the structures devised by the PDVSA, these funds were remitted to Citgo's US parent firm PDV America. This company, in turn, declared dividends to its own parent, PDV Holdings Inc but not before reducing the amount from \$468 millions to \$268 millions. And this company further reduced this amount to ZERO! What happened was that the funds were simply recycled to various businesses of PDVSA in USA. So the net effect of "acquisition of Citgo" were:

1. High volume of Venezuelan capital is invested in USA.
2. By means of this commercial tie-up both Citgo and its US affiliates and the US Govt too make heavy profits solely derived from forcefully selling Venezuelan oil at very cheap prices.
3. But PDVSA and Venezuelan Govt do not earn a single dollar as dividends from above profit, in addition swallowed heavy losses incurred due to having sold oil at discount.

The dismantling of the 1967 Hydrocarbons Law was the next step devised and executed by the PDVSA. As we shall see now, the PDVSA, acting as the agent of foreign imperialists and multinationals, embarked on a path of systematically dismantling whatever little barriers (legal) were there to the open loot of Venezuelan oil. The main such legal obstacle was the 1967 Hydrocarbons Law, which, as seen before, stipulated control on the terms and conditions of the contracts of oil.

As we have told earlier: 'political independence' etc of such countries are very empty and fragile in this era of imperialism — *during the reign of the same Acción Democrática party led governments those 1960, 1967 and 1975 amendments were made*, the same AD & COPEI parties filled the houses of representatives and they almost alternatively led the govt from 1958 to 1998.

### **PDVSA in the Period of Globalisation**

This is how the PDVSA proceeded. In 1990 a 'Plea for Interpretation' was placed before the Supreme Court of Justice. To cut a long story short, the main aim of the Plea was the annulment of article 3 of 1967 Hydrocarbons Law. The president of the court, proving that he was also a stooge of foreign capital, gave the ruling whereby:

1. Article 3 of 1967 Hydrocarbons Law was annulled.
2. It was also clarified that "state control" would henceforth not mean majority shareholding stake, but a supposed legal control. This cleared the way for operations where the multinationals would have majority shareholding. In fact,

in all association of contracts it was explicitly stipulated that under no circumstances PDVSA would be allowed to become a majority partner.

3. By the annulment of Article 3, the principle of International Arbitration was ratified for all contracts. This meant that disputes would be settled by International Courts (= imperialist courts) and not by Venezuelan Courts.

4. The most important effect of the annulment of Article 3 was that the Venezuelan Govt no longer had supreme authority to decide the terms and conditions of the contracts. They would be decided by the PDVSA and its multinational masters (obviously in a way so as to allow looting of Venezuelan oil reserves).

The eye-opener is that **the National Congress of that time coolly accepted ALL OF THIS.**

So, by the end of 1993 the Ministry of Energy and Mines was fully under control of the PDVSA and oil multinationals.

***Taking advantage of an open legal field, the PDVSA embarked on two major sorts of agreements to rob Venezuela: (1) Operating Contracts, and (2) Association Agreements.*** Let us briefly review what it did.

**(1) Operating Contract:** The original intent of the Venezuelan state regarding Operating Contracts was: (1) they were to be mere service providers, to aid State companies in production and managements of oilfields; (2) they were to be restricted to producing and managing marginal fields. However, in actual practice what was done by the PDVSA were: (1) Virtually the whole production was turned over to contractors — they even began to show oil supplies in their U.S. Balance Sheets (as if they owned them); (2) by the time of the 2nd and 3rd round of operating contracts, both active and inactive fields were turned over to them — by the end of this period (from 1995 onwards) some contracts handed over rich and highly productive fields to contractors (as for example the Boscán Field in 1995); (3) each time the Congress or National Assembly requested copies of agreements, the PDVSA replied that they contained privileged information and so could not be handed over; and (4) the real reason for this evasion is clearly shown to be illegal terms of contracts, which practically looted Venezuela's oil wealth.

For example, in 3 contracts undertaken around 1992-93, invoices raised by the contracts were 80% of the value of oil produced! This means Venezuela, through PDVSA, was turning over 80% of the value of oil wealth to the contractors! Total loss was estimated at \$9.7 millions in a single small field producing only 34 thousand barrels a day. The nature of overpricing of services by the contractors can be understood when we see that **whereas contractors charged lifting cost of \$19.17 per barrel, PDVSA in its own operated oil fields calculated a lifting cost of only \$4 per barrel!! (The contractors extracted almost 380% more charge!)**

In the Second Bidding Round, eleven Operating Contracts were made and the service charge rated by the contractors was 66% of the value of oil. This seems slightly better – *but the catch was elsewhere!* Within some of the contracts, there were clauses that if production reaches a certain volume, further 'incentive' will be paid to the contractors. All these provisions triggered in 2003-04 a

bizarre thing: **service charge shot up to 93% of the price of oil!!!**

Then, in the Third Bidding Round, the PDVSA tried with all its might to scrap royalties payable by it to the state. The main target was – the service charge payable to contractors was determined based on the value of a barrel of oil less royalty paid to the state. Hence if royalties were eliminated then service charges would shot up.

To sum up, the Operating Contracts turned out to be another means of robbing the Venezuelan state by higher service charges.

**(2) Association Agreements:** The best of methods employed by multinationals to rob Venezuela was by means of Association Agreement. The stated purpose was to form joint ventures with oil multinationals with the aim to produce upgraded extra-heavy crude oil, which is more profitable. But here too, the terms and contracts of the Agreements were designed in a manner so as to rob Venezuela of its oil wealth. Witness the following facts:

(A) **They were liable to pay only 1% royalty.** This was an illegal application of a clause in Venezuelan Law that stated that – mature projects which had paid 16-and-two-third% (i.e., one-sixth of their total value) interest all their lives, would, in their mature phase, be allowed to reduce royalty payment to 1%.

(B) The income tax was fixed at only 34% of profits, which was non-oil tax-rate. It is to be remembered that in Venezuelan Law the rate of income tax on oil production would be (supposed to be) one-sixth or half of the income depending on certain factors.

(C) It goes without saying that in all these projects PDVSA has a minority stake.

(D) In at least one of the Association Agreements (SIMCOR), the foreign multinational involved in the project illegally extracted more oil (110% more, in this case 110 thousand barrels more) per day than it was authorized to do (0.1MBD). It was originally assigned 250 sq. km of oilfields, but it illegally extended its operation to 324 sq. km and further illegally “reserved” for it another 170 sq. km.

(E) Finally, even though it does not have any right to sell natural gas produced in the wells, it has illegally usurped this right.

(F) And in order to cover up the gross illegalities they were performing, the multinationals arranged for the “disappearance” of all documents pertaining to the technical terms of the contract. Finally, after a lot of effort on the part of Chávez Govt, some of the documents could be retrieved using international sources and that is how the original terms of the contracts were made public.

## **The Fight Back: Imperialist Sponsored Coup & Aftermath**

### **The Administrative and Political Events of the Fight Back**

The fight back against the imperialists started early in 2002. Chávez started to take steps to bring the PDVSA under state control – and the management fought back.

In April 2002 the fight reached a peak — Chávez sacked seven top-level managers and some other officials.

Immediately the stooges of multinationals struck back — within a few days Chávez was ousted by a military coup supported by the pro-imperialist oligarchy.

But amidst mass popular protests and mass movement against the coup, in a few days the coup was crushed and Chávez was reinstated in power. His steps were continued, and that led to another climax in December 2002, when owners (capitalists) and imperialist stooges struck again — a “strike” was called. It had minimal impact on other sectors but crippled the oil industry where the full top layer (managers, executives and supervisors) struck work and started sabotaging production. Chávez responded by mobilising the rank and file. Countrywide, communities kept vigil on thousands of kilometres of oil & gas pipelines. **And workers did almost a miracle — despite the highly sophisticated and computerised nature of the production and distribution process that needed supposedly highly educated and trained manpower of top level management and technical experts, with the help of retired workers coming in, thousands of PDVSA workers slowly restored production. Workers in the electric company CADAPE also succeeded in similar efforts.** By January 2003 oil sector production reached 50% of pre-strike level, and soon thereafter that came to almost normal. This was a decisive battle in which poor communities of the country and more strikingly the workers played a major role. How the workers actually managed PDVSA and CADAPE production-distribution that time, and later showed their ability to ‘run’ the state owned Aluminium Giant ALCASA led by former guerrilla fighter and respected leader Carlos Lanz, is a very significant thing to be investigated and understood (**but then Michael A Lebowitz has cited the problem of ‘thwarting’ of “workers’ control” in PDVSA and its dearth in all state sector firms except ALCASA and CADELA in his recent article in Monthly Review July-August 2007 issue**) – and that needs an urgent and separate treatment.

This anti-imperialist crusade was progressing since then and culminated in the takeover of the Orinoco oilfields. The shareholding of each project has been set at at-least-60% for the PDVSA – the new, restructured, anti-imperialist PDVSA – and all illegal terms and conditions annulled.

During the course of this political battle, the following are some of the steps taken by the Chávez administration in the oil sphere:

- (1) The illegal terms of the Operating Contracts have been annulled.
- (2) No service charge greater than two-third will be paid in any Operating Contract.
- (3) Mixed enterprises will be constituted with at least 51% state shareholding.
- (4) In September 2004 the royalty in the Orinoco basin Association Agreements was made one-sixth from one-hundredth of the value produced (a gain of at least \$2.5 millions per day).

(5) In the Sincor case, steps have been taken to restart operations limited to 250 sq. km.

In brief, though multinationals still hold a large stake in Venezuelan oil industry, the past 4-5 years' anti-imperialist drive has succeeded in smashing the inner enemy — the old PDVSA was smashed and reconstituted in a thoroughly national, anti-imperialist fashion, automatically resulting in usurpation of the almost political control that the multinationals and imperialism were exerting.

### **In Lieu of Conclusions**

In the present day scenario of unbounded attacks by US imperialism, will it be too much if we call this a strong anti-imperialist step? This question needs to be clarified a little. It is true that the Venezuelan government has not fully expropriated the imperialist ownership of the oilfields. Then what has it done? In retrospect we find that: (1) Forcibly the percentage shareholding of the imperialists has been reduced to 40%. (2) The control exercised by the imperialists and their stooges over policies of the state, as well as total liberty in framing the terms and conditions of oil contracts, have been smashed. And a new control is now exercised by the state via the reconstituted PDVSA, anti-imperialist in nature. (3) The oil-income of Venezuela has gone up sharply.

Based on this summary and keeping in mind that all this is happening when there is no super-power to challenge the USA from whom Venezuela can draw help, it can and should be asserted that this was a prolonged anti-imperialist battle by the Venezuelan workers and poor toilers led by Chávez, which has succeeded in striking a blow to imperialism.

A last thought on these events: It is also a striking feature of these events that the US imperialists did not perform armed invasion of Venezuela. What conjuncture of forces stopped it from doing so? Keeping in mind the psychic (self-defeating) "victory" of imperialists in Iraq, followed by the bumbling (if not volte-face) in case of North Korea, Iran, and then finally these Venezuelan events... ... the question, which now demands serious attention, is — is US imperialism weakening? Is it in the decline?

These are the questions and propositions, which the world proletarian movement will have to urgently address.

