

# Strive to Transform the People's Turbulent Forces into a Revolutionary Movement! Build for Communist Resurgence! -- II

Resolution of the Central Committee, CPRCI(ML), on the Present National Situation and Our Tasks  
(December 1996)

## [1.] An Overview

India, as part of the neo-colonial order, is in the process or being devastated by the current worldwide multi-pronged offensive of imperialism. This all-round offensive encompasses the economic, social, ideological, cultural and political life of our countrymen and women. As the hope of the international bourgeoisie for economic recovery and political stability recedes, so this offensive in India too is getting intensified. As the crisis of the imperialist system is deepening, it is also unbearably sharpening the already existent crisis of India's semi-feudal semi-colonial system.

In transferring, hastened step by hastened step, the burden of the recession in the imperialist countries on to the backs of India's working masses, arbitrary and concealed terms of exploitation are being imposed on India's people and its markets so as to expropriate *beyond* the surplus, cutting into the subsistence of its people. The various sectors of the already disarticulated comprador Indian economy are being made further inert and dislocated. And all ideological values and cultural norms are being distorted with massive expenditures to cripple a people's social sense and moral life-force.

The international financial/trade institutions--in the main the triple official economic instruments of international finance capital, viz, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the World Trade Organisation, (the IMF, WB, and WTO)--are actively moulding the Indian economy for the purpose. The internal legal, administrative and judicial measures to achieve the massive loot are being undertaken by India's native reactionary rulers. These lackeys of imperialism are subject to peremptory instructions from international finance capital. To salvage their own political credibility the lackeys are making these out to be the country's own need, using their propaganda machinery to convince so. Under such conditions, their share of spoils vis-a-vis imperialism may have declined but its quantum even in the short run has increased manifold. This is because the new policies allow them to expropriate people to their heart's content (as did the colonial British allow their newly created Jamindars).

## [2.] Nature and Content of Onslaught

While the onslaught on India is all-round--economic, social cultural, ideological, political--the purpose of it all is the thoroughgoing economic fleecing of the country. So the focus is on the remoulding of the country's economic and financial structures.

**Backdrop:** The 1980s were marked by events which, while major in themselves, today seem only fore-runners of what is to follow with the more thoroughgoing assault of the 1990s. Outstanding among the events of the 1980s were: the betrayal and starving of the longest and largest textile strike, after which the labour-force in the organised sector textile industry was halved in the name of "modernising" the mills under the "new textile policy"--and has by now been reduced to a-third; the agitations of sections of the peasantry--later betrayed by the leading landlord lobby--against the choking cost increases and the pressures of the commercial market, and the sequence of famines and droughts, with shooting food prices mocking the paltry public distribution system.

The Indian ruling classes' pretensions to "planned development" (and even "socialism") had already run out of steam in the 1970s. And, at the start of the 1980s, with the first IMF loan and its conditionalities began the processes which have gathered immense momentum in the 1990s. Liberalisation of economic

controls was carried out then under the slogan of "modernisation" (Rajiv Gandhi's journey into the 21st century). In reality this was not modernisation but the beginning of the process of de-industrialisation of India by laying waste the country's own industrial capabilities, and encouraging import of foreign capital goods and intermediates.

In their hunt for "growth" by any means despite possessing only a crippled semi-feudal base and dwarf-market, the Indian ruling classes during the 1980s resorted to large-scale expansion of internal and external debt. (The latter in particular became a handy weapon in the hands of the crisis-ridden imperialist economies to prise open India further.) The foreign debt in those years rose from \$20.6 bn (Rs 16,000 crore) in 1980, to \$41 bn (Rs 49,000 crore) in 1985, and \$82 bn (Rs 148,000 crore) in 1990 (as a percentage of GNP it increased from 11.9% in 1980 to 28.1% in 1990). Besides, short-term, high-cost, debt became a larger portion of the total debt. At the same time, India's capacity to service the debt declined. Already, India was in a debt trap, needing loans to service loans. Its real economy was unable to pay, by exports of goods and services, for the ballooning imports and foreign collaborations which the ruling classes were parading as "growth". As a result, there started a decline in the net transfers on debt. In effect, India's economy was being prepared for future inroads by foreign finance capital.

**Structural adjustment programme:** India was thus once again thrown at the mercy of the IMF when, around the time of the Gulf War of 1990, the international commercial banks (from which India had been encouraged to borrow by the earlier conditionalities) suddenly choked off their credit to India for no novel credible reason. Now the IMF stepped in to give a variety of contingency loans and then more stable financing, at the price of the notorious "structural adjustment programme" (SAP).

This SAP India was to implement through internal policy-measures. The "new economic policy" is just the fiscal, financial and physical policy-measures India had to undertake, both on the domestic and balance of payments fronts, in order to open its economy in a more sweeping and thoroughgoing fashion to international finance capital. These policy-measures have, moreover, been under the close direction of the IMF-WB-WTO triumvirate. The IMF lays down the thrust of the changes; the World Bank specifies sectoral targets and forms; and the WTO (a body actually controlled by the club of imperialist countries), under cover of regulating international trade, is armed with the most sweeping powers to legislate the internal economic affairs of the member countries.

The explicit aim of the SAP, and its native instrument the New Economic Policy (NEP), is to suppress domestic demand (purchasing power) in order to cause investment to shift to the export sector. In theory this will thereby boost exports and restore the country's "creditworthiness" with foreign capital. In suppressing mass demand (i.e. mass purchasing power) for essentials, the imperialists and their lackeys are indeed succeeding. In this way, the costs of labour are being yet further depressed, and several resources are being released for the export sector. But at the same time among the unstated aims of the SAP is also to foster here a narrow elite demand for imported goods. This involves the concentration of income in the hands of an even smaller section, whose grotesque consumption is draining the country's foreign exchange reserves, and keeping the country in a tangle of foreign liabilities.

**State abdicates even minimal investment:** Now, as part of suppressing domestic demand and industry, the semi-colonial Indian State is being made to abandon its presence to promote economic development and to protect even the minimum welfare of its people. "Indian planning" (originally conceived by the colonialists for the more systematic exploitation of India in the post-Second World War world) has been abandoned in all but name. Planned infrastructural development (in railways, power, irrigation and roads) originally intended to develop the minimal networks for stable neo-colonial exploitation (in which the comprador bourgeoisie and the feudals had relatively greater significance), has now been abandoned, throwing Indians at the mercy of immediately degenerating services (note the routineness of railway accidents) and escalating prices (as in power).

By suppressing State investment in this fashion, ground is being prepared for the influx of foreign investment--whenever foreign finance capital may choose to enter. Estimates of the foreign investment needs for this infrastructure are being projected in lakhs of crores of rupees. The precedent for the terms on which foreign direct investment will come has been set by extortionist ventures such as Enron,

Cogentrix, and other "fast-track" projects. The term "investment" suggests creation of assets, a production process, and then realisation of surplus value (with all the normal attendant risks of such realisation through the market); but this is not the case with the foreign investment coming in. Effectively this is investment with such scandalously high and State-guaranteed returns that it amounts to no-risk buccaneering, with the surpluses realised at the very outset. For an example of the scale of loot: It has been calculated that if the Ninth Plan targets for private power plants are met, there will be an annual outflow of \$10 ten, or Rs 36,000 crore at the current exchange rate.

Official policy has summarily assigned to the scrap-heap in this period whatever modest capacities and technical capabilities had been built in industries such as fertiliser, drugs, and engineering, including for their further development. This makes way for foreign finance capital either to export to us at self-chosen terms or to come in to produce here, whichever suits them better.

While the major part of the imperialist countries' trade in value terms is among themselves (and so also their real grievances about trade protection and production subsidies), they are together crucially dependent on countries such as India for forced dirt-cheap imports of all kinds, and for extraordinarily high rates of return through their "investments" here. While imperialist countries and their MNCs even today consider trade and investments amongst themselves safer, they turn to third world countries for short-term-high-return financial flows (which is also essentially what their foreign direct investment amounts to with its guaranteed scandalously high, quick profits). Though of course they are interested in gaining sizeable markets (and even a-tenth or a-twentieth of our population is a sizeable market for them) they are even more interested in ensuring exploitation of cheap labour here (in both industry and agriculture) and of natural resources. Hence the retrogression through economic policies is by no means bothering them.

