

she is entitled to pension for life.

The real income of Parliamentarians

However, only the most naive would believe the above constitutes the income of MPs. The above is actually a trivial portion of their incomes. Their substantial income is actually made from the sale of their votes in Parliament; the questions they raise on behalf of one or the other vested interest; the commissions they earn for brokering deals and for using their contacts to guide plum proposals and projects to their conclusion. A large number of MPs are kept on 'retainer' by one or the other business house, in advance of any matter that concerns that house's interest.

Another big source of earnings for these gentlemen is the MPs Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS), which MPs control. It is officially documented that MPs frequently violate the guidelines for such projects. Since 1993 when the scheme was first announced, the expenditure incurred under this scheme is Rs 7,861 crore. •

Malkangiri

Tribals Rally to Resist Eviction Drive

-- by a correspondent

A many-sided, coordinated assault has been launched by various wings of the Indian State to rob millions of tribals of their land, and turn it over to foreign and corporate interests. The same forest authorities who gaze benignly on the increasing plunder of forest wealth, depredation of the environment and encroachment on forest lands by private commerce have sprung into action against tribal 'encroachments': that is, tribals' own agricultural plots. The ordinarily inert judicial system now moves at breakneck speed to evict tribals from their only means of livelihood. The ministries of mines and of forests are busy issuing circulars and re-drafting the law for the requirements of this massive land grab.

In fact the rulers have for some time been contemplating drastic legal measures to reverse certain partial rights won by the tribals through years of bitter struggle. These rights, reflected in Supreme Court orders and government circulars, can be summed up as follows: The government cannot arbitrarily label adivasis who lack proof of their long-standing cultivation of forest plots as "encroachers" (using some cut-off date) and evict them. If it wishes to evict any tribal from forest land it must be through a process in which tribals must be heard and in which all types of evidence, including the testimony of other villagers, must be admitted.

It was inevitable that these rights (to whatever extent they are implemented) would be under assault under the rule of the New Economic Policy. For the New Economic Policy has among its hallmarks, first, the stagnation or shrinking of the productive economy, as a result of which the ruling classes cannot get rich pickings in the normal course and through ordinary means; and therefore, secondly, the private appropriation of massive assets earlier at least nominally in the public domain (including natural assets such as oil, water and minerals; productive

assets built up from national savings such as public sector units; and financial assets such as people's savings for their old age); and thirdly, in order to bring this about, the rallying of ruling class forces and institutions to wage a fierce assault on all -- admittedly slender -- established rights of the toiling people.

The Supreme Court launched one front of the assault in November 2001, when it ordered the chief secretaries of nine states to report what steps had been taken to clear 'encroachments' on forest land and prevent further encroachment. The Court followed this in June 2002 with the setting up of a Central Empowered Committee (CEC) to examine the reports of the states, and place recommendations before the Court. The CEC, consisting of officials of the ministry of environment and forests (MoEF) as well as so-called environmentalists, did not contain a single representative of the tribals. In May 2002, the MoEF sent a circular to all state governments ordering them to "summarily evict" forest encroachments that are deemed ineligible for regularisation (no due process of law; a forest officer would simply evict at will). A cell was to be constituted to monitor the progress of this mission; forest officers would be armed with powers to try encroachers; and monitoring committees were to be constituted at the state and forest circle level to pursue the matter and fix responsibility. The CEC followed this with an even more aggressive set of recommendations to the Court in June 2002 along broadly the same lines. The CEC set a target of clearing 7.26 lakh hectares in nine states; other estimates put the target at 12.5 lakh hectares, affecting 10 million (one crore) tribals (*Frontline*, October 25, 2002); but virtually all tribals, whether or not they possessed pattas to their land, would be under threat in a situation where the forest officials would possess the power of police, judge and jury against them.

At the same time, it has come to light that the Union ministry of mines has prepared a secret circular to amend Schedule V of the Constitution as well as the Land Acquisition Act to undo the effect of an earlier judgement in the Samata case (*Liberation*, March 2003). The Samata judgement of 1997 rendered leases of land granted to private companies in the scheduled areas (ie the tribal areas) null and void. In order to facilitate the grabbing of the country's mineral resources by such firms as Rio Tinto Zinc (Australia), BHP (Australia), Alcan (Canada), Norsk Hydro (Norway), Meridian (Canada), De Beers (South Africa), Raytheon (USA), and Phelps Dodge (USA), it is necessary to remove the hurdle of the Samata judgement. The Attorney General has given the proposal the green signal.

Naturally, in different states of the country tribals have come into struggle against the new drive of the government. The government has retaliated with firings at several places such as Guwahati (Assam) and Dewas (M.P.). And given the current drive of the rulers, it was natural that the Kerala government reneged on its earlier promises to rehabilitate displaced adivasis. When the organised militant section of the adivasis responded by occupying Muthanga sanctuary, the rulers brutally slaughtered at least six and perhaps