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## **Welcome PSUV**

## **But What about the 'New' Party of the Working Class of Venezuela**

**S. Majhi**

### **Socialist Party — Why**

Classes, and persons too, feel the need of a party out of various reasons, and various situations compel them to think of having a party. The working class needs its own party, which is nothing else than the organised advanced detachment of the working class itself, to lead it for its struggle for socialism — in the courses through a socialist revolution that proclaims the start of the social rev-

olution; then through the transition period, in which the class makes 'despotic inroads' on Capital as Marx and Engels foresaw in their Communist Manifesto, using its instruments, e.g., the 'state' under its control or "the dictatorship of proletariat", etc... and ultimately reach the goal of a classless society, socialism, where classes 'wither' away, and so will be the fate of the party of the class. [For the sake of simplicity, we are not distinguishing here the 1st and 2nd phases of socialism, and that is out of the ambit of the present topic too.] Working class feels this, realizes this, in the face of the regime that exploits and oppresses them and other toiling people, a system, to change that they need to fight a political battle, and that raises the necessity of the class party of the proletariat. Lenin also saw and taught us that in 'backward societies' it is possible, and is imperative for the class, to draw the other toiling people, especially the toiling peasants, towards socialism through certain ways — and he was so confident on this possibility (and necessity) that he was not even inclined to 'expropriation of kulaks' in general in the post-Nov-revolution days [kulaks were *peasants* too and so *take part in major farming activities* according to Lenin's classification, even if they are *exploiters* who extract surplus value exploiting agro-labourers, and were seen to be prone to 'hoarding' and other vices] as for example in his 1921 speech in the 10th Party Congress.

Our Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez had told his realisation about the necessity of a socialist party in Venezuela frankly, though that may sound strange to advanced class-conscious workers of the world. We are quoting here those often quoted lines that appeared in so many pro-Venezuelan regime [or process] sites from the website of the famous Hands Off Venezuela campaign. "Human beings are transitory," he said. "The party must be eternal, the most powerful revolutionary motor." Chavez recalled his recent visit to Havana and that Castro had explained why he (Castro) can die but the Cuban Revolution will continue. On the other hand, Castro apparently said that without Chavez the Venezuelan "revolution would be carried away in the wind." "I realize that unfortunately he is right," said Chavez on Saturday. "If I die this revolution will be carried away in the wind because we don't have a party, a big political machine, a big political direction," he said. And so he advanced the idea of forming United Socialist Party of Venezuela [PSUV].

### The Reawakening in the Making

The workers and other toiling people of Venezuela could have assured Chávez that he didn't need to worry about the future of 'Venezuelan revolution', as course of history in general and social movements too are decided by so many complex things and obviously not by any particular individual; though of course individuals have very important parts to play in setting direction of certain social movements, which in turn influence the course of history to some extent. The Russian or Chinese revolution did not get 'carried away in the wind' simply by the death of important leaders like say, Lenin, or, Mao. Rather, history teaches us that the working class *couldn't hold* the real 'prime motors', state and the class party of the proletariat, *at their control*; things slipped out of their hands when they were taking some initial steps of the 'transition' phase. And only at a later stage the 'seemingly' or so-called 'actually existing' *socialism-s* or so called *socialist states* that were actually *in the phase of transition to socialism* crumbled down manifestly, roughly around 1989-91. And things became clear almost

to the last person of the class that the first offensive march of the international socialist movement (1848 – 19??) was defeated. Not a single communist party, the class party of the proletariat, worthy of its name is there. The old communist parties degenerated, got rotten and became just bourgeois/petit-bourgeois reformist parties. And this defeat is all the more painful and humiliating, as the defeat didn't occur evidently in a frontal war with capitalists of the world combine — as was in the case of our glorious Paris Commune, for which the workers feel proud even if that was defeated. But then, after all these, what happened to the course of class struggle?

Bourgeois pundits grinned gleefully 'the end of history': but unluckily for them history only chose a path previously *un-thought-of*. After a spell of frustration, passivity, disarrayed-ness, helplessness, etc on the one hand, and having been driven back to the wall by the assaults of Thatcher-Regan-and the likes and Structural Adjustments etc in the 1980s and then finally by the fiercer attacks of 'Globalisation' from the early 1990s on the other, the workers are slowly but steadily coming back in the arena. This is happening in spite of that defeat, in spite of absence of a true party of the class. *A reawakening of the class struggle is taking place objectively through the new struggles the workers are launching, their new organisations that are being built up from below, and most importantly, by their rejection of and rebellion against the 'old' betrayers, old rotten parties, some of whom are still bearing the names of 'communist party', and old trade unions, old lines, practices, etc.* This objectivity is manifest in different ways in different places; naturally one shouldn't look for any uniformity in the birth or springing up of new sprouts. Movement, at this stage, evidently will follow previously uncharted paths; *and as the old communist movement never faced this situation we should not expect or try to find out suitable quotations from chosen leaders either to find out all our necessary lines in clear cut terms, or, what is more, in support of some approach of one's own choice.* Rather we have the time-tested methods of scientific socialism like 'concrete analysis of concrete conditions'.

### Venezuela – Reawakening – Problems & Confusions

In our previous article on Venezuela (written in Aug 06 and in print version 'Nov 06') we tried to focus the facts, problems and prospects of the reawakening that is taking place in Venezuela. We mentioned the absence of a revolutionary working class party in Venezuela as a weakness. We also mentioned the comment of veteran leader **Guillermo Ponce** in 2003 in this respect (Revista Punto Final **14-28 May, 2003 issue no: 539, to be found at <http://www.puntofinal.cl/>**) and also the inadequacy of the comment. Besides that, we didn't know *at that time* any other comment of any Venezuelan leader on this urgent matter, but that's our limitation; later we came to know that the point had been already raised by the leader of UNT (C-CURA), i.e., the bloc within UNT named Current-Classist-United-&Autonomous, supposedly the largest bloc within the UNT, Orlando Chirino in his interview with 'International Socialism' posted on June 1, 2006, where he said, "WE are absolutely convinced that workers not only have the challenge to construct a powerful centred union, but also have to construct a political instrument that fights consciously for a true programme of socialism in the country, for the actual participation of the base, developing social control and participating in the management of companies. We

believe that like this, just as the bourgeoisie have their parties, reformism also has its parties for example, the so called parties of the Block of Change that are now rejected by the majority of the people, we believe that the workers have the legitimate right to create, without any attempt at self-proclamation, the necessity to construct our own party..." (<http://www.isj.org.uk/?id=204>). Surely Orlando Chirino was not alone in Venezuela bearing the thought of necessity of a class party of the proletariat.

Incidentally, while trying to form an opinion on the PSUV, its creation process, etc and while probing the problems-&-prospects of forming a *working class party*, one must take into account relevant things – the most important is ***the general setting or backdrop of current international situation: the already mentioned Defeat of The First Offensive March of the International Working Class Movement, the absence of party of the proletariat and also any international centre etc resulting disarrayed-ness, frustration, helplessness, directionless-ness etc of the class, and then the attacks of imperialism, the exploitation, loot, plunder by its TNC-s, the alignment of the bourgeoisie of the world with the policies of Globalisation. And in this general backdrop we are to see the unfolding of the particular, in this case the Venezuelan movement itself.*** We tried to approach that in our Nov 06 article. Another important factor: We do not see now the "rising international revolutionary movement" as we saw earlier in history, safely we can say that happened thrice in the 20th century: (1) just after the Nov '17 revolution in Russia, which continued till almost 1921; (2) at the later period of second world war and after the second world war what is sometimes called the Tumultuous Forties; and (3) during mid and end 1960s. In today's condition of global balance of forces, we mean precisely at *this* moment, it is really difficult for a country to, using Lenin's expression, "hold on" a proletarian power; and Venezuela is far from attaining this 'proletarian power'. [Have the zealous agitators for expropriation of bourgeoisie appreciated this factor!]

Before going farther we would like to mention that, in this background, when 'socialism' is not an 'In Thing' generally, it is really interesting to note, and we noted that in our article, a sizeable section of Venezuelan toiling masses including workers are showing positive interest towards 'socialism', whatever insufficiency be there in their realisation about 'socialism' or with whatever 'unconscious' appeal of socialism be there in them. *To the extent that the proposed PSUV consolidates and crystallises this aspiration of the masses be that not yet 'conscious', and helps that to let that blossom through initiatives from below, it is welcome.* But... well, there are many 'but-s'!

Anyway, after the call of Chávez we saw a lot of enthusiasm in Venezuela and in the international 'left' media too regarding PSUV. But sadly we are seeing so many discussions, several lengthy articles... approving the PSUV and the process of its formation without taking all the above factors into account! On the other hand, several articles critical to the PSUV are also available in the web world, but those too are not taking these factors into consideration. (Ranging from Venezuela's PSUV and Socialism from Below By: George Ciccariello-Maher in MRZine [Wednesday, Mar 28], or Central committee of Socialist Worker-New Zealand's May Day's Statement [Venezuela's Revolution Is Globally Significant <http://www.debateabierto.net/Home/English/27052007Venezuelasdeepening/>]

tabid/307/Default.aspx – where they wrote *"Is the unfolding Venezuelan revolution the most important leap forward for the workers' cause since the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution? The answer from delegates at Socialist Worker-New Zealand's recent national conference was a unanimous "yes" "] to 'Political Parties and Social Change in Venezuela' by Sujatha Fernandes in ZNet [Thursday, Mar 22], or as in <http://indymedia.org.nz/newswire/display/73433/index.php> Venezuela: 'The Revolution In The Balance' by CWG, ... ..different angles of discussions, criticism are available!)*

And in the mist created by the defeat and the sheer pressure of many prejudices and misconceptions inherited from the past movement it is all the more necessary to 'rehabilitate' the correct revolutionary essence of Marxism, correct revolutionary conceptions. And Venezuela is no exception. 'Socialism' is often taken to mean whatever one likes or thinks as 'socialism' although in a totally wrong, non-Marxist way! As for example we cite only two. (1) Often Nationalisation is confused with socialisation, and nationalisation plus a 'socialist' party in power and/or a *benevolent* 'welfare' state is taken to be socialism. (2) Socialism – as a movement – is assumed to be as if a 'non-class' movement or movement of an amorphous, heterogeneous 'people'. Of course if 'people' means 'workers, peasants and other toiling masses' then peasants and other toiling masses can surely be won over towards socialism through prolonged struggle and endeavour of the working class – this is what Lenin taught us. But socialism, if that means scientific socialism, is essentially a principle of the working class, *and only working class*, as this is the only class which out of its objective existence strive for a classless society, fight for abolition of classes. Orlando also gave a hint of it although in an oblique manner in his recent interview when he said: *"The president has to understand that because of what we call the class instinct, and the levels of class and revolutionary consciousness, as well as because of their relationship with the bosses, the behaviour of workers is different from that of peasants, communities, or students."* (Interview with Orlando Chirino, by Aporeia.org, <http://www.newsocialist.org/index.php?id=1307>.) Then again, in [www.vheadline.com](http://www.vheadline.com) recent news story dated July 20, 2007 we see, "For us it is very clear: without the working class there is no socialism, and there will be no possibility of creating it in this country," said Máspero [Marcela Máspero is a member of the national coordinating committee of the UNT and works as an organiser of, among others, the Chemical Workers' unions – editor FAPP]. She emphasized the movement's desire to participate in the political process being carried forward in the country and emphasized the importance of converting the "bourgeois" state into a "socialist" state." It is indeed amazing to find the near absence of words like "proletariat", "proletarian", "working class" etc in the socialist discourses of the president and some other promoters – couldn't the old-timers, veteran members of the past communist movement like, to name a few, **Guillermo Ponce**, Carlos Lanz and of course Marta give some proper elementary course on Socialism to the president and the promoters of PSUV there?

We dealt with some other misconceptions [and 'over-estimations'] too in our article, like that of "changing production relation(s)", thinking of chalking out steps to socialism without even starting first few steps of democratic revolutionary agrarian transformation, and the ludicrous title *"Socialism of 21st*

Century" too (as if socialism of 19th century, i.e., the basics of socialism taught by Marx and Engels, are outdated now!!) etc.