**External sector crisis persists, deepens:** In line with their present drive to fuel vast income-earning sprees worldwide for their moneyed sections through speculation of all kinds, imperialists have forced open, via their lackey rulers, the *financial markets* of India for speculative gain. India today is open to the depredations of hot money flows. Secondly, the World Bank has made sweeping recommendations (dittoed then by India's official Narsimhan Committee) for "liberating" the *financial institutions* (banks, insurance corporations, and long-term credit institutions), opening another sector for cannibalising by foreign finance capital and yielding yet another economic command point for more direct imperialist control.

The "external debt crisis" was the supposed reason for the structural adjustment programme being implemented through the new economic policies. Yet, by March 1996, the foreign debt had risen to \$91.2 bn (about Rs 324,000 crore). Moreover, other foreign liabilities (eg. foreign holdings in the Indian sharemarkets) have shot up. The sharp devaluation of the rupee (dictated by the World Bank), from Rs. 21 to the \$ to Rs. 36 to the \$ between June 1991 and January 1996, has pushed us deeper into the debt trap (to get out of which, supposedly, the IMF had imposed the SAP). Debt-servicing costs in 1996-97 will touch a record high of \$14.5 bn. At the end of five years of the IMF programme, the trade deficit for 1995-96 is a massive \$8.9 bn (over Rs 30,000 crore).

To fool the people the government has tomtommed the growth of the foreign exchange reserves. But the real progress of these was dependent largely on unreliable funds. (From \$2.24 bn at end March 1991 these foreign exchange reserves rose to \$5.6 bn in March 1992, \$6.4 bn in March 1993, then sharply to \$15.1 bn in March 1994, then reportedly to \$20.8 bn by end March 1995. The major increase was between March 1993 and March 1995--of \$14.4 bn. But this in the main--at least \$12 bn--has been hot money, speculative foreign finance capital, which is here for short term gain and ready to fly out at the first assurance of better profit or lesser perceived risk elsewhere. Moreover, \$14.9 bn worth of NRI deposits, largely fronts for foreign investors placing foreign exchange to earn the higher interest rates offered on these deposits, can be repatriated at short notice.) The point is that, should these unreliable flows of foreign exchange move out, India would have about the same level of reserves as prior to March 1991, before the SAP began. Such arithmetic moreover shows that, while capital account convertibility (i.e., permission to move capital in and out of the country at will) may not be formally introduced, it exists in practice as major segments of foreign capital here could be quickly withdrawn.

Thus, of the three main forms in which, in the present day world, foreign finance capital moves across national boundaries--viz: portfolio investment (especially speculative stock market capital flows); foreign direct investment; and loans (from governments or from international financial institutions and banks)--the first, viz, speculative capital flows dominate here today.

The internal measures that have jacked open the Indian economy are: the various "privatisations", such as of the telecom, power, and oil sectors; the massively executed "market orientation" of decisions on investment and production (which includes scrapping of infrastructural public investments, subsidies, and welfare measures); the vast and deepening dependence on imports of capital goods, intermediate goods, and increasingly consumer goods; and the full-scale dependence by now on foreign collaborations for every economic activity. Thus, even without the uncertainties of speculative flows, the economic buffer of internal policy-initiatives, controls, and checks against external shock stands abandoned. It is like an open helpless invitation to foreign direct investment to come ravage the economy and to abandon it when they have finished with it.

The economic slide has in fact accelerated not only in relation to the debt-crisis but every other bourgeois economic parameter--monstrous unemployment/underemployment, which actually plagues upto 40 per cent of the workforce; declining per head food availability, and worsening nutritional balance; virulent revival of communicable mass diseases of old; sharp, persistent price increases of essentials, particularly of food items; fast eroding public services; degenerating accident-prone infrastructure; falling rate of actual productive investment in both agriculture and industry; and an export sector that refuses to boom as promised.

**Smokescreen of terms for plunder:** Imperialists, and their lackeys and apologists, have distorted terminology to present this depredation in glowing light. Economic "reform", which they tout, is nothing but the economic retrogression of India. When they pontificate about India's "economy doing well", they mean that the tiny section of collaborators and their ilk are accumulating vast wealth--the scraps the imperialists throw at them. By "globalisation" they mean the prising open of the Indian economy and dismantling its few defences against the international market in trade and capital, for free movement and easy exploitation by the far superior and powerful foreign finance capital. By "modernisation" is meant the free import of high-tech foreign capital and consumer goods (at the cost of local industry, employment in it, and growth around it) thus forgoing the more rational use of India's wealth of labour resource for economic development. By "efficiency" is meant "more profit at any cost", not the economical use of available resources for now and the future. By "privatisation" is meant a number of forms of plunder: the cannibalising of public assets (already ruling class controlled) by foreign finance capital when the killing is juicy; the wholesale appropriation of natural resources (eg. oil, minerals); the surrender of such small claims on State services as people still may have; the wholesale robbing of public sector workers' rights by delegating work to private contractors. The "drive to cut the fiscal deficit" essentially comprises: cutting off of budgetary support to infrastructural activity (power, railways, roads, telecom, etc); attacking subsidies (on food, fuel, fertiliser, transport, credit to agriculture, etc); giving up of public investment activity; and abandoning welfare services (the meagre claims such as the public distribution system, medical and educational services that few Indians may have had on the system). All of these aim to make India a free hunting ground for foreign finance capital and its profiteering local lackeys. However, the greater expenditures on interest payments and defence, which are sacrosanct for foreign finance capital, more than make up for such fiscal "saving". "Market discipline" means concentration of economic power so that those with vast capital are killing off and preempting, through market manipulations, the initiative and localised markets of lakhs of small indigenous producers and workshops (for whom access to capital and credit is on usurious terms).

### [3.] How the Imperialist Onslaught Is Intensifying the Principal Contradiction

The impact of the imposed retrogression is murderous on the toiling people. The most immediate and severe assault is on the working class, as its very source of livelihood is being slashed. This has further sunk its living standards, forcing many workers to start leaving for their villages.

Such tendency affects both the agrarian and the industrial sectors. It increases the pressure on the land in the agrarian sector. Thus those already in semi-feudal agriculture are being more helplessly pinned to the

land with the avenues of urban employment narrowing. The basis for their semi-feudal exploitation and oppression is thus being reinforced.

The hopeless dependence on land in rural India further degrades urban wages and wage labour. It does this in two ways. The countryside's vast and increasing reserve army of labour is competing for urban employment which itself is being strangulated; and this reserve army is offering itself in the labour market from ever more depressed levels of rural living and so at wages that get based on these depressed levels.

Thus the insecurity of the working class is depressing the peasantry and the depression of the peasantry is further degrading the working class's conditions of labour.

That process will become more poignant when the attack on the peasantry, already under way, is fully unleashed. It is the peasantry that will suffer most profoundly as it becomes, in addition, the direct victim of the impoverishment, misery and dispossession that is to unfold under WTO's commercial regime of "freeing" our semi-feudal agriculture to be ravaged by the critical storms of imperialist trade and investment in agricultural and agro-based products. The process has already begun under the IMF-Bank regime since 1991 which has chalked out the Government of India's plan for our agrarian sector. But what has been implemented so far is only a dim warning for our people of the ferocity to follow under the WTO.

Essentially "globalisation" of agriculture will mean the *manipulated commercialisation* of those productive sectors of our agriculture in which the multinational corporations see scope for profit through trade and investment. It will mean large-scale dispossession of the peasantry without it having recourse to alternative urban sources of livelihood.