***We understand that one of the most urgent tasks now is to sum up the causes of defeat taking into account concrete conditions of those days. In its absence everyone, even if unconsciously, is found to have been summing up the experience and also taking lessons from that in her/his own way, and in fact, many such things are contributing to increasing confusions!*** Let us explain this a bit: Suppose someone smartly says things like — *In Russia they started with "All Powers to the Soviets" and finished at All Power to the Party! Well, it may look 'smart' indeed to laymen, but advanced workers shouldn't think of applauding, rather they should grill that speaker with questions:* (1) Why those millions who fought for their soviet power for long 3 years after being ruined by 4 years of World War couldn't hold all powers to the Soviets? Can you answer that citing historical references of objective reality that time there? (2) What debarred them from doing so? Are the Bolsheviks to blame, or they 'conspired'? Either way you answer, you submit proofs, historical facts. (3) What you say about Lenin's insistence on re-making, re-building the whole structure from scratch? What you say about Lenin's efforts from sickbed for rejuvenating the party and the state? (4) What are the constraints, handicaps, difficulties, etc faced by proletariats of comparatively backward societies like Russia after revolution? It is claimed that the PSUV workers managed their sophisticated production-process during the strike of technocrats-bureaucrats, but why their Russian counterparts couldn't achieve that more than 80 years back? ... There are many such pertinent questions, and just throwing some comments evading those questions with some 'smart' 'quote-of-the-day' like things cannot help revolutionary movement for socialism. We have heard enough of such clichés for decades.

### **What Advanced Workers May Do**

But given the international scenario including the defeat of the old movement and the objectivity of struggle in Venezuela – if a party like PSUV emerges, and that is likely to emerge with 'millions of members' at this present state of affairs, what the class-conscious Venezuelan workers should do? And what about Chávez's call of unity where erstwhile parties/groups will have to dissolve their separate organisational existence as a precondition of their joining this party? This again tells us to take recourse of concrete analysis of the situation. But then it is very difficult, nearly impossible, for people from so far a distance (and not conversant in Spanish) to know the concrete conditions of Venezuela. As much we can conjecture from the lessons of history is the following:

If advanced class-conscious workers remain segregated from a platform that united a veritable whole or majority of still un-class-conscious & to some extent pro-socialism toiling masses assembled within PSUV, they will perhaps face extra-difficulty in *educating and organising on a class-line* the comparatively rearward class elements and other toiling masses. Again, organising on a class-line means having a separate organisational entity, which cannot be maintained as per PSUV rules as we heard. But *separate* and to that extent 'independent' 'bloc' *within* PSUV – will that also be impossible or prohibited? What the PSUV 'promoters' can say about Lenin's position of allowing different 'blocs' or 'platforms'

within the Bolshevik Party, which he fought against and had that banned *only under special circumstances* in 1921?

The point is: the advanced class-conscious section of the Venezuelan workers *must* interfere in the political formation there; it would be definitely better and easier if they can do that *from within*; but all the way they *should* maintain their *separate and independent* identity, line, effort, because this is *vital* from the angle of marching towards *scientific* socialism; they should have some clear-cut conceptions of today's concrete condition: reality of class struggle, balance of forces, dynamics of the defeat and emerging reality thereafter, etc; and on this only depends the future of the revolution and party in Venezuela. And for God's sake please forget the 'old' line of thinking, the old fashion of labelling, etc *including things like "I'm a Trotskyite", "that's Stalinist"* etc which *don't have any meaning* in today's circumstances of new struggles and new organisations.

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## **Preliminary Comments on Venezuelan Referendum Result**

**S. Majhi**

1. Perhaps Tariq Ali was the first among the prominent international 'lefts' [though 'left' is a hazy term nowadays] to comment on Venezuelan Referendum Result, and that appeared in Counter Punch on 3rd December. As reason he cited: "...large-scale abstentions by his supporters. 44 percent of the electorate stayed at home. Why? First, because they did not either understand or accept that this was a necessary referendum. The key issues were the removal of restrictions on the election of the head of government (as is the case in most of Europe) and moves towards 'a socialist state.' On the latter there was simply not enough debate and discussion on a grassroots level." ...and then "Another error was the insistence on voting for all the proposals en bloc on a take it or leave it basis...."

2. Tariq could have and should have concluded from the above that *it was not a defeat of Socialism*, if socialism is to be understood as the International Working Class Movement [and also the movement of all toiling and exploited masses of people of the world under the leadership of the working class] towards liberation of humanity; and *neither it was a defeat of the Venezuelan workers and the advanced activists of working class there at Venezuela*. Because workers there haven't proposed or sought the referendum, they didn't chalk out their issues at stake or the issues of the referendum... etc. This was a defeat of the Chàvista ruling group.

3. Tariq wrote, "He is a fighter and he will be thinking of how to strengthen the process. If properly handled the defeat could be a blessing in disguise." We would like to add that: Whatever Chàvez and his close circle friends think or not, the workers must tell him and them that it was enough, they must stop this funny/crazy 'socialism model-making' [a socialism *minus* working class] and better they should spend some time in reading history of international socialist movement, some important writings of Marx, Engels and Lenin at least. Tariq wrote about our class brothers and sisters there: "they did not either understand or accept that this was a necessary referendum." And Tariq knows well, he could have written too, what Lenin taught about 'introducing' socialism. Lenin taught

that *only* those socialist reforms could be enacted 'from above' for which the ground, i.e., 'the ground below' is ready, has become ready. This doesn't mean the masses would have to be 'ready' to accept the reforms as 'passive recipients', but Lenin meant that the masses would have to be active participants of those reforms, would be in a position to demand those reforms [apart from the objective condition, as for example, the production process being ready for the change] because the masses should be subjects of history, not 'objects', if we are talking about building socialism. Edgardo Lander did raise the point as Tariq did; but the point is why they didn't put Lenin and his teachings straight and undiluted. Cannot they, as peddlers of '21st Century's Socialism', try to learn from the history of socialist movement, the great rise of working class movement worldwide, and its defeat too? Do they want us to forget that as working class we have a long l-o-n-g history of socialist movement!

4. Tariq wrote, "One of the weaknesses of the movement in Venezuela has been the over-dependence on one person." But the weakness becomes a threatening disease if persons start to believe that he is the messiah who'll give the 'poor and wretched' workers 'deliverance' in the form of '21st Century Socialism' and 'socialism' can come as a 'governmental project' without the initiative and struggle of the working class!!

5. Venezuelan workers must take this issue of referendum result seriously, should take lessons from it and should take those lessons to other toiling masses. It is the initiative and struggle of working class and other toilers there on which destroying capitalism, vanquishing imperialism and building 'socialism' in Venezuela depend.

6. But in spite of all said above, we must say, a solid 49.3% of valid votes went in favour of unlimited power of the president for carrying out 'socialist reforms' [whatever 'socialist' means to them]. This figure speaks out the soul of Venezuela.

And here too we have Pros and Cons: very briefly speaking, Pros — in the sense that so many people are veering to 'socialism', at least they are seeing it as a better and viable alternative to 'capitalism'; and Cons — in the sense that they are seeking actions and intervention 'from above' for materialisation of their objective rather than thinking of taking the steering wheel of history themselves.

7. Later we found James Petras in his analysis emphasising and probing the role of the 'holy-alliance' or the unholy-quartet led by the US imperialism for a disorder in Venezuela and for a NO vote in the referendum. Surely this point is to be noted and given due importance.

## **Readymade Garment Industry**

### **A Case-Study of Global Chain Of Imperialist Exploitation**

**Debabrata Mondal**

In two countries, at two opposite ends of the world, two remarkable incidents of workers' revolt occurred almost simultaneously in 2006. The workers associated with both these incidents were of the same industry, namely the ready-made garment industry. The comparably larger incident took place in Bangladesh. Spanning the period from March to October 2006, 18 lakh [1.8 million] workers of the ready-made garment industry frequently came out on the road after striking work in a number of factories together and effectively laid siege on the capital Dhaka. Powered by the spontaneously crystallizing unity among themselves, the lower-rung workers revolted against the coercion of the factory-owners, braving the repressive terror unleashed by the goons / security guards hired by the factory-owners, the police and the military. Moreover, these revolts gathered momentum in spite of the concerted effort to pull in their reins by the trade-union organizations abiding by the dictates of the established parliamentary parties. All these had been achieved by the workers who had been denied even the right to organize in a trade union till then!

The other incident took place in Argentina. On March 30, 2006, fire broke up in a ready-made garment factory and six workers were burnt alive. Spurred by this, the garment workers began to mount continuous protest demonstrations in the capital city of Buenos Aires. Camping in front of the offices of the renowned brand-name companies of ready-made garment, they began to campaign about the mindless coercion carried on the workers in the factories manufacturing the garments bearing those glittering brand names. The factory owners, brand-name company managements and the government tried concertedly in various ways to smother the workers' initiatives. These stretched to the extent that thugs hired by the owners kidnapped the nine-year old son of a worker-couple, who were in the forefront of organizing the protest demonstrations, and threatened that the child would be killed if they did not cease their activities. In spite of these, the workers are continuing their efforts to get organized. Most of these workers were immigrants, who had been denied legal identity certificate by the city-officials and who were also not allowed to form even any factory-based trade-union. Still, it was they who were trying to build up an industry-wide platform, which would unite all the workers for struggle.

Apart from these two remarkable incidents, in quite a few other occasions, revolts of ready-made garment workers have broken out in the last two years in different so-called 'developing' countries. Vietnam and Cambodia have witnessed two such incidents of great intensity.

#### **Why are the garment workers so agitated?**

**Bangladesh:** The least mandatory wage for the garment workers was fixed up twelve years ago. From that time till 2006, the cost of living for the workers increased three times, yet the least mandatory wage remained unrevised. Even this wage was not paid to the workers regularly in all factories. The hourly wage of the garment workers in Bangladesh was 0.23 USD [\$] [Note: 1], and accord-

ing to the news media of Bangladesh, the unpaid wage of the garment workers was of magnitude 300,000 USD [\$] [Note: 2]. This implies that in 2006, the 1.8 million garment workers had to *work without wage for 13 million hours!* Apart from this, there are other atrocities, like forcing the workers to work overtime without any additional pay, working hours being arbitrarily extended at the whims of the management and forcing the workers to comply by locking them within the factory-shops, there being no fixed holidays. Ninety percent of the workers are women, their age being between twelve and thirty years. Forget about any maternity leave, failure to turn up for work ends up in being sacked. Moreover, there is the constant threat of being sexually abused by the management personnels and their hired goons/security guards.

Within most of the factories, the conditions of the workplace are also very dangerous. Just in two months of 2006, namely February and March, three cases of accidents came up in news. In two of those incidents, after fire broke out in the workshops, the workers, who were locked in from outside, could not get out. Some were burnt alive. Some were desperate enough to try to save their life by jumping out from third/fourth floor windows, but ended as corpses with smashed skulls and broken bones on the road below. In the other incident, several blocks of illegal construction atop a two-storied building, serving as a garment-factory workshop, came down and buried under it the workers working there. Nineteen workers died and fifty were severely injured.

**Argentina:** About four hundred garment factories had come up around the capital city of Buenos Aires. According to the official government record, these factories had no existence. One lakh [100,000] workers, who toiled daily in these factories, were also officially non-existent, as they were immigrants, denied of any legal identity certificate by the collusion of the factory-owners and the government officials. Taking advantage of this vulnerable condition of the workers, the factory-owners exploited them brutally. They were forced to work twelve to sixteen hours daily on an average. Wage, though paltry, was not paid regularly. When paid, it was at the rate of one hundred USD [\$] monthly, where the minimum cost of living for a four-member family was six hundred USD [\$]. Hence, *even if all the members of the family sell out their labour power, they would not be able to eke out a living!*

Beside this, there is the usual saga of workers being forced to work indefinitely extended working hours by being locked in from outside in the workshops, fire in locked-in workshops resulting in workers being burnt alive, no holidays for the workers, any absence leading to termination of job, and rampant sexual abuse meted out on the female workers. [Note: 3]

**In other 'developing' countries:** The conditions of the garment workers are similar as in Bangladesh and Argentina. The garment factories have grown up in the regions demarcated as the E.P.Z. (Export Processing Zone) or F.T.Z. (Free Trade Zone) by the governments of the 'developing' countries. Rather than modern technology or developed machinery, what is chiefly needed to run these factories is cheap human labour power. Hence, easy as it is to set up a unit in any 'developing' country, easier still is to relocate it. As a result, production units of the ready-made garment industry are constantly shifting location in search of cheaper labour power, and thus cheaper cost of production. Let us exemplify. In

Asia, Philippines was one of the first countries where such garment factories were set up, and in 1995, 13.8 % of the country's export came from this industry. But in 2002, the quantity of garment export had a much lower absolute value, making up only 7.2 % of the country's total export. The reality behind this statistics was the closure of numerous factories; pauperization of a large number of workers, mostly middle-aged women, who were robbed of their livelihood. At about the same time, Thailand also had similar experience. The reason behind this was that during the period, Bangladesh, Cambodia and Mexico emerged as vendors of much cheaper labour power; and garment industry shifted their production units largely to the E.P.Z./S.E.Z. of these countries. Today, in 2007, African countries, China and Caribbean Islands are providing labour power at further cheaper rate and threatening to draw the production units away from Bangladesh, Cambodia, Mexico. In the garment factories situated in the E.P.Z.s of Madagascar in Africa, the garment workers begin to work at 7.00/7.30 A.M, the working day stretching to 6.00 P.M. in ordinary days and to 10.00/11.00 P.M. in days of extra workload. Still the owners and managements of the factories there are claiming that they are losing out in competition to their counterparts in Mauritius and Seychelles as the factories have longer working days there. So the workers are being told that to 'save' their jobs they have to work for still more hours! [Note: 4]

*Thus there exists a terrible chain —intensification of exploitation of the workers at one juncture of it in one corner of the world directly creates the necessary condition for the exploitation to be intensified at other junctures in other parts of the world.*

### **How has this chain come into being?**

Industries for manufacturing ready-made garments originated in the developed countries of West Europe and United States in the 50's of the last century. In those countries, during that period, organized trade union movement was able to exact relatively high price of labour power. From the beginning of the 1960's, the relatively big capitalists investing in the garment industry began to explore the possibility of taking advantage of the cheaper labour power available in the 'developing' countries for decreasing the production cost. They first chose Asia's Taiwan, South Korea, and Hong Kong. At that time, these countries were taken under its influence by the U.S. imperialism, and the path of capitalist development from above through U.S. imperialist military and economic assistance was being carried on. The aim of this exercise was to create a foothold of the western imperialist powers which could counter the waves of anti-imperialist revolutionary movement spreading through Asia at that time. As a part of this scenario, ready-made garment manufacturing industries were set up with the capital and technical assistance of the 'developed' countries, primarily to cater the western market. Labour power being much cheaper in these countries, the production cost became a fraction of that in the western 'developed' countries. The success of this strategy to bolster the profit of the capitalists of the 'developed' countries and the fancy they took to it became evident when, from 1965 onwards, the model of these Asian countries began to be upheld by the imperialist authorities as the only 'feasible' path of development left to the 'developing' countries. Institutions spearheaded by the imperialist countries, like United Nations Industrial Development Organization, World Bank and International Mon-

etary Fund started bringing the governments of the 'developing' countries in line with this policy of so called 'export-led industrialization' by hook or by crook, through economic control, and, if needed, political control too. Greater part of the ruling classes of the 'developing' countries also dreamt of quick 'development' of their own interests and became willing mates of the imperialists. The governments of the 'developing' countries began to adopt policies of eradicating all curbs on export / import, giving increasing powers in the hands of the multinational investors to deflate the price of labour power— thus was brought into existence the Free Trade Zones. Simultaneously in 1974, the governments of the developed countries forged the Multifibre Agreement by which they could fix 'quotas' for each 'developing' countries, which had to be abided by the latter countries in their export of ready-made garments. Thus the 'developed' countries institutionalized their controlling hand on the ready-made garment industry of the 'developing' countries, which was initially used as a check to prevent any undesired effect on their own home industry. In this way, did spread in the 'developing' countries the production bases of the ready-made garments, which were sold in the 'developed' countries as commodities of multinational companies.

To build up the garment factories in South Korea, U.S. gave an 'aid' of 40 billion USD [\$.]. To set up the garment factories in Sri Lanka, World Bank sent a 'soft loan' of 2 billion USD [\$.] and a team of 'specialist / technicians'. The Sri Lankan factories erected with this support 'boasted' of the lowest wage of the workers in entire Asia at that time.

There is still another facet of the imperialist 'assistance' in the setting up of these garment factories — *assistance to curb down the workers' resistance movements* — in absence of which this model of 'development' could not be enforced. U.S. and its allies had directly or covertly facilitated the establishment of autocratic rules in countries like South Korea, Philippines, Taiwan; backing up dictators in some cases and supporting military rule in others. These autocratic governments had drowned in blood any worker's movement. Apart from this, the U.S. and its allies had backed formation of organizations like Asian-African Free Labour Institute (A.A.F.L.I.), which under the garb of workers' organization did everything to foil any spontaneous, independent effort of the workers to build up any struggle. Let us note here one elucidating example. In 1978, the women workers of the 'Dong Il Garment Factory' in Incheon, South Korea, organized themselves in an independent trade union and started agitating for higher wage and better working conditions. Their effort created a sympathetic stir among workers of neighbouring garment factories. Musclemen of A.A.F.L.I. raided the office of this union with iron rods and buckets filled with human excreta. They stormed into the office, vandalized it, beat up the women workers, poured the human excreta into their mouth and left after giving explicit 'instructions' to stop the agitation and start 'cooperating' with the management. Thus acted A.I.F.L.D., bolstered by U.S. USD [\$.].

From this time, another pattern began to emerge. The garment factories of Hong Kong, South Korea, and Taiwan supplied orders of West European and North American fashion companies. To take advantage of potentially increasing order, they had to find a way of bypassing the country-wise quota restrictions laid out in Multi-fibre Agreement. This they did by sub-contracting production to

neighbouring countries like Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, where they helped in setting up garment factories with still lower worker's wage.

In 1982, the government of Bangladesh adopted new export / import policy following the blueprint of 'export-led industrialization' dictated by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. Export Processing Zones (E.P.Z.s) were set up in the suburbs of Chittagong and Dhaka, giving free hand to the owners of the garment factories springing up there to exploit the workers at their will. As a result, the sector of ready-made garment production underwent massive expansion. While in 1980, there were about 50 factories employing a few thousand workers; in 2000, there were over 3000 factories employing 18 lakh workers.

At about the same time, expansion of ready-made garment industry took place in India in the post-1991 period of 'pro-market export-oriented' economic policy. Tirupur in Andhra Pradesh accounts for 40 % of total ready-made garment production in India. Compared to 1985, garment production increased in this area 22 times. [Note: 5]

In this way, the production units working for the multinational fashion companies based in the 'developed' countries began to spread worldwide in search of more and more cheaper labour power.

### **How do this global chain works?**

The multinational fashion companies/ready-made garment companies based in the imperialist countries has now almost stopped production in their own countries as a consequence of the globalisation of the production process described above. They have been converted into 'brand-name companies'. Garments manufactured in production facilities scattered throughout the 'developing' countries worldwide are brought together and stamped with their brand names before coming to the market. But the brand-name companies are in no way associated with the ownership or management of the production units. The brand-name companies, on one hand, control worldwide the 'retail chains' of sale of ready-made garments, and on the other hand, after developing new designs, allot orders of a definite quantity of production in that design. Let us get a picture of their control over the retail market.

In 2000, of the total market of ready-made garments in the world, one-third was in North America, one-third was in West Europe, and one-fourth was in Asia. The biggest 50 brand-name companies of U.S. had grip over 28 % of the North American market in 1977, which they increased to 53 % in 1992. Out of this 50, if we consider the largest 5, then they increased their market share in North America from 9 % in 1977 to 18 % in 1992. In West Europe and Britain, 7 brand-name companies held 40 % of the total market among themselves in 2000, and this share was growing at the rate of 6 % annually for the preceding 10 years. [Note:6]. Many bourgeois observers have commented that this handful of large brand-name companies are increasing their market-share in Asia at a much faster rate than in North America or West Europe, though we have no concrete quantitative measure. [Note:7]. In our common experience we have seen in India that the middle class and upper class customers are increasingly getting addicted to 'branded ready-made garments' in the recent years. Among them, brand-name labels like Nike, Levis, The Gap, Wall Mart, Marks & Spencer,

Disney, Tommy Hilfiger, Lacoste are becoming increasingly popular. This also bears testimony to the increasing clout of the brand-name companies in Asia. Hence, as a whole, not only is the grip of the brand-name companies becoming ever more firmer on the world ready-made garment market, but the giants among them are getting even more bigger, the smaller ones getting gobbled up by them through merger and acquisitions or getting extinct.

The companies to which the brand-name companies give their orders are called the 'trading companies' or 'sourcing agents'. Mostly these are those companies of Hong Kong, Taiwan, or South Korea which did production jobs in the 1960's, but now mainly do not do so. They distribute the production jobs as sub-contracts to the garment factories spread over the 'developing' countries and act as bridges between the brand-name companies and the manufacturing factories. They provide the raw materials to the manufacturing factories, which are known as the 'supplier companies', collect the finished products from them, undergo the quality control check, and finally deliver the goods to the brand-name companies. The key of the control, which they exercise on the supplier companies spread worldwide, is that both the order and the raw materials are in their hands. Let us consider one example. Lee Fung & Company, based in Hong Kong, is a trading company that currently supplies 40 % of the world's total garment production. It distributes production to supplier factories in Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka of Asia, and Egypt, Madagascar, Morocco, South Africa of Africa. 75 % of the products sourced through it are sold in North America, and 21 % in West Europe. From the supplier companies to which it distributes orders, it buys from 30 % to 70% of their production. This quantity is carefully calculated so that the supplier companies remain dependent upon it for their orders, but it does not become dependent upon any particular supplier company, nor upon supplier companies of any particular country for getting its job done. This condition it uses to its advantage when exerting pressure on the supplier companies to diminish the price of garments it pays by asserting that factories elsewhere are providing cheaper rate. In this way, the average price paid to the supplier companies in Sri Lanka had been reduced by 30 % in the period from 2002 to 2004, in Honduras by 23 % in the period from 2001 to 2004, in Philippines by 20 % in the period from 1998 to 2002. This in turn is resulting in further decrease of the real wage of the workers. Beside this, the delivery time given to the supplier companies for each order are also being curtailed continuously to cut down on the inventory cost of the brand-name companies and so that the brand-name companies can bring to market new designs at very short notice. Thus the profit margins of the brand-name companies are being enhanced, but at the level of the supplier company this implies concentration of excessive orders with short delivery time at some particular periods of the year corresponding to the cycles of the fashion world of the western 'developed' countries. For the workers of the supplier companies, this means excessive workload periodically, which coupled with the management's obsession to cut cost, result in imposition of forced overtime on the workers, no fixed working hours, locking in the workers to force work, no holiday, constant threat of lay-off... and these are increasing globally. [Note: 8]

Recognition of this vicious controlling grip that the few giant multinational brand-name companies have on the numerous supplier companies spread worldwide can be found in a report of the United Nations, from which we quote: "Bar-

riers to entry are low on the production side of the garments, in comparison to complex technology-and-scale-intensive industries like electronics and automobiles.... There is an ample supply of capable garment makers, and it is relatively easy to create new ones by providing design inputs and some technical assistance. Thus, the fragmentation of the production process is very advanced. .... However, there are high entry barriers in marketing in the garment industry. Buyers therefore occupy an important place in global value chains and dominate the industry. ...." [Note: 9]

The thoroughness with which the 'buyers' referred to above ( i. e. the brand-name companies and the trading companies ) have established their dominance over the industry and their further ambitions have now made the Multi-fibre Agreement unnecessary to them. In the Doha round of W.T.O. negotiations, it had been decided that the Multi-fibre Agreement would be phased out gradually and replaced by a new agreement. This new agreement called A.T.C. seeks to further their interest in a number of ways. Inducing the governments of the 'developing' countries to reduce further taxes and duties on export, using greater part of the taxes of the people of those countries to subsidize their production works in the E.P.Z./F.T.Z./S.E.Z.s, gaining more freedom to shift orders from factories of one country to another in search of cheaper labour power— these are some of them. The condition of the bourgeoisie of these 'developing' countries is such that they are not able to think beyond fattening their own kitty by a minor share of the huge profit expropriated by the giant multinationals of the imperialist countries. Bourgeoisie of countries of Africa, Caribbean Islands, and South Asia are vociferously pitching in for A.T.C. in the hope that it will result in more orders of ready-made garment manufacturing coming their way. On the other hand, bourgeoisie of some countries like Bangladesh are begging pitifully for the Multi-fibre Agreement to be retained, fearing that the termination of the quota system will result in their losing orders to the competitors. Such is their capitulation to the dominance of the giant multinationals!