The WTO-ordered slashing of already very meagre State support to agriculture implies increased prices of fertilisers, electricity, water, seeds and bank credit. State procurement of crops is to surrender its ground to private trade. State distribution of foodgrains is to be restricted to an even smaller fraction of the population, the size of which will be determined by the WTO. Government and private domestic manufacturers of seeds are to be replaced by multinationals. Restrictions on both import and export of agricultural commodities are to be removed, implying displacement of Indian producers of a number of crops (such as oilseeds), tying of a section of peasantry to the unstable world market, and snatching food away, for export, from a needy population. State investment in creation of agricultural assets has been declining for over a decade: it is now to be dealt a death-blow with the combined strictures of the IMF-World Bank (against budgetary outlays) and of the WTO (against "subsidising" farmers). Moreover, the absence of State investment or credit discourages private investment in agriculture. The crux of the matter is that, while each measure of GATT accelerates the draining-off of surplus from the direct producers in India's agriculture (into the coffers of MNCs and the palms of sundry agents along the way), none of its measures gives an impetus to *re-deployment* of such surplus in agriculture. Such re-deployment is vital for extended reproduction of capital in agriculture. With the accelerating slide in investment, agricultural productivity as a whole, barring pockets, is bound to suffer.

In the present conditions of Indian agriculture these measures mean for the peasantry: higher input costs and hence greater borrowing needs; greater dependence on usurers as even the paltry State credit disappears; greater helplessness (especially of the poor peasants) in the face of private traders as State procurement/price support mechanisms are folded up; periodic upheavals in crop prices according to the vicissitudes of cartel-controlled international trade; inability of many poor peasants to hang on to their tiny holdings, their last buffer against destitution. Various state governments are making preparations for undoing whatever restrictions exist on the alienation and concentration of land. Indeed, in order for multinational corporations to squeeze some juice from the pathetically backward Indian rural market, it is vital that the concentration of assets and income with the top five per cent *increase*.

Meanwhile the uprooted will have nowhere else to go for employment, as industry (State and private), is disgorging itself of lakhs of workers--what to speak of absorbing additional crores of desperate peasants. Hence the GATT-destituted peasants will remain condemned to their villages. There, amid now accentuated backwardness, they will experience the tightening grip of the feudal sections, who alone can

flourish on usury, manipulative trade, alienation of land, and arbitrary exploitation of the vast pool of rural unemployed.

The feudal sections no doubt would be somewhat disgruntled at the SAP-reduced flow of budgetary funds (from the Centre to the states, and from the state governments to local bodies) for "rural development" and "poverty alleviation". Such funds, in collusion with officialdom, the feudal sections regularly plunder; but now they find the sums dwindling. Some landlords/traders no doubt, are attracted by the scope for export, but given the inherent limits of the world market in agricultural commodities, only a minority of feudal sections will actually be able to turn their hands to such activity. Most will have to be appeased with the now greater license to whip and expropriate the poor and landless of the villages.

The principal contradiction in our political economy between the semi-feudal mode of production and the vast masses of our people (i.e., in social class terms between feudalism and the vast masses of our people) will thus be aggravated with the latest wave of commercialisation of agriculture.

It is even more obvious now, that all classes that have a direct stake in stemming the present tide and reversing it--i.e., in liberating India and establishing a democratic socio-economic order by revolutionary means--can not establish that without the revolutionary movement and mainstay of the peasantry, around the question of land and reinvestment of its surplus.

#### **[4] The Ruling Classes, Their Political Condition, and the Weapons They Fashion**

India's ruling classes and their State system, bred by the neo-colonial order to rule on its behalf and promote its interests here, are now naturally under the direct and indirect pressures of the imperialist crisis. By their training and methods of rule, they have been transferring finance capital into the country and, under one respectable name or another, transferring India's surpluses to the owners of finance capital abroad.

But now the peremptory pressure from imperialism for better and better terms for them and for opening the Indian economy for unhindered exploitation--financial and physical (of labour and national resources) is destabilising their base and their methods of rule. The chain reactions of the policies undertaken for this imperialist purpose and the consequent turmoil and resistance among the working people, which the lackeys have to manage, are posing challenges to their rule.

The imperialist expectations from the rulers here were first suggested as "improvements" in the seventies as the recession set in in the imperialist countries. They became blatant in the eighties, and were imposed as IMF conditionalities. Now, in the nineties, the pressure has become brazen, unconcerned about the political damage the haste might cause to the lackey rulers here. Thus: the hasty way the IMF's "Structural Adjustment Programme" was forced down the throats of policy-makers, exposing them to ridicule with their quick succession of contradictory statements trying to pretend to sovereignty; the blatant *quid pro quo* of fuelling U.S. planes on Indian soil for the war with Iraq in exchange for the loan release from the IMF; the IMF-WB insistence for quick dismantling of balance of payments controls; the fiasco over the rulers' "resistance" to the extortionist terms set by Enron and the likes; the scant respect shown by the U.S. to the Indian Government's noises about CTBT; the wanton opening of the Indian economy for international speculation along with encouragement of those local speculators who served such ends; and the recent somersault over the stand to be taken at the WTO Singapore meet.

All such anti-national policies, summarily implemented, have been resulting in popular turmoil. Significant in this phase have been the rounds of working class storms and struggles. Though limited to pockets throughout the country, these have happened despite the class collaboration of established union readerships. So also the resistance by the nationalities demanding the right to self-determination despite extreme suffering at the hands of State repressive forces: people of Kashmir and the North-East, turbulent in their anguished outrage, may not be under the sway of a conscious anti-imperialist anti-feudal movement, but the thrust of their struggle is against the contrived reactionary plank, of national chauvinism, of this lackey State. In the coming phase, as the attack on the vast mass of peasantry gets more seriously mounted, the Indian rulers know from past experience the seething and

joining of forces that can result across the country.

The immediate headaches for the ruling classes and their political parties are the difficulties for ruling within the parliamentary frame. This pseudo-parliamentary system and form of rule are cracking. These difficulties have been most obviously posed in the last parliamentary election of mid-1996. That election made it explicit that the century-old favourite of the Indian ruling classes, the Indian National Congress, is in strategic decline. Actually, this strategic decline of the Congress is associated with the crisis of the ruling classes and the Congress's inability any more to sustain its nationalist populist demagoguery which for decades had served the ruling classes. It can no longer coalesce into a parliamentary majority the various ruling-class interest groups throughout the country. But nor can any other party do so. Not even the BJP could emerge as the agreed national representative of the ruling classes--though it has long been grooming itself as "the national alternative", employing Hindutva and violence to conjure a national identity, and scraping and bowing before imperialists to assure them fullest compliance with foreign finance capital's terms. The patch-work United Front of remaining parties--hastily put together to occupy the seat of government--has been and would be politically unstable. Undifferentiated as the United Front parties are on the commitment to carry out imperialist-dictated economic policies and on the general method of rule, their stability in government would still require that they satisfy the various components of their ruling class social base (coalescing the emerging interest groups to the national level) and that they have credibility with their support base among the voting public.

This latter credibility all the parliamentary parties have lost. That the whole range of them are committed to the new economic policies makes sure they cannot gain it back. In the absence of the revolutionary alternative, the public now votes, when it does, negatively or for some short-term practical gain or for cutting their losses--not for any political belief in the parties. Few believe that the current policies are going to yield, against present trends, any reliable gains for them or for their children. Quite apart from the avarice with which foreign finance capital is siphoning off surpluses--there is no give left in the system for any kind of accommodation or for any sectional welfare. This, notwithstanding the fact that they will from time to time make symbolic gestures to hoodwink the people and in special cases such as struggle pockets take ameliorative measures for political considerations.