### The grapes of dominance

We have already discussed the condition of the workers of the ready-made garment factories in the 'developing' world. Let us now discuss the imperialist plunder exacted as a result of the economics of this 'global value chain' dominated by the giant multinationals.

Let us assume that the market price of a branded ready-made garment is Rs. 400.

Then, out of it,	
Cost of raw materials (fabric/material)	= Rs. 40
Overhead and other costs	= Rs. 13
Quota-fee	= Rs. 20
Transport expenditure	= Rs. 02
<b>Workers' wage</b>	<b>= Rs. 07</b>
<b>Profit of the owner of the supplier company</b>	<b>= Rs. 18</b>
Total up to this	= Rs. 100
<b>Hence, the value appropriated by the brand-name company &amp; the trading company</b>	<b>= Rs. 300</b>

Out of this Rs.300, (*which is 75% of the total value produced*) a very small

part goes for the running of the retail outlets and design-making centres of the brand-name companies, and for advertisements; *the remaining lion's part is their profit!* [Note: 10]

Thus we see that when ready-made garments are being manufactured in the 'developing' countries, more than 70 % of the value produced is being appropriated by the 'developed'/imperialist countries as profits of their giant multinational companies; while in the 'developing' countries, the workers get 1.75 % and the factory-owners get 4.5 %. *This hideous machine of drainage of the 'developing' countries by the imperialist countries is being held up as the 'engine of growth for the developing countries' as a part of the package of 'export-led industrialization'!*

### Efforts to dampen revolt

Opposition against this imperialist exploitation is brewing in the form of spontaneous revolt of the garment-workers in several 'developing' countries. In the 70's and 80's of the last century, we witnessed how so-called 'worker's organization' like A.A.F.L.I. and A.I.F.L.D., run with the imperialist's backing, worked to derail any workers' movement. Similar processes are also present today, though under different garbs. A number of N.G.O.s like Oxfam, who draw their salaries from the imperialist's coffers, are coming forward with reports / programs aimed at the garment workers, with the avowed intention of 'increasing the worker's consciousness', but in reality intending to restrict the worker's movement within some petty demands not affecting the overall chain of imperialist dominance. The conscious workers have to take their role such that the garment worker's spontaneously erupting revolts become a part of a revolutionary struggle to eradicate imperialism.

### Postscript: An Indian story

For a little over one year now, Indian Rupee is appreciating against U.S. USD [\$]. As a result, the cost of production in an Indian supplier company is increasing in terms of USD [\$]. This can eat into the profit of the trading companies, which they are not ready to allow. Hence, orders are being shifted from Indian supplier companies to those in other countries. As a consequence many ready-made garment factories are closing down; others are retrenching workers furiously. Only at Tirupur, in the three months following July, 2007, ten thousand workers have lost their jobs; and by the end of the year, this number is estimated to go up to eighty thousand. Just one garment factory of Gurgaon, Orient Crafts, has retrenched eight thousand workers. A retrenched worker of Tirupur has summed up: "Just when the lamps are being lighted countrywide for Deepavali, the festival of light, all light has been extinguished from our life." *How many times will such darkness descend, before you alight the fire burning up the whole lot of capitalism, imperialism?* [Note: 11]

#### Notes

1. Quoted in the report to the Indian Parliament by central minister Sankar Singh Baghela on December 17, 2004, from 'Cost Benchmarking Study: India vis a vis Bangladesh, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, China, & Pakistan' by Cotton Textile Export Promotion Council, India.
2. Source: 'Garment Workers' Revolt in Bangladesh' in libcom.org.

3. Source: 'Worker's Power in Argentina: Reinventing Working Culture' by Marie Trigona, published in Analytical Monthly Review, July-August, 2007.
  4. Sources for data used in this section are: (a) Oxfam Hong Kong Briefing Paper, April, 2004: Turning The Garment Industry Inside Out. (b) Behind The Brand Names, I.C.F.T.U.
  5. References for the history of the garment industry discussed in this section are: (a) 'Women In The Global Factory' by Annette Fuentes & Barbara Ehrenrich, 1983, South End Press, U.S.A., Cornerstone Publication, India. (b) 'Rags, Riches and Women Workers: Export Oriented Garment Manufacturing in Bangladesh' by Naila Kabeer & Simean Mahmud, 2004. (c) same as 4(a).
  6. Sources for the data quoted: (a) World Investment Report, 2002 by U.N.C.T.A.D. (b) <http://www.heureka.clara.net/gaia/global02.htm>.
  7. Example: Birnbaum (2000): 'Birnbaum's Global Guide To Winning The Great Garment War', Hong Kong, Third Horizon Press.
  8. Descriptions of activities of Lee & Fung and other trading companies can be had at 'World Investment Report 2002: Transnational Corporations & Export Competitiveness', by U.N.C.T.A.D.
  9. Quoted from Pg.129 of the source cited in Note:8
  10. Quoted from Table 3: Value Chain Of Garments in the source same as in 4(a)
  11. Source: Economic Times, 25.10.2007 and Times Of India, 28.10.2007
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## **US-India present "Partnership"**

### **Place of India in the US Imperialist Chains**

**R. Ali**

#### **Certain Elementary Points**

This is beyond doubt that dependence of India on the US imperialism is going to increase in the course of forging present relationships between the two countries. There is no doubt also that this growing dependence means more intensification of the US imperialist exploitation-oppressions-dominations on the masses of India.

What is meant by this 'dependence'? This 'dependence' must be understood in its true sense of the term. The 'dependence' is multifaceted including economic, political, defence (strategic), ideological, cultural, etc. This 'dependence' must be comprehended as a whole. In the era of imperialism, if one country is dependent or compelled to be dependent on the imperialist capital, the dependence of the said country — or in other words, the imperialist exploitation-oppressions imposed upon that country — are revealed through numerous threads of dictation, servitude, dominations, conditionalities, etc. India was never remained outside the spheres of these imperialist dominations-dictation-conditionalities etc. In other words, the ruling classes of India had no power (& desires) to remain outside these spheres of imperialist influence.

In the past, there were numerous instances of curbing and/or strangulating the independence & sovereignty of a country by the imperialist powers in the course of their economic exploitation, and plunder of raw materials & resources. This is a glaring fact of recent times also. This is revealed by: the aggression on Iraq and Afghanistan orchestrated by the US-Anglo imperialist capital to capture and loot oil resources; numerous instances of conspiracies, subterfuges, dictation, threats made by the US administrations to maintain the strange holds of the US imperialism on most of the countries of Latin America; relentless efforts

by the US-British imperialism and their allies to establish control on the countries of central Asia created by the dismembering of former Soviet Union, etc. These inherent characteristics of imperialism were established theoretically by none other than Lenin himself in the following words:

... The more capitalism is developed, the more strongly the shortage of raw materials is felt, the more intense the competition and the hunt for sources of raw materials throughout the whole world, the more desperate the struggle for acquisition of colonies....

Finance capital is interested not only in the already discovered sources of raw materials but also in potential sources, ...

The interests pursued in exporting capital also give an impetus to the conquest of colonies, for in the colonial markets it is easier to employ monopoly methods (and sometimes they are the only methods that can be employed) to eliminate competition, to ensure supplies, to secure the necessary "connections", etc.

The non-economic superstructure which grows up on the basis of finance capital, its politics and its ideology, stimulates the striving for colonial conquest. ... [Source: 1] (stress ours) [Note 1]

In this so-called 'post-colonial' era when the imperialists in general prefer to 'rule' only indirectly if not compelled by some particular situations — This elementary concept of Marxism-Leninism is quoted to dispel some doubts and confusions crafted purportedly by the parliamentary 'left' parties in the name of 'opposing' imperialism. During the last one year or more, these 'leftists' remained busy to 'protest' against the US-India nuclear deal to 'prove' their anti-imperialist credentials. Though the confusions created do not have much effect on the advanced proletariat, it must to be countered and some elementary truths about imperialism must be upheld, as the 'anti-imperialist' arguments of the 'leftists' — in name of Marxism — may have some ramifications on the larger canvas. The fact that the imperialist "superstructure" such as political control, dominations, spheres of influence etc are grown & developed on the base of imperialist economy ("finance capital") and the "superstructure" grown therefrom further "stimulates" the "striving" for imperialist "conquest" and plunder is distorted and stripped off the real significance by these impotent 'leftists'. It is not clearly understood that the finance capital and/or the modern instruments 'discovered' by the imperialists such as foreign direct investment (FDI), foreign institutional investment (FII), hedge funds, P-notes etc cannot be separated from the source countries' imperialist politics, strategies, aggression for conquests, etc. If the content (finance capital) be deprived of its form (i.e., imperialist politics), the real essence of the finance capital is robbed off cleverly to depict it as an innocent 'vegetarian' capitalist making *only* profits & super profits and thus can be justified to be invited in states like West Bengal or Kerala ruled by these 'lefts'! So the 'lefts' have jumped into the bandwagon of 'anti-imperialism' to obscure their true faces (and misdeeds) in those states by separating (imperialist) politics from (imperialist) economics; and are projecting themselves as 'messiah' of the anti-imperialist masses and are shouting against losing of the 'independence', 'sovereignty', 'self-dependence' of the country by the conclusion of the nuclear deal (and defence deal, on certain points) *only*. What a caricature of anti-imperialism it is! And finally, they have failed to hide themselves under the mask of their 'anti-imperialist' tirade when they allowed the UPA government to negotiate the nuclear deal in the forum of International Atomic Energy Associa-

tion (IAEA) in the last November.

In fact, India had never achieved "independence", "sovereignty", "independent foreign policy", etc in the proper sense of the terms though the 'leftists' are used to claim so. Hence it is meaningless to mourn about losing something which India never possesses. Instead of these futile efforts let us investigate how much the existing imperialist exploitation, oppressions, dominations, control, etc meted on the Indian masses will intensify with greater ferocity by the recently concluded deals, agreements, pacts, and partnerships with the US imperialists.

### US-India Present Relationships and Agreements

The changes observed in the relationship of US-India during the last several years were actually initiated in the post-1991 period when the so-called "cold war" ended with the demise of Soviet Union. The ruling classes of India, in fact, took advantages of the 'great' escalating rivalry between two powers (one led by the US imperialism and another led by the USSR & its "socialist" allies) during the "cold war" period in the garb of its "non-alignment" policy to extract maximum benefits from these powers in the forms of concessions & opportunities, mostly strategic in nature. This advantage disappeared with the vanishing of the USSR. Since then, existing dependence of the Indian ruling classes on the US imperialism had been growing in a gradual manner. Hence there developed more cosiness between the Indian ruling classes and the western imperialist camps led by the US imperialists. At the same time (during the late-1980s, more precisely), the New Economic Policy (NEP) was initiated in India under guidance of imperialism. In the ongoing process of globalisation, the pace of NEP was further accelerated through a number of steps & reforms. These processes of reforms are going on till now bulldozing, pauperising, and crushing the labouring masses with greater ferocity. Under this circumstances, several agreements and deals have been concluded between the US's and India's governments.

These agreements are: **a) US-India strategic economic partnership, b) Agricultural agreements, c) 'New framework for the US-India defence relations, d) Nuclear deal.** Each of these agreements are nothing but to intensify the existing exploitation-domination of the US imperialism on the Indian masses. Interestingly, very few of these agreements (nuclear deal, and one or two clauses of the defence deal), drew attention in the parliamentary arena. Other agreements (including the whole gamut of the defence deal) are almost blacked out either in the 'hot' parliamentary debates or in the media. But any careful scrutiny will depict how these agreements/relationships, if taken as a whole, are slated to increase the burden of the US imperialist exploitation & dominations in an ever aggressive manner. It is impossible to narrate these volumes of agreements in detail in such a short article. Hence we are trying to focus on most of the important aspects of the present US-India agreements.

### US-India Economic Partnerships

The Indian PM Mr Manmohan Singh went to the USA in 2005 and signed a number of agreements entitled "Joint Declaration" with the US President Mr George Bush on 18th July. Interestingly, in this government-to-government official and diplomatic relation-building exercises, Mr Singh was accompanied by some who's who of the Indian capitalist classes including Ratan Tata, Mukesh Ambani, Baba Kalyani, YC Deveswar, Dipak Parekh, etc. During this meeting,

under the aegis of the existing US-India Business Council — principal function of which is to foster investment of US capital in India — a new organisation named as US-India CEO Forum was formed. A preliminary 'wish-list' was submitted on behalf of this Forum before the governments of USA & India just before the finalisation of the above-mentioned "Joint Declaration". In fact, this 'preliminary wishlist' was the foundation of the present "US-India economic partnerships".

George Bush visited India in March 2006 to bolster these package of agreements including the N-deal. Another "Joint Declaration" was delivered on 2nd March. And again, just before this declaration, the CEO Forum placed their 'final' wishlist before the heads of the two governments. More interestingly, this Forum-wishlist was accepted "formally" as an "official" agreement entitled as "US-India *Strategic Economic Partnership*"<sup>2</sup>. Moreover, within a day, twenty four committees had been formed on behalf of the Planning Commission of India to implement the main theme of the wishlist! This wishlist is available in the website of the Planning Commission. The term "strategic" is not a misnomer as it advocated *speedier reforms* as a precondition of US investment in India. Main points of this *strategic economic partnership* are given below along some comments from us:

**a) Infrastructure:** "Indian government must play a lead role in fostering speed, efficiency and transparency in the *bidding process* for Infrastructure contracts to attract *more US companies*"; "US industry, given the right policies, could participate in highways/bridges, rail/mass transit, townships, SEZs, airports, seaports, energy/power, environment, water, etc" and in this initiative "the resources and expertise of World Bank/ADB/IFC" must be "drawn". [This recommendations have been following currently in all the states including the 'left'-ruled West Bengal!]

**b) Energy:** "An opportunity exists for US companies to be involved and invest in the power sector in India". And to "encourage greater investment/competition" India "should move *more aggressively* in reforming its power sector" and should "promote *market driven tariff structure*"; and to ensure "opening up of *civil nuclear* technology supplies from the US to India". [It's an open secret that one of the objectives of the US-India nuclear deal is to make wide open the nuclear market of India before the US MNCs.]

**c) Trade & Intellectual Property:** "With the objective of doubling trade every 3 years" India should take measures for " *removal of barriers*" as a "*priority*"; India must build a "patents culture" to safeguard the interests of US MNCs. India should make further progress "to frame laws, rules and processes to sustain the highest standards of protection to the inventor or the organization, which invests in IP". To this end, India must step up efforts of "*National coordination of IPR enforcement*" between the states & centre, establishing "*Specialized intellectual property courts*", arranging "*specialized training*" for the "judges, prosecutors, and other court personnel". [The US ambassador in India, Mr Mulford subsequently patted the Indian government in taking speedy actions regarding this matter and wished a role of "interlocutor" from India in the forum of WTO.]

**d) Foreign Direct Investment:** India should "allow FDI in the Indian Retail

*Sector*"; "the *Real Estate Sector* needs to be *fully open* and *FDI caps* on *print media, broadcasting, cable and satellite systems* and *e-commerce* need to be *removed*" and "the *Indian Companies Act* provisions relating to privately-held companies (as many *US companies* are) need *review*". [All the state governments including the 'left'-ruled West Bengal are moving along the chartered path and are preparing to lay red carpet for the US MNCs including the biggest MNC Wal Mart.]

**e) Insurance-Pension-Banking:** "It is a matter of urgency to *raise foreign ownership cap in insurance to 49%*"; undertake "pension reform" and allow "foreign investment" in "pension" "to own their business"; lift cap on foreign investment in "Indian private sector banks". [Initiatives are taken to go along this prescription.]

**f) SEZ:** "Set up large scale *Special Economic Zones*" comprising "world-class infrastructure with integrated real estate, power and transportation facilities, single window clearance approval and administrative process, flexible, internationally-competitive labor laws and transparency/clarity of governance". [Vigorous & violent efforts have been taken by the state govts run by all of the parties including the 'lefts' to implement the SEZ projects prescribed by the US bosses.]

**g) Defence:** "With the *opening of defense supplies from the US to India*, there are new opportunities emerging for private sector defense cooperation, including co-production and co-development". [Thus one of the biggest defence market is opened for the US companies erstwhile predominated by the Russian behemoths. In the name of "co-production" the Indian companies will be employed as 'contractors' & 'assemblers' of the products 'made in USA'.]

**h) Investment Regions:** Encouraging to set up "Investment Regions with the *primary focus of attracting FDI*" which must offer "*Flexible, internationally-competitive labour laws*" and will be run in the model of "SEZs". [May be accomplished in near future.]

**i) Agriculture:** "*Open the food-processing sector*"; "Consider *fiscal incentives* for domestic and international investors"; "Review the *Agricultural Produce Market Committee Act*"; "*Liberalize import policies and tariffs*" etc. [Parliamentary parties of all hues are in fact, spearheading the 'liberalisation' of agriculture in line of the US wishes.]

**j) Judicial Reforms:** Measures India "could undertake to strengthen and reform the *judicial system*"; "Set up an Indian Institute for Regulation" for "*development of regulatory practices*". [No comments!]

**k) Remove legal hurdles on Dow Chemicals** regarding "Bhopal tragedy" according to the formula applied in clearing US company AES in Dabhol Power Project. Moreover, "The report" of "the task force under the *Chairmanship of Dr. Pronab Sen*" which "recommended *price controls* be expanded to every *medicine* on India's 'Essential Drug List'... should be *reviewed*". [Not surprisingly, the Chairman (on the Indian side) of the CEO Forum, Mr Ratan Tata shot a letter to the Union Government urging to take appropriate & speedy measures in this respect which was duly undertaken by the government.<sup>3</sup>]

These are the prime aspects of the prescriptions of the 'US-India Strategic

Economic Partnership'. It is beyond doubt that these measures of the 'partnership' is nothing but to intensify the imperialist exploitation on the Indian masses.

### Agricultural Agreement

The outline of the present Agricultural Agreement was more or less designed in the "Joint Declaration" of Bush-Singh summit in 2005. Both of these leaders and other responsible officials of both the governments have clarified time and again that the main theme of the Agricultural Agreement is to initiate a "Second Green Revolution" in India. What are the impacts of the first green revolution initiated in the 1960s on the Indian agriculture and peasants? Was it properly reviewed by any official organisation of the government? In fact, it is more and more revealed that under the projects of the first green revolution: a section of peasants in certain pockets and/or states could reap the 'benefits' and become rich; huge amount & values of high-yielding varieties of hybrid seeds, chemical fertilisers, pesticides, farm machinery, technology of big dams, etc were imported from the 'developed'/imperialist countries benefiting US MNCs in particular; the peasants of India were made overwhelmingly dependent on these inputs like HYV seeds, chemical fertilisers, pesticides etc; soil of the farmlands and ground water became dangerously contaminated and toxified etc etc. Though the outcome of this much-lauded, imperialists-promoted first green revolution are disastrous, most of peasants of the countryside are more or less remained ignorant about it. Moreover, each parliamentary parties including the 'lefts' are maintaining complete silence about the sinister designs of the US imperialism behind this first green revolution. Under the circumstances, new blueprints of plunder-exploitation have been designed by the US imperialists with the tacit understanding with these parliamentary parties in the name of 'second green revolution'.

The US designs can be explained by the fact that the high-powered Agricultural Knowledge Initiative Board (AKI) constituted to implement the US-India Agricultural Deal is represented by none other than some (in)famous US MNCs like Monsanto, Wal Mart, and Archer Daniels Midland. Interests of the US MNCs are well reflected by the following main aspects contained in the agricultural agreement:

1. The main theme of the "second green revolution" is to "increase" the agricultural production by expanding the use of "genetically modified" seeds through the application of "gene technology" on a wide scale. Moreover, the "gene technology" will be applied in building "transgenic animal and fishes". [It is widely acknowledged now that cultivation of transgenic crops, animals, fishes, etc are dangerous and harmful in many respects and are in fact banned in several European countries due to lack of their credibility.]
2. Several US MNCs (including Monsanto, Wal Mart, etc) in association of US agricultural research institutes, universities, etc will arrange "training", "workshops", etc to "educate" the Indian scientists, teachers, fellows, and students about the knowledge of "gene technology", "marketing", "food safety" etc. The tuition fees of these tailor-made "training" will be borne by the Indian government.
3. To accomplish the mission stated above the "curricula" in the Indian agricultural universities & institutions will be examined, "revised", and "overhauled" so that it can facilitate the intrusion of "transgenics".
4. By virtue of this agreement the US companies, universities, foundations, etc will

have free access to the seeds and bio-resources modified by and preserved in the hands of the Indian peasants and universities; they will transfer these resources to the USA; will modify it; and sell the modified versions to make super-profit. But these US companies/organisations are not obligated to pay charges to the Indian peasants. In fact, the piracy is legitimised.

5. The US MNCs will dictate the Indian peasants types of soil, fertilisers, pesticides, machinery, technologies, etc to be used in cultivating the "transgenics" developed in their laboratories. It is beyond doubt that the Indian peasants will be forced to purchase inputs at hefty prices demanded by the MNCs (which also happened in the first generation of green revolution).