There are two factors now working against the ability of any of the ruling class parties successfully representing the ruling classes at the all-India level: One is the narrowing industrial base of the Indian comprador-bureaucrat capital, particularly the bureaucrat capital of "Indian planning" (the latter had been a major stay of the Indian big bourgeoisie). The nationalistic and socialistic demagoguery, that could be pegged onto the State control of these so-called commanding heights of the Indian economy, used to lend the political margin to the big bourgeoisie to directly appeal to the Indian voters over the heads of the locally influential interest groups. Thus it used to be the political lever in the hands of the big bourgeoisie to press together the fractious groups of the ruling classes, in particular the naturally fissiparous landlord lobbies, into an all-India political coalition (in the main in the form of the Indian National Congress). The loss of this lever, now, is corroding the effectiveness of the big bourgeoisie's leadership in the ruling class alliance through their all-India political parties. Second is the sharpened competition among contending feudal forces hand-in-hand with the growing disarticulation and lopsidedness of the economy, especially following the onslaught of globalisation and the new economic policies. These competing and disarticulated feudal forces are essentially regional in character and can better exert pressure through regional parties. The failure of the so-called national parties to form a stable government at the all-India level and the emergence of the regional parties, thus, by no means indicates a more democratic or federal expression of public opinion but rather this further disarticulation of the Indian economy and polity.

Moreover, this disintegration is working in an environment of enhanced bribes and rampant speculation. Corruption has taken on gargantuan proportions. The "loot-while-you-can" and "get-rich-quick" culture has been made highly respectable as part of the opening up of India. The old systems of bribing are giving way to the new. In this transitional period for bribing systems there is an appearance of breakdown of the established order among the rulers. It is this damaging situation that "judicial activism" is addressing. In fact, it is one corrupt as well as unaccountable arm of the State seeming to judge, by prolonged games of investigation and strictures, another arm which was powerful enough to pretend to accountability. Besides, the basic truth is carefully left unacknowledged that it is imperialist

bribes that form the base of the bribing superstructure. Those huge amounts with which foreign finance capital bribes the politicians are a tiny part of the future profits it expects to earn out of India. Meanwhile, judicial activism is an attempt to make out to the support base that the system is not drowning in chaos, that "there are institutions here that work", that the Indian State is not yet disintegrated though so obviously its pretensions to sovereignty have been sullied.

Similarly, the spawning of foreign-financed NGOs (non-governmental organisations), registered and working in tandem with the State machinery, is an attempt to make out to the people by foreign finance capital that the small established system of claims on the Indian State, won by the struggling masses of Indian people, is being replaced by a "privately-financed", "closer-to-the-people", "activist" force of NGOs. However, NGOs are answerable to their funders, not to the people. By virtue of their bureaucratic character they cannot in any way build people's initiative or obtain genuine relief.

Judicial activism and the activism of the NGOs are aimed basically at different sections of the Indian masses to convince them that "the system can be made to work" if only the just and humane come into action. In fact, by their origin and style of existence, they are anti-democratic and diversionary, and need to be exposed as such. Nevertheless, working within some of these NGOs may be genuine democratic forces who, because of the lack of viable democratic organisations in their area, have sought to work among people via the NGO. If any of them come in contact with revolutionaries, the latter should aim to wean them away from such loyalties and instil democratic understanding, methods and norms in them, without in any way getting entangled in their organisational structures and funds.

The crisis in the ruling classes' parliamentary form of rule has developed progressively since the seventies, as the full gamut of slogans of "reform" and "egalitarian planning" got exposed for their vacuity, and as the economic system in retrogression was clearly seen to be unable to give relief to the basic masses of our people. In this period of disillusionment, the intricate play of diversionary, divisive and dangerous politics has been practiced by the ruling classes and their political parties with the complicity of the imperialists.

The communal card was first systematically re-introduced in national-level politics by the Congress in the seventies, most notably in Punjab, and Congress role is notorious in various riots, particularly the carnage of Sikhs in 1984. The BJP, with its heritage of Jana Sangh and RSS, put up the Sangh Parivar, a conglomerate of fronts to play different tunes for different sections. Through the eighties and nineties, the BJP deliberately promoted Hindutva with a vengeance and with fantastic pageantry. It matched the Congress in bloodying its hands on various occasions, the last such major series being the communal violence starting with the destruction of the Babri Masjid. The Congress and various opposition parties played a supplementary role in the whole scenario while making noises about secularism. People have been slowly sickened by the cynicism of the communal carnages. Communal identity and frenzy are yielding diminishing returns in terms of the popular support base. And it is difficult to keep up the frenzy with any conviction especially when the party is in power (as the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra is constantly finding itself judged by its secular policies and betrayals).

The parliamentary parties' playing up of the caste issue and the recommendations of the Mandal Commission are also yielding lesser returns. The cynicism involved in these parties raking up profound feelings of injury around the actual social crippling of the oppressed castes, only to turn around the issue in their own favour, and the emptiness of their various promises of justice, have rendered the caste platform less useful at present for the major all-India political parties. There is a significant independent undercurrent, however, that is flowing ahead at the same time among the oppressed castes to which the manipulations of the ruling classes give an unintended impetus. This is the increasing ferment among, and assertion by, the oppressed caste masses themselves. It is a reflection of their basic urge for fundamental change, and it constitutes a factor in the realisation of such a change.

Diversionary, divisive politics will be needed, nevertheless, in this period while loot of the country is to be organised. Here, national chauvinism is becoming a more prominent manipulative instrument of these parties. Already, the ground has been prepared by projecting the struggles in Kashmir and the North-East as anti-national and as assaults on the integrity of the country, to justify every heinous form of murder and social fracturing in those states by the Indian armed forces. Decades of anti-Pakistan propaganda too

serves this target. Communalism, already fiercely practised for decades to create a deep sense of mutual suspicion and schism among communities in India, is now sought to be joined with national chauvinism to manipulate the popular unease and the craving for national pride. In the given undeveloped state of consciousness today about imperialism as the basic freebooter of national resources and labour, such diversion of the national feeling into national chauvinism towards those who are themselves victims of imperialism is more easily done. Countering this would need a two-pronged approach: incessantly exposing imperialism through secular struggles--the country's plunder by it and the mental and social enslavement of our people by it; and on every possible occasion and from secular platforms telling the people the true history of the peoples of Kashmir and the North-East and the anti-people role of the Indian rulers and their armed forces there.

In this period, the CPI and CPM are suffering thoroughgoing political exposure as ruling class parties. Now part of the United Front (the CPI, indeed, being given the much trusted post of the home minister), thoroughly undifferentiated in aims and practices and sources of finance from any other ruling class party, they can no longer mislead people with ideological propaganda claiming common heritage with communist revolutionaries. Thus their earlier effectiveness for the ruling classes for misleading the people is being further marred.

In a nutshell, the ruling classes are facing humiliating exposure, are unable to cobble together any convincing platform, and while unanimous on serving the imperialists are even unable to decide amongst themselves who should have that honour. All these are circumstances objectively favourable to the communist revolutionaries.

## [5.] How the Masses of the People Are Affected

**Working class:** The engulfing unemployment situation is the crux of the assault by foreign finance capital on our working classes. It is not merely that new employment is not growing to absorb the new entrants into the workforce or to absorb the huge backlog of unemployed and underemployed in the country. Even the existing employment at the start of the 1990s in the tiny "organised sector" (a 2.7 crore force in a total workforce of 30.6 crore in the country) is under threat. With the increasing privatisations and the implicit exit policy (closures being administratively and judicially executed by the government), this employment would be further eroded. By 1994, in the public sector 75,000 have been retrenched and 1,25,000 in the private sector. These numbers are set to increase. The retrenchments are taking place through forced "voluntary retirement schemes" (VRS), and fragmentation of the workforce.

With 3.6 crore registered in the employment exchanges (when most unemployed don't even bother to register at the exchanges) the pressure on the "unorganised sector" workers in industry, services and trade comprising already some 7 crore (the sweated, insecure, unprotected sector of contract and casual labour) is crushing. The below-subsistence wages and conditions of labour of this sector are under further downward pressure. Apart from wage levels in small unorganised industry getting depressed, the job losses because of the suffocation and squeezing-out of small and cottage industry as a consequence of the globalisation and new economic policies are wiping out employment here as well. But such account can not depict the misery of displacement, the hunger and disease, and insecurity that follows job losses, the uprooting of whole families of the working classes. Working class localities in major cities are being depleted or uprooted. With that goes a whole identity of the community of workers, the base away from the workplace for working class organisation.

The physical uprooting of whole worker-populations, the fragmentation, the desperate search for any kind of job, with the ultimate threat of having to return to the village (where 20 crore of our working-age people are already working the land), inevitably first cause shock waves and despair. But the struggle to survive, and a wave-by-wave realisation of the political nature of what is going on, makes workers grimly show dissatisfaction with established opportunist leaderships, seek new forms of resistance, and bring new leaderships to the fore. Dalla in U.P., Chhattisgarh in Madhya Pradesh, Victoria, Kanoria and Titagarh in West Bengal (and similar unrest in many other mills and industries there), Nelli Marla and the Singareni coal miners' strike in Andhra Pradesh, Reliance project at Hazira in Gujarat, the all-India telecommunications strike, the Central Government employees' strike, etc. all in this period, bear witness in various ways to the workers' need and readiness to fight, their initiative-grasping capacity, their

determination in the face of repression, their challenge to government policies and established readerships.

Wide-scale and serious solidarity-building, and consequent staying power of workers' struggles such as can add up to a working class movement, is possible in the present context only with communist revolutionary leadership. Only this can give workers today the political understanding they need about what is taking place and what can be achieved with which steps. Only such leadership can give workers their proletarian ideology which they badly need to recognise their role in reversing the imperialist assault. Only revolutionary orientation and understanding can help workers bridge the present time when their material base and their very numbers in stable industry are getting eroded; when legal rights, won through past struggle, are being dismantled by the rulers with cynical contempt.

In the absence of their revolutionary organisation, the workers' links with the countryside (their potential strength for carrying the revolutionary message to the vast peasant masses who constitute the majority of our revolutionary classes) are today unable to develop the proletarian leadership for the peasantry's struggles. Ravaged by unemployment and insecurity, their labour depressed in a market when hundreds of thousands are being flung into the unorganised urban labour market (from organised industry, from the new entrants into the workforce, and from the pressing influx from the constantly depredated countryside), and without their own class organisations which alone can prevent worker from being pitted against worker in destructive competition, thousands of workers seek refuge in the village where the starving feudal structure gives them a place to die and an identity to die with.

**Peasantry:** Already the peasantry's base is being whittled down. Because of steep hikes in prices of fertilisers and pesticides, under the NEP, there is a squeeze on the peasants. Credit to agriculture has declined from 17 to 12 per cent of overall credit and the dependence of most peasants on moneylenders and usurers has increased. About half of the peasant households have less than an acre of land, which means that at least they, and probably many more, would be purchasing foodgrains in the market. Under the NEP the price of foodgrains has risen between 60-70 per cent by just official figures, cutting thus further into the starvation levels of the majority of peasant households. Between March 1991 and July 1995 the official consumer price index of these sections rose by 62 per cent. These features would in any case get sharpened if the NEP proceeds as is currently planned. But a more fierce onslaught is planned on the existing base of the peasantry.

The ground is being prepared for the relaxation of land ceilings and agricultural land transfers in various states in the name of industrial projects, including food processing units and the feudals', big bureaucrats' and corporate sector's agricultural, "social afforestation", plantations, animal husbandry, fisheries, and horticultural projects. In all of these, foreign capital is being welcomed. While no legislation may be actually attempted (in any case the record of "land reform" of the decades since 1951 has shown that quite other practice can be allowed systematically by this State), the message is out that the poor peasantry, already teetering on the edge of losing what little land it has, can be dispossessed. This land grab can be done both administratively and even more widely through indebtedness.

By official records (which always understate inequality in holdings), 4 per cent of rural households own 33 per cent of the land, whereas the poorest 66 per cent of rural households own 12 per cent of the land. These figures are blunt and hide the actual variety and ferocity of agrarian inequity and exploitation. They hide the actual extremes of inequality, the harsh conditions of labour, the fierce social oppression that underpins those conditions, the dogged economic practice and inventiveness of the poor peasantry in cultivation, their below subsistence existence after all expropriations have been taken from them, their love and hunger for land.

The practiced efficiency of the poor peasantry and its lifestaking attachment to land have an inherent power in a country that thus has enough land for redistribution (roughly 2 acres per household) and resources too, to produce progressive surpluses on it, using newer institutional forms democratically chosen. It is these capabilities that will finally enable India to opt out of the orbit of dependence on finance capital.

**Adivasis:** The adivasis are a special category of our peasantry and have their particular significance for

the peasantry's revolutionary future. But meanwhile, for over a century under different sets of rulers, and now even more rabidly under liberalisation, their lands have been usurped, a layer of middlemen has been created from among them to loot them, big dam projects have uprooted and displaced them, their lands and forests have been destroyed for commercial purposes, and they have suffered the most painful cultural suppression and social marginalisation. With the same predator's unconcern, the New Forest Bill, 1995, lays the basis for a more thorough and arbitrary power over the tribals' lives and assets--for the administration, the traders/contractors/landlords, and the corporate interests. Many of the tribal areas are zones of precious natural resources, the looting of which is taking place and is going to take place at a greatly accelerated pace, involving much greater havoc in the land and lives of tribals.

The vast range of artisanship including the weavers, the fishermen and the toddy tappers who have been leading a precarious existence today face a grave threat of destabilisation and extinction of their occupations.

**Intermediate sections:** The intermediate sections, particularly those engaged in mental labour, are going to be hit by the general trend towards contractualisation, computerisation, "information networking" and "globalisation". Globalisation's method among these will be to draft out exceptional talent as "success stories" and ditch the rest in an insecure and oppressive employment situation. Though the more natural victims of the ideological-cultural onslaught of the imperialist media promising a glowing future of gross consumerism, these sections are awakening to the harshness of an utterly insecure present and future for their jobs, a materially sinking living standard, and the brute force suppressing their articulated claims and legal fights. Their readiness to bolster their situation with a humble share in the massive systems of bribes has boomeranged on them through the crass cynicism these practices of theirs have bred in their younger generation. It is necessary to incorporate non-antagonistic but political struggles against corruption and corrupt practices that have entered among particular sections of the broad working masses, in order to develop and strengthen the values and habits of revolutionary democratic functioning so as to build the people's fighting mass organisations.

Students and youth are facing a most uncertain future. The old system of education is basically collapsed and this process is being completed by a policy of financial starving out. Its place has been taken by a hybrid high-cost system of specialisation for the few. Jobs are dwindling even further, so that competition and lack of assurance of livelihood plays havoc with the self-respect and social morale of the youth of our country, leaving them prey to semi-criminal networks and businesses, and fascist political influences. This section needs the revolutionary alternative most acutely to find their identity and self-expression and a positive outlet for their unbounded energies.

A relatively more articulate section, accustomed to thinking it deserves a decent life, is thus going to be slowly alienated enough to stand with the rest of the working masses. These intermediate sections, especially youth and students, are particularly sensitive to questions of national hurt, and would be receptive to propaganda exposing the pathetic surrender of the ruling classes before imperialist institutions. They need special attention for developing democratic solidarity.

**Dalits:** Ruling class politics is paying fresh attention to the Dalits: not only by posing its existing platforms as their defenders, but also by floating new platforms claiming to represent militantly their caste interests. In other words, the ruling classes are anxious about their loosening political hold on this particularly oppressed section of Indian society (the disintegration of decades-old Congress vote-banks among them being an example of this trend). The Dalits' dawning disillusion with ruling class 'constitutional' politics, their pent-up anger and their unrest are getting sharpened with the State's abandonment of 'welfare' presences. With the cutbacks in State spending, the earlier scope for pacifying vocal elements among them is disappearing (eg. with public sector employment reduced, the slim worth of job reservations is even further diminished). And the most immediate target of the present general license for intensifying landlord thuggery is the landless peasantry of whom the bulk are Dalits; whatever paltry holdings the Dalits have managed to acquire over the decades are likely to be first prey of the increasingly aggressive feudals, attempting to mobilise sections of the peasantry on a caste basis.