6. Mechanisms of "food processing", agri-businesses & "marketing" will be "developed" etc.<sup>4</sup>

It must be noted that the above-mentioned US MNCs directly involved in the US-India agricultural agreement (i.e., Monsanto, Wal Mart, Archer Daniels) are intricately connected in a chain of interests with a set of (in)famous MNCs, such as Cargill, Dow Chemicals, Bayer, Dupont, Syngenta, etc who have devastating records of ruining & expropriating the agriculture & peasants of many poor and/or underdeveloped countries. Moreover, it must not be overlooked that the use of 'genetic technology' has been initiated in Indian agriculture much before the signing of the present agricultural deal (or, 'second green revolution') the outcome of which is a ominous portent of the future. As for example, large number of Indian peasants have become bankrupt buying genetic seeds at exorbitant prices; forced to commit suicides; and/or made bonded in indebtedness of staggering magnitude (note point 5 above). Though these types of incidents are occurring in certain states till now, it will grow on a larger scale as the speed of the 'second green revolution' is bound to increase rapidly in the near future. Moreover, the vast and varied genetic resources of India will be expropriated massively by the MNCs as happened in the past in the name of the 'first green revolution', when the rich varieties of seeds of rice grown and developed by the Indian peasants through their age-old practices were stolen and reserved in the gene-banks of the MNCs/imperialists.

### US-India Defence (Strategic) Relations

The naval exercises conducted between five countries including India-US-Japan-Australia-Singapore in the Bay of Bengal during the period of 4-9th September 2007 was an integral part of the US-India defence agreement. In fact, the development of the present defence/strategic relationship between the USA and India had been observed well before the terrorist attacks in New York on 9th September 2001, the day from which the "war on terrorism" was initiated by the US imperialists & and its allies on a global scale. More particularly, the present relationship was initiated since the demise of the Soviet Union as iterated earlier.

In 18th February of 1992, the subjects of a draft entitled as "Defence Planning Guidance for the Fiscal Years 1994-1999", sent to the US administration from the Pentagon were formulated as an 'US strategy in the post-cold war period'. Main theme of this strategy was as follows:

"Our *first objective* is to prevent the re-emergence of a new rival... that posed formerly by the Soviet Union... [W]e endeavour to *prevent* any hostile power from *dominating a region* whose resources would, under consolidated control, be sufficient to

generate global power. *These regions include Western Europe, East Asia, the territory of the former Soviet Union, and Southwest Asia... Asia is home to the world's greatest concentration of traditional Communist states, with fundamental values, governance, and policies decidedly at variance with our own and those of our friends and allies... [Hence] to buttress the vital political and economic relationships we have along the Pacific rim, we must maintain our status as a military power of the first magnitude in the area. This will enable the U.S. to continue to contribute to regional security and stability by acting as a balancing force and prevent emergence of a vacuum or a regional hegemon.*<sup>5</sup>

Moreover

*In the Middle East and Southwest Asia, our overall objective is to remain the predominant outside power in the region and preserve U.S. and Western access to the region's oil. We also seek to deter further aggression in the region, foster regional stability, protect U.S. nationals and property, and safeguard our access to international air and seaways.*<sup>6</sup> [stress ours]

Therefore, the USA's strategy revolving round the Asia had been developing as an integral part of the US post-cold war global strategy since 1992. It states unequivocally that it will "prevent the re-emergence of a new rival" challenging the US supremacy and dominance all over the world.

After the nuclear tests made by India in 1974, the US administration 'stopped' the supplies of nuclear fuel, technology, etc to India in 1978. Though several pundits of different hues tries to construct a myth that "colder" relation was developed between the USA and India since the 1974 N-tests, the fact tells different truth. In fact, since the late 1970s, the USA stopped only the supplies of nuclear materials to India, but maintained the export of military arsenals, equipment more or less uninterruptedly; they never withheld multitude of supports to India's missile development programme; they supplied missile technology, equipment, technical help in 1988 on a large scale etc. It is also out of question that the USA stopped its imperialist exploitation and oppression on the Indian people since the late 1970s! In fact, the so called "cold" relation was evaporated well in the period of 1992-93 when an "Executive Steering Group" was formed and several military exercises were executed involving the army, navy, air forces of the USA and India. In January of 1995, "Agreed Minutes of Defence Relations" was signed forming three separate groups such as i) *Defence Policy Group (DPG)*, for tackling issues of defence cooperation including "sensitive issues like CTBT and Kashmir"; ii) *Joint Technical Group (JTG)*, for discussing issues related to defence research; iii) *Joint Steering Committee (JSC)*, for discussing personnel and information exchange, as well as joint exercises.<sup>7</sup> These groups have been made fully operational with greater role in the newly concluded US-India defence relationship. The sanctions imposed on India after the second N-tests in 1998 did not bear significant importance since it did not disturb the above-mentioned growing defence "cooperation". Moreover, in January of 2000, 10th meeting of the "cooperation" had been held.<sup>8</sup> In March of the same year, US president Bill Clinton visited India. Few months later, Mr. Vajpayee, the PM of India went to the USA and made further "understanding" on the growing "relationships".

At the same time, the regional (or Asian) aspirations of the Indian ruling classes were becoming more pronounced. In 1998, just after the detonation of N-tests by India, the ministers of the NDA government advocated some projects

and policies named as "South Asian Framework" and "Nuclear doctrine" respectively. These hawks of the Indian ruling classes included China, Central Asia, Afghanistan, Iran, Oman, South Asia, Myanmar, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia and North Indian Ocean as parts of the "South Asian Framework".<sup>9</sup> In 2000, construction of a big military base entitled as "Far Eastern Command" had been undertaken, the work of which was scheduled to be completed in 2012. In 2000 also, the Indian Navy took part in a military exercise in South China Sea.<sup>10</sup> Reports of these incidents published in media at that time was largely overlooked considering these to be high-voltage deliberations and actions of the BJP-led NDA government as merely reflections of the *hinduvtavadi* aspirations of the Sangh Parivar. In fact, the policies of the Indian ruling classes reflected by these actions were nothing but 'great Asian ambitions' covering important commercial and strategic locations & routes in this hemisphere. Interestingly, the US big brothers did not discourage this growing ambitions of the Indian ruling classes proclaimed loudly. In April of 2001, the foreign minister of India, Jaswant Sinha revealed the "sphere of influence" of India during his US visit in the following way:

For a long time, India has not been seen in its true dimensions. How many people know that *Indonesia is only 65 miles from the southernmost Indian Island?* Or that but for POK [Pakistan-occupied Kashmir], *Tajikistan is just 27 miles from India.* That we had a border with Iran in 1947? Or that the legal tender of Kuwait till 1938 was the Rupee? *So when we talk about Indonesia or central Asia or the Gulf, it is because of our interest and our sphere of influence.*<sup>11</sup>

After the attacks in New York on 11th September 2001, the situations took some rapid turns. Rest of the sanctions imposed on India and Pakistan were withdrawn (some of which were withdrawn earlier). The BJP-led Indian government promised active cooperation in the yet-to-be-declared US-led "war on terror". During the US military offensive on Afghanistan, American warships were routinely fuelled in Mumbai & Chennai, were given opportunities in repairing warships, escorted US ships through Malacca Straits to Arabian Sea, etc by the Government of India (GoI) for a duration of six months at a stretch. In 2002, the US administration designed its "Asian Order" declared in the notorious "National Security Strategy" (NSS) granting India a 'special' and 'dignified' role in it. Salient features of the NSS is as follows:

"Today, the United States enjoys a position of *unparalleled military strength* and great economic and political influence." [Moreover, the] "task has changed dramatically." "Enemies in the past needed great armies... to endanger America." [Now], "terrorists are organized to penetrate open societies.... We must be prepared to stop *rogue states* and their *terrorist* clients before they are able to threaten or use weapons of mass destruction against the United States and our allies and friends." [And] "the United States can no longer solely rely on a *reactive* posture as we have in the past.... Traditional concepts of *deterrence* will *not* work against a terrorist enemy.... We *cannot* let our enemies strike first.... [W]e will not hesitate to act alone, if necessary, to exercise our right of selfdefense by acting *preemptively* against such terrorists...."<sup>12</sup>

Thus the blueprint of a "New American Century" had been constructed and the status of India was designed as follows:

The United States has undertaken a transformation in its bilateral relationship with India based on a conviction that *U.S. interests require a strong relationship with India.*

*We have a common interest in the free flow of commerce, including through the vital sea lanes of the Indian Ocean. Finally, we share an interest in fighting terrorism and in creating a strategically stable Asia... [T]oday we start with a view of India as a growing world power with which we have common strategic interests.*<sup>13</sup>

Two subjects were made crystal-clear in the NSS: i) the enemies of the USA are either the "terrorists" (above document and other analysis published in support of this document unequivocally pointed out in number of occasions that these "terrorists" are in nothing but the "Muslims!"), or some "rogue" or "failed" states such as Iraq, Iran, Syria, Lybia, and North Korea; ii) the USA and India both have "*common strategic interests*" in "creating a strategically stable Asia". Thus it is proclaimed that India is a 'close' and 'reliable' partner of the USA in combating 'Muslim terrorism' in Asia. But the US administration pointed that Pakistan is also a strong ally in fighting "terrorism". Hence the geopolitical scenario of Asia is changing rapidly in the subcontinent. In fact, since the end of the "cold war", the US administration pursued [read: dictated] both the rulers of India and Pakistan not to make any misdeeds that will "disturb" the newly evolved geopolitics of South Asia. Clinton jumped into the imbroglio caused due to Kargil war to make "peace". NGOs backed by the US and western administrations advocated fantastic blueprint in making the LoC as permanent border between India and Pakistan aiming to "resolve" the Kashmir dispute once abetted by the imperialists and super powers. In fact, the governments of both the countries are moving along the US-designed roadmap. Still, the US administration is concerned about the progress on "war on terror" undertaken by Pakistan. The boiling and/or volatile situation of recent Pakistan has made the US imperialists "concerned" about their design in this territory. Now, the strategists of the US imperialism are making statements that India, not Pakistan, will be the "most reliable" ally in fighting the "terrorists" and/or making a "strategically stable Asia"!

Since the year 2000, the official and military representatives of the USA and India met each other on a regular manner. In January of 2004, the Vajpayee government concluded a grand "understanding" with the US administration which may be considered as a basis of the present "US-India partnership". Most of the major aspects of the present "partnership" — "civilian nuclear activities, civilian space programs, and high-technology trade" (i.e., purchasing of US armaments), "dialogue on missile defense",<sup>14</sup> etc are in fact, drafted in the Bush-Vajpayee "understanding". These steps were included in the "US-India Joint Statement on Next Steps in Strategic Partnership" signed by the UPA government in September, 2004. 'Unfortunately', at the time of inking of this "historic" partnership by the UPA government supported by the 'leftists', no one heard any murmur of protests from the 'leftists' as: 'we have lost our sovereignty', 'we will withdraw our support if the UPA government do not cancel the deal', etc etc! Once a leader of the 'leftists' claimed that "we are not mere lapdogs; if situations arises, we can bite also". But, "barking dogs seldom bites". Hence after the 28th June of 2005, at the time of finalising the US-India partnership entitled as "New Framework for the US-India Defence Relations" for a duration of ten years, those "dogs" remained silent and forgot to bark even!

Salient features of the "New Framework for the US-India Defence Relations" are: a) to "*strengthen the capabilities of our militaries to promote security and defeat terrorism*"; b) to "combat the proliferation of weapons of mass destruc-

tion"; c) to "conduct joint and combined exercises and exchanges"; d) to "collaborate in *multinational operations*"; e) "protecting the free flow of commerce via land, air and sea lanes" (e.g., *Malacca Straits*); f) to "assist in building world-wide capacity to conduct successful *peacekeeping operations*"; g) expanding "defence trade" and "collaboration relating to *missile defense*"; h) continuation of military-to-military exercises on a regular basis; etc.