All this underscores the urgency of communist revolutionaries making inroads among the Dalits on class demands. In particular, it is the implementation of the agrarian revolutionary programme that will give

teeth to the necessary specific struggles against caste oppression and injury, and expose the diversionary character of various essentially ruling-class caste-based efforts afoot to woo them.

**Women:** The *unconstrained* exploitation that "globalisation" sanctions is leaving no scope for women to submit to it in normal routine ways. It is, thus, objectively propelling women into resistance in extraordinary numbers. As they face the State's open partisanship with their oppressors, women are being increasingly drawn into the political arena.

As domestic workers within their families and as victims of patriarchal values, women of the vast toiling masses are bearing most of all the crushing physical burden, of rapidly sliding living standards. They are sharing the havoc wreaked on their loved ones by job losses and utter uncertainty, uprooting from homes and displacement, and hunger following steep price increases in staple foods.

Women who work outside the domestic arena are facing the worst consequences, within their class, of the general degradation of labour power: On the one hand, they are the first targets for deprivation of permanency, facilities and security at the workplace. On the other, women's ever-ready cheaper and more exploitable labour is enabling employers to pit them in competition with men workers, further pulling down overall wage levels and security.

As the role of violence in the settling of social and class issues is heightening, and as their menfolk are becoming targets of the increasing violence, women are becoming indirect victims of it. Moreover, women, too, more and more are becoming direct victims of such violence. In particular, the communal fascistic policies, in relation to women, of the ruling classes and their gangs have been further eroding women's social position. The unimaginable atrocities on women, especially of the religious minorities by Hindu communal fascists, during the series of communal carnages of this period; the tormenting and abuse of women by the Khalistani and State terrorists; and the targetting of women of Kashmir and the North-East by the armed forces; these are all outstanding examples of this.

The cultural onslaught on women is cumulatively fierce in this period--from both the feudal and the imperialist planes. Television serials have officially been dinning in the most reactionary interpretations of the Sita-Savitri-Draupadi stereotypes as ideals upon Indian women. Massive and unremitting consumerist advertising through all the media, and multi-crore beauty contests and rewards, are promoting the most insulting practices about the "necessity" of women's "physical charms and desirability". The other face of this is that women's worse-than-ever economic position is exposing them more than ever to sexual use and oppression, including prostitution.

The social cultural impact of "beauty consumerism" is felt primarily by the urban intermediate sections who are now beginning in small numbers to protest against such degradation. The suffering women of the toiling classes are finding vent in sporadic but powerful actions. In particular the struggle of A.P. women against the arrack trade indicates the dramatic potential of women's democratic mobilisation. Moreover, in several of the outstanding working class struggles of recent times, such as Nellimarla, Kanoria, and Chhattisgarh, women's fighting response and participation have been notable.

So militant and receptive to democratic mobilisation are the broad masses of women showing themselves to be, that the ruling classes are having to resort to their pet offering of reservations for women--from in panchayats to parliament; and state governments have been drafting special "policies for women" to mislead them with crooked promises for their betterment.

In this period the women are a potent force for revolution. Revolutionaries must give particular attention to methods for mobilising them not only on their own questions but for various general political and cultural aspects of the mass revolutionary movement. Beyond this, communist revolutionaries must develop the more advanced among them as proletarian forces, striving organisationally to free them from helpless dependence for social security and respectability on established social institutions such as the family.

**Disparities among nationalities, regions, ethnic groups accentuated:** The so-called New Economic Policy is stepping up economic processes which invariably widen the existing disparity and imbalance

between different states and different regions within the states. As a result various nationalities and ethnic groups belonging to the more underdeveloped and neglected parts of the country face the threat of further marginalisation. While the plunder of their natural resources will be accelerated, their claims on the national exchequer are going to be diminished.

**Cultural onslaught:** The imperialist cultural onslaught is aiming blatantly to promote consumerism; generally to obliterate the fact of imperialism by promoting the idea of a neutral "globalisation"; and, even more, to imbue the feeling that the imperialist world of production and culture is metaphysically superior and here to stay. However, it is able to address only a small minority of the populace. The lives of only these sections can leave any scope for imagining that the "fine results" of "globalisation" might trickle down to them, or that imperialism needs them enough to draft them into the grand excitement of a consumerist existence. In any case, such brainwashing can only be short-term. Real contrary experience gradually asserts itself in the form of perceptions and then ideas. But the short-term is helping imperialism to lull the sense of social outrage and the urge to oppose.

The vast majority of the Indian masses living in semi-feudal India are being more effectively targetted by the obscurantist culture drive of the Indian ruling classes. State-promoted "religious" yatras and pilgrimages; the repeated depiction of reactionary serials twisting even mythology to suit present ruling class purposes; the promotion, in various ways, of the notion of "natural masters" and the propriety of meek obedience and superstition: These are all part of this anti-people cultural attack.

Communist revolutionaries can counter it by urgently incorporating the cultural task in their work among people and filling this gap in the lives of people.

## [6.] Situation of Struggle and Present Tasks in Relation to the Basic Classes

1. **Working class:** In these past few years of liberalisation workers have shown their capacity to resist their tormentors and begin to challenge them politically. The State has had to implement its exit policy, the hire and fire policy, and the contractualisation of labour by the *back door*, afraid to openly legislate their anti-worker plot. Meanwhile the established readerships are more than ever playing a class-collaborationist role, advising managements and rulers what they should or should not do in order to "prevent trouble". In their militant struggles workers have sought new readerships, rejecting or dragging along the existing economist-reformist-opportunist readerships, which reflects their strong urge for new genuine readerships.

Though the need for solidarity is pressing upon it, the working class is still fragmented in its organisation. In its immediate defensive fight it faces the imperialists, the compradors and the lackey Indian State who are concerted and unified in their attack on it. Besides, when lacking the revolutionary alternative, it is affected by the communal-caste politics and schisms systematically created by the rulers over the past two and a half decades, and tends to be parochial. Palpably feeling its own material insecurity today it has little immediate memory of the alternative to that: viz, successfully concluded massive actions where its own forces have been left stronger and better organised than before. Its legal protective frame from past decades, however meagre it may have been, is fast being dismantled by the State, what to speak of any other right exercised by custom or tradition by workers in some areas. Under brute attack from ruling class fascistic gangs and State forces, it has no organised volunteers to defend itself. It is, besides, under severe ideological-cultural attack. It is being fed, through all mass media, the most feudal reactionary culture and mythology. And, about the current affairs, it is being told that the changes damaging its life are "necessary for progress".

Therefore, the working class *needs* the revolutionary alternative--to know, and consciously assert, "Not only is this not necessary, but it is anti-people and anti-national: and therefore criminal; that this attack has the intent to depredate and abandon, as parasitic usurers do". The Indian working class today has nothing to lose but its devastation. And it has disappearing little left to turn to in the villages for even short-term security.

Thus the urgent need of workers is a political understanding of their plight and a political orientation to their struggles. It is their urgent need to band together on the broadest scale in solidarity, to confront the

infamous combine of the State, the ruling capitalists and their managements, and the imperialists. To achieve this broad spectrum of bonding, and to go beyond their desperate resistance to a conscious hopeful building of organisation, they need to understand not only their own unit's/section's condition and the cause of it, but their class condition and the cause of it, their country's condition (including the peasantry's and the intermediate classes') and the cause of it, and the condition of countries and working people around the world and the reasons for that. These then are urgent tasks in relation to them which have to be appropriately met through forums variously suited to the workers' sectional needs.

The organisation of workers' families at the areas of their stay is a profound need of the working class movement, neglected at the cost of the strength and depth of the movement. For a major factor in favour of the working class (which the ruling classes too have been noting with anxiety and trying to check through token concessions and reservations) is the democratic force of women. Again and again in recent years, these have shown an outstanding capacity for militancy, spontaneous action, and organised forms of democratic functioning. Properly harnessed, the working class women will be a fighting contingent for their class.

Lastly, and crucially for its future, the working class in India has the revolutionary forces in its midst. No doubt, communists themselves are a very small force in relation to the needs of the objective situation. And, though steeled with having withstood ideological-political upheavals and repression from enemy forces, have been limited in struggle to certain pockets. They have yet to extend their influence over the broad sections of the working class. They have yet to firmly establish consistent mass-political leadership and orientation of their work within the unions. Most significantly, they have yet to effectively function the mass political centres of working class movement and struggle. Still the operation of such a dependable leading core in such a favourable objective situation cannot but infuse revolutionary purpose and tenacity into the working class movement.

To extend revolutionary influence over broad sections of workers in the country, given the smallness of revolutionary forces, among other things workers' newspapers need to be suitably planned for the section in mind and the planned nature and level of influence immediately sought. Revolutionary work effectively done in a limited area can be most widely projected in this manner. Such work would be part of an integrated plan to build up mass political centres of working class movement (going beyond the existing trade union frameworks). One realisation that must address all revolutionary conduct today is the imperative need for workers to *resist* the onslaught on them in whichever way they can. All revolutionary political and mass conduct needs to convey the urgency of immediate resistance and then a step-by-step collective movement leading towards a new life and order. It needs to convey that defeat *is* everyday life without resistance. That at issue is not just the present onslaught: that the very system is decaying.

In all this, while the level of resistance and the form of the fight must take into account the present level of organisation and preparedness of workers (always aiming to carry it to a higher more consolidated level), the projection of the revolutionary alternative should be a running thread. Since the masses of people objectively need the revolutionary alternative for their process of liberation, the only reason why the revolutionary message may not be properly grasped or received would be inappropriateness of form or method in imparting. Our effort should therefore be to seek out innovative forms suitable for people's reception.

Equally important it is for revolutionaries and the proletarian leaders of the working class to have an idea of what may be expected by way of positive results in this period. While aiming to achieve, in this period, a fighting well-knit organisation at work-places and bastees and several solidarity fronts for working class show of force and action, it should be clear that, although even small victories (political or economic) will be useful, stable economic victories can not be expected at the end of particular struggles. Rather, a more consolidated democratically functioning organisation will be the measure of stable victory. It should be emphasised that every struggle is a rung in the ladder of movement, and the stability of the ladder and the strength of the rung is what needs to be ensured.

The organised sector workforce is on the wane. In any case for a long period (partly owing to opportunist union readerships and partly because it was on relatively affluent secure islands in a sea of

insecure unorganised labour force) it was accustomed to defend only its own rights, mostly legally. The scope for winning demands on the basis of litigation or legislation has been dramatically reduced in recent years. The organised sector's plight today is driving it to relatively more militant action and to seek solidarity from others. However, it needs to understand how its lot is intertwined with that of unorganised labour--indeed always has been.

And both the organised sector workers and the more staunchly militant unorganised sector workers ever more under pressure today, need to understand how along with them the landless, poor and middle peasants are equal sufferers from and fighters against this onslaught. In all their struggle steps and orientation there should be the constant concrete reminder of the distressful situation of the peasantry. How the peasantry's distress underpins the distress of the working class. How the attack on it is already under way, and will be engulfing in a few years. The urgent need is to educate and organise the peasantry into an agrarian revolutionary movement and put up a dam of this class alliance. All revolutionary organising and struggle activity among workers must have this basic tactical orientation. (No doubt, these efforts will show quicker fruit where there is an agrarian revolutionary movement nearby, or where the workers hail from areas of such movement.)

Distinctive features for working class work in this period are: struggle-basis; schooling in democracy through struggle committees; reliance on the more oppressed and fighting sections; constant building of solidarity with other workers and employees' sections; massive show of strength whenever possible without weakening the frame of the proletarian class orientation; class cultural activity in the course of struggle; a reliable propaganda mechanism (including workers' newspapers); consciously undertaking to set up volunteer teams for protection of workers at each step of struggle; infusion of political understanding, particularly concerning the significance of agrarian revolutionary politics. This is a difficult task given the background of the working class politics which has had imposed upon it the worst of trade union politics. So it has to be a conscious struggle and striving to ensure that various steps and turns of the practical movement are imbued by this awareness.

**2. Peasantry:** What we are witnessing today is one more invasion of commercialisation on the feudal base of Indian agriculture. Such commercial invasions (commercial expropriation of the peasantry on the harshest terms) have been afoot since the British colonised India. And have thereafter been carried on in semi-colonial India, more notably under the name of "extensive irrigation projects" and later the "green revolution". Always the inroads are made, changing certain commercial forms of exploitation, *using* the general depression of semi-feudal conditions of the peasantry to suck out commercial profits in pockets, preventing the re-deployment of surplus in increasing the productivity of agriculture.

The consequences are crucial for revolutionaries' plan of work among the peasantry. In the cesspool that is Indian agriculture stand out few and far between islands of commercial agriculture's high success. In these pockets of high commercialisation and mechanisation, there could be changes of form in class composition (worth noting for methods of mobilisation) but the essence of semi-feudal exploitation will remain. In the present period, too, revolutionaries will be faced with and working in two kinds of areas in rural semi-feudal India: areas of commercial agriculture and agro-industry, and far more vast areas of intense feudal oppression and expropriation including the adivasi tracts.

In both kinds of areas, with the NEP, processes of differentiation of the peasantry, and of polarisation of the rural classes, though imperceptibly, have already begun. This will now be accelerated with the WTO. Opening up of Indian agriculture to world trade will lead to wild fluctuations in prices and production patterns, and hence to instability. Instability will be conducive to speculation and depredation in Indian agriculture, as the larger trader, usurer, landlord cash in to rather quick profits. Dispossession of land of the poor and middle peasants will be a direct consequence of this. But, more predictably, the opening up will push down terms of trade of agricultural products in relation to industry. It will also cause sharp absolute increases in the price of foodgrains, other foods, and animal feeds. These price increases will hit the landless and poor peasants worst of all and start the decline of the middle peasantry. The entire process will quicken the differentiation among the peasantry; through dispossession of the poor and even the middle peasantry it will lead to greater concentration of holdings; and in struggle and organisational terms it will result in all-round polarisation. With such differentiation, "general" peasant issues will no longer be so generally applicable to all classes of peasantry. And landlords can no longer pretend that

their interests are the interests of the peasantry at large.

The landlords, many with an eye to the export markets for raw and processed items, support the general thrust of agricultural policy. They are also amenable to foreign collaboration--i.e., they have the position needed to be the local agents of foreign collaborators in agro-industry. The rich peasantry, not confident to export, still has an eye on the internal markets and as such joins the landlord class in wanting policies such as removal of grain zones, removal of the rationing system, etc. though they would still like procurement policy to play the limited role of price support operations. The interests of landless poor and middle peasants are diametrically opposite to all this.

Thus the Sharad Joshi contingent in Maharashtra has exposed its pro-imperialist pro-landlord tilt. And, in Punjab, the splits in the BKU have essentially been on lines of class interest, whatever the leadership's subjective considerations and designs might have been. Future class alliance--as of the poor peasantry with the most oppressed class of agricultural labourers--can be born in this developing situation. In the time ahead, in commercialised areas revolutionaries need to consciously undertake broad-front peasant agitations to expose imperialist deviousness and expropriation of the area concerned, exposing also the wide gamut of imperialist operation in agriculture beggaring the country as a whole. However, as the situation accelerates, the focus of revolutionary activity has to be on organising the poor and middle peasantry on the crisis centred around their possession of land and the myriad hidden semi-feudal expropriations by the bureaucrat landlord combine leading to alienation of peasant land. The necessary alliance of this exploited section with the landless agricultural labour organisation needs to be highlighted by propaganda and practice. These will be painstaking tasks, requiring deep association with the peasant masses, a detailed study of their problems and production relations in specific areas, and a struggle-based building of their organisations.

In the second area of non-commercial cropping and semi-feudal oppression, our tasks remain basically the same, except that dispossession of land now being even more on the cards, the urgency to defend the land ownership of poor and middle peasants and the common assets of the community come on the immediate agenda. Such an agenda has to be backed by self-defence teams of the mass organisations of the peasantry. The question of self-defence, pressingly relevant to the struggling peasantry in all areas, acquires a bigger dimension and urgency in this area. Possible confrontations in such contest require, beyond self-defence teams of mass fronts, the ideological-political preparation of the peasantry on the crucial significance of the agrarian revolutionary programme and agrarian revolutionary movement based on that, together with the significance of its deep links with the working class. (Witnessing the tendency of the tribals to staunchly support those who stand by them, the communist revolutionaries in particular, and anxiously anticipating upsurges in the times to come, the ruling classes and their imperialist masters are unleashing innumerable funded "voluntary" agencies--the NGOs--in the tribal regions, to pre-emptively win the tribals' confidence and corrupt the vocal sections among this crucial community. This lends added urgency to the need to get revolutionary footholds among the tribal masses.)

As the objective conditions in the regions of acute semi-feudal exploitation increasingly thrust to the fore the questions of land alienation and self-defence against reactionary violence, the communist revolutionaries will have to make all the more serious preparations to raise the existing partial struggles in the direction of armed agrarian revolutionary movement.

### **[7.] Pressing Urge for Revolutionary Alternative and Crucial Need to Project It**

Even in the normal course of mass struggle and organisation against semi-feudal semi-colonial forms of exploitation and oppression, revolutionaries constantly attempt to project the underlying class antagonisms in society. By their popular analysis and propaganda, they try to indicate the direction in which struggles must move in order to achieve emancipation. Earlier, it would have required greater effort by, revolutionary forces to project the revolutionary alternative by exposing and establishing the connection between the different problems of various sections of the people and the policies and character of the Indian State. This is because, while the assault on the various sections of toiling people was always palpably economic in content, its political expression would take the form of the law and order machinery of the State repressing the "unruly" resisting masses. A population, accustomed to

routine feudal suppression in day-to-day social life, could thus discern the politics behind the assault and suppression only in the course of prolonged struggles.

However, the present assault is all-round, comprehensive, and massive. It is on all the people, especially the working people. It is more and more clearly not just on their standard of life but on their sources of livelihood (their jobs, and their land) and it is ravaging their total social-cultural existence. It is being brazenly carried out, besides, with all the initiative and might of the different arms of the State the media, the administration, the judiciary, the police and the military forces. Whole classes and masses of people are being pushed about in a manner that is forcefully exposing for them the uselessness of their opportunist economist mass organisation readerships and the ineffectiveness of their associated forms of organisation and struggle. The attendant devastation and chaos make people look for a political explanation and create an urge for a revolutionary alternative. The devastation and chaos also expose ruling class political parties (including the CPI-CPM) and institutions.

Sensing the dangers of such a poignant search by the people, the ruling classes themselves have sought to offer their own solutions. Their system itself in a crisis, and unable to afford any material accommodation to the struggling masses, the ruling classes turn to diversionary methods. These have come in the forms of: shoring up the present system (through judicial activism and slogan-toting NGO functioning); pretending to reform of the present system by offering social justice planks (caste reservations and reservations for women); and suggesting alternatives to the method of rule (especially the sweeping social-cultural changes suggested on the basis of the reactionary ideology and violence of "Hindutva" and the communal fascistic Khalistani movement).

These ruling class responses to the mass urge for political action and revolutionary alternative tend to lose credibility under pressure of the persisting basic assault on the mass of people.

The objective situation has greatly enhanced the receptiveness of the masses for class political explanations and for the mass revolutionary alternative. No dependable resistance and organisation is possible today without the incorporation of such understanding and revolutionary purpose. Which is why the projection of the revolutionary alternative, motivating struggle and organisation, has a central position in all practical work: *That every fight today--whether economic, social, cultural--is a system-related fight is the ideological-political cord that must hold together all struggle-related activity and tasks. That the struggle is to put an alternative truly democratic system in place of the decaying and bankrupt ruling class system, is to be the thrust behind all popular activity in the period ahead. This is because the major achievement in this period will be of political organisational consolidation of the revolutionary masses, even as these will have to defensively fight for their economic base and gain.*

As the developments following the current attack on the people are damaging the credibility of the ruling classes and their representatives who pose as political-organisational leaders of the people, so are they also opening the opportunities for the forces standing for and putting forward the revolutionary alternative to build their credibility in the emerging situation. Wherever communist revolutionaries have worked among people they have been loved and acknowledged by the people as pro-people forces. The gap of credibility they face today is not concerning their political character but concerning their capacity to yield results with their small forces in the grim engulfing situation. The successful projection of the revolutionary alternative will need the convincing projection also of the vehicle of that alternative--viz, the revolutionary movement and the revolutionary organisation.

The organised revolutionary forces are small and weak relative to the demands of the situation. However, they have basically shown themselves to be serious, tenacious, persevering in working among the people, and pursuing with revolutionary perspective. With these basic qualities and by concentrating their forces in specific areas particularly for the agrarian revolutionary movement, they need to show how struggle and practical activity can be imbued with the revolutionary alternative so as to create a stable political base for the operation of all pro-people forces and for the building of a united front for the struggle movement. The forces, however small, must project in the area of their concentration what the alternative can be in all matters pertaining to people--their economic activity, their social and cultural life, and the democratic functioning of their mass organisations. The effectiveness of such effort in these pockets has then to be projected widely in other areas.

At the same time, it should be clear that projection of the revolutionary alternative before the struggling masses is not the same thing as an action-call for the revolutionary alternative. In the attempt to carry the struggling people to a further level of consciousness, the forms of action chosen necessarily depend on the condition of the concerned section of the people, their history and experience of struggle and organisation, and their present preparedness. The projection of the revolutionary alternative, however, does not depend on these. The projection of the alternative is to be undertaken, with initiative, whatever the specific circumstances of struggle, to carry the struggling people *in the direction of* that consciousness. If people fail to respond in any situation to such an initiative, the pertinent question is, in the given context of work and struggle, how else should the projection have been made, in what way could the posture or the representation have been made better. It would be tailism, given the basic revolutionary potential of the situation, to conclude that to attempt itself is wrong because people are failing to be convinced forthwith about the feasibility of the alternative.

The thrust of the whole objective situation has left for the masses of Indian people no other alternative than to fight against their enemies. In the present situation, the communist revolutionaries are the only force who can effectively lead the people in this fight. But coming in the way of fulfilment of this gigantic task is the fact that the communist revolutionary forces are relatively small and disunited. Thus unification of communist revolutionaries as steps towards party reorganisation is a central task. Indeed, communist revolutionaries have just been through a period of polarisation and associated unification. However, at present the basis for further unity is lacking. Communist revolutionaries therefore need to create the basis for further unity through their vigorous implementation of the line. (Such implementation would yield, and benefit from, the further development of the mass revolutionary line. This in turn would lead to further polarisation and fresh basis for further unity.)

Meanwhile, in the course of such a basic pursuit of implementing the communist revolutionary line, communist revolutionaries must seek unity in action with all genuine revolutionary forces, develop unity and cooperation between different sections of struggling masses, guiding them to fight every inch for their material rights and final emancipation, and strive hard to resolve the ideological political differences and to advance principled unity of communist revolutionaries.

To successfully carry out these tasks, the organisation of communist revolutionaries has to rectify and mould itself as the fitting leading instrument of the revolutionary alternative.

Indeed, today, in rectifying and moulding the organisation of revolutionaries as the living force of the revolutionary alternative, the critical questions to ask are so: in which aspects of their work, style and consciousness do they need to rectify themselves, which steps do they need to take in order to emerge as a convincing force before the people for representing the required fundamental change in their life-situation.