The central idea running through the "Framework" can be further explained by a "secret" Pentagon document named as "Indo-US Military Relationships & Perspectives" circulated among the top officials of the US administration in 2003. Mr Blackwill, former US ambassador delivered a lecture in 2005 chartering the path to be followed in building the present relationship masterfully. These documents and 'visions' of the US bosses depicted India as a junior and obedient partner of the US imperialism so vividly that all the 'claims' of preserving "sovereignty" must sound like nonsense. The visions of the US masters on India are as the following:

1. "India's strategic location in the centre of Asia, astride the frequently travelled Sea Lanes of Communication (SLOC) linking the Middle East and East Asia, makes India particularly attractive to the US military". India becomes a "natural ally" of the USA.

2. India is at the "centre" of the "Greater Middle East" stretched from the "Persian Gulf to Pakistan"; Moreover, "On one side it [i.e., India] borders China, on another the *Greater Middle East* and on another *Southeast Asia*."

3. The USA is locked in the battle of Iraq where India can take certain role in helping "to train Iraqi police and to build a civil society within Iraq". And, "Over time, India will do more".

4. The "rogue state" Iran is developing "nuclear" and other "dangerous weapons" in a rapid scale making whole of the middle east a boiling pot including the "Harmuz Strait" (commercially strategic to the USA). [see Map in the inside back cover]

5. "Rich in natural resources" states of the Central Asia are becoming "unstable" which were created by the breaking of the USSR. Moreover, Russia can challenge the US supremacy in near future.

6. "Rising" of "China" is "the most significant threat" to the USA in the near future. It is expanding its 'spheres of influence' detrimental to the US interests not only Asia, but also in Africa, and even in Latin America. Moreover, "U.S. and Indian views of China are 'strikingly similar'..."; India also "fears... China's modernization of Burmese naval bases in the Bay of Bengal", "its development of Pakistan's port of Gwadar", and construction of "airfields in Tibet". [see Note 2]

7. Strategic importance of Malacca Strait: "More than *half* the world's commerce passes through the Straits of Malacca, including *two-thirds* of the world's LNG trade... The flow of oil... is *three times greater* than what passes through the Suez Canal and *15 times greater* than the flow of oil through the Panama Canal." [see Map in the inside back cover]

8. India is badly needed in building "democracy" and "governance" in Afghan-

istan where the fighting against the "war on terror" is still going on and where "Talibans" & "religious extremists" cannot be wiped out till now. Situation has become complex because the rulers of Pakistan are failing to perform the assigned "task".

9. "India is a *viable player* in supporting all naval missions, including escorting and responding to regional crises. In the same vein, the US Air Force would like the Indians to be able to grant them *access to bases and landing rights during operations*, such as counter-terrorism and heavy airlift support." India is eager to "cooperate" with the USA in many occasions. "During Operation Enduring Freedom, several US warships *used Indian facilities* for rest and recuperation... Indian naval ships *provided escorts* to merchant vessels from North Arabian Sea till *Strait of Malacca*." Though India cannot be won over the issue of "Iran", nevertheless, it "voted twice" against Iran in IAEA. India has traditional past in helping "us" in middle east where "the British units" were "active during the First World War were largely" recruited "from India, with minor supplements of British troops." Moreover,

10. "It is not just access to bases and ports that the US military hopes to get in India, but also training facilities in India" because "India has a variety of landscapes, from ice-clad mountains to deserts".

11. In this massive "cooperation" and "given the strategic challenges ahead, the United States should want the Indian armed forces to be equipped with the best weapons systems, and that often means buying American". In fact, India is not satisfied with the quality and terms of weapons purchased from Russia, France etc. Moreover, this will "benefit" US companies which could not take advantage of the huge Indian defence market during the last four decades. There is "opportunity" in "missile defence" market also.

12. Above all, the USA must "stop hectoring India about its nuclear weapons" rather than taking an "opportunity" in binding India into a web of "nuclear security" making India dependent on "nuclear supplies". The strategy must be taken in such a way not hindering the process of making India as a "natural ally" of the USA. Moreover, steps may be taken to build an "Asian NATO" involving India. The Malabar exercise (engaging three other allies of the USA) is a significant step in this direction. The USA is "considering" option of "supporting" India "as a permanent member of the Security Council".

13. Significantly, the USA representatives noted that "the geopolitical objectives of India, which they are pursuing in a very hardheaded way, are quite parallel to ours."<sup>15</sup>

These are the salient aspects of the "US-India Strategic (Defence) Relationships". The "Relationships" are not only aimed to use India to serve imperialist interests of the USA, or to make India a "junior partner" of the USA to carry out "low-end tasks of hegemony", but also to satisfy the "Asian ambitions" of the Indian ruling classes in collaboration with the 'masters'. Whole of the project will intensify certainly the ongoing imperialist exploitation & oppression on the Indian people on an immeasurable scale. Thus India has been making a 'satellite' of the USA not uncommon in the era of modern imperialism.

## Nuclear Deal

There are volumes of dialogue & debates on the N-deal. Hence it is no longer necessary to detail our discussion on this subject. We want to stress on some aspects of the deal the significance of which are shadowed by the ruckus in the media. The US interests behind the N-deal can be summarised broadly as: i) strategic, ii) commercial.

One thing must be clear first. It is claimed by several governments/media/parliamentary parties of all hues that the nuclear capability achieved by India is mostly "indigenous". But the facts tell the different story. In fact, the 'capability' to conduct the first N-test by India "stunning" the world in 1974 could not be achieved if not helped by the supply of nuclear fuel, reactors, technology-know-how etc delivered by the imperialist and/or big powers like USA, Canada, France, Britain, Japan and the erstwhile USSR. To be more correct, the 'advantage' of "cold war" helped the ruling classes of India to 'bargain' with those powers to ensure nuclear supplies. The superpowers did not bother to stop the supplies though India did not sign "Nuclear Proliferation Treaty" (NPT) in 1968. Even the "closest allies" of the US-led imperialist camp like Israel, Pakistan didn't sign it (including the countries like Iran & North Korea having "dubious" records). Interestingly, even after the "shock" of the 1974 N-test conducted by India, the superpowers couldn't "convince" (read: dictate) India & Pakistan to sign the NPT due to the "volatile geopolitics" of South Asia created and abetted by those powers and/or imperialists. The relation of India & Pakistan became so "acute" that even in 1991, just after the end of "cold war" the US-led imperialists could not "convince" them to sign. In fact, the policies followed by the US imperialists in the Indian subcontinent to maintain the "pot boiling" became out-of-date in the post "cold war" period. In other words, in the "new world order" the US imperialists "must not" allow the Indian subcontinent to continue as a "nuclear" hotspot "detrimental" to them. After the subsequent detonations of the N-tests conducted by India & Pakistan the situations became so "acute" that it cannot be 'tolerated' further. Hence came the N-deal crafted meticulously by the US imperialism to shackle the 'nuclear ambitions' of India in the garb of allowing some 'concessions' of ensured supplies of fuel, technology etc. The US design behind the N-deal was splendidly narrated by the following statements of Condoleezza Rice, the US secretary of state:

"[W]e adopted nonproliferation policies to try and constrain and change Indian behavior. But I think that *it is entirely clear now that those past nonproliferation policies did not achieve their goals. In fact, they had no effect on India's development of nuclear weapons. They didn't prevent India and Pakistan from testing nuclear weapons in 1998.* They contributed little to lessening regional tensions, which brought India and Pakistan repeatedly to the brink of war. And all of this *simply resulted in a more isolated India*, especially isolated from the standards and practices of the nuclear nonproliferation establishment that had been developing and maturing over the last decades.

Now, let us consider the future that we could have instead. The initiative that we are putting before you [i.e., before the Senate Committee]... will deepen the strategic partnership [with India].... [India] has a massive and rapidly growing appetite for energy.... Diversifying India's energy sector will help it to meet its ever increasing needs and more importantly, ease its reliance on hydrocarbons and unstable sources like Iran. *This is good for the United States....*

Secondly, ....Nuclear cooperation will provide a new market for American nuclear firms....

Finally, this initiative does strengthen the international nuclear nonproliferation regime....

First, India would never accept a unilateral freeze or cap on its nuclear arsenal.... Second, ....India is not and is not going to become a member of the NPT as a nuclear weapons state.... [B]ut this agreement does bring India into the nonproliferation framework and thus strengthen the regime.... Third, ....Nothing we or any other potential international suppliers provide to India under this initiative will enhance its military capacity or add to its military stockpile."<sup>16</sup>

What does Rice want to say? She elaborated the designs of the USA so much clearly that only the rascals may try to confuse it. She clarified that the N-deal is such an "initiative" which will shackle the nuclear capabilities and/or ambitions of India by the "non-proliferation regime" in a different way; the deal will never help India to "enhance" its nuclear "stockpile"; moreover, no country can supply nuclear fuels denying the wishes of the US bosses. On the other hand, the "initiative" will decrease the 'dependence' of India on oil supply from Iran. Moreover it opens the vast nuclear bazaar before the US MNCs! What a 'strategic' as well as 'lucrative' deal it is!

In fact, the nuclear deal struck with India by the US administration is a fantastic project to serve the above-mentioned aims. Those are eager to show the masses and themselves (like our "leftists") that the US government has suddenly changed its hearts to deliver nuclear fuels, technology, etc with generous hands to make India a nuclear power have, in fact, a design to deceive the people about the real interests of US imperialism behind the N-deal. Recent incidents corroborate these facts. In the midst of hullabaloo of the parliamentary parties, the US administration unequivocally emphasised that 'India cannot test' further once the deal is 'operationalised'.<sup>17</sup> And if she does it dis-obeying the US dictum, the US "president have the right to as for return of the nuclear fuel or nuclear technologies transferred by the American firms".<sup>18</sup> Still our "leftists", fully aware of all of these imperialist nudges and pushes expect 'assurances' from the Indian government that it has not surrendered before the USA! What a travesty of anti-imperialism it is!

### Concluding remarks

The substance of the US-India present "partnership" is: to intensify the existing imperialist exploitation & oppression on the Indian masses by the imperialism (US imperialism in particular); to place India in its well-crafted "strategy" as a "natural ally" to accomplish its imperialist interests; to magnify the existing imperialist control and domination over the Indian masses to a new height, etc. Hence, it is not permissible to the class-conscious proletariat only to combat this or that part (e.g., N-deal) of the US-India "partnership" like the parliamentary "lefts". The proletariat must voice its oppositions to the whole of the "partnership".

#### Notes:

1. This comment of Lenin on imperialist economy & its superstructure is splendidly expressed by an US imperialist in following way:

"The hidden hand of the market will never work without the hidden fist—McDonald's cannot flourish without McDonnell Douglas, the designer of the F-15. And the hidden fist that keeps the

world safe for Silicon Valley's technologies is called the United States Army, Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps." (Thomas Friedman, *New York Times*, 28.03.1999; quoted in Monthly Review, July-August, 1999)

2. It is often argued that China, though 'developing' along capitalist lines at breakneck speed, cannot become an imperialist country owing to its vast poverty and backwardness compared to even the most backward countries of the Europe. Is it not possible? What did history tell us? We quote Lenin:

"There can be *no* other conceivable basis under capitalism for the division of spheres of influence, of interests, of colonies, etc., than a calculation of the *strength* of the participants in the division, their general economic, financial, military strength, etc. And the strength of these participants in the division does not change to an equal degree, for under capitalism the development of different undertakings, trusts, branches of industry, or countries cannot be *even*. Half a century ago, Germany was a miserable, insignificant country, as far as its capitalist strength was concerned, compared with the strength of England at that time. Japan was similarly insignificant compared with Russia. Is it "conceivable" that in ten or twenty years' time the relative strength of the imperialist powers will have remained *unchanged*? Absolutely inconceivable." (Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, New York: International Publishers, 1939, p 119; quoted in Monthly Review, June 2006)

**Source:**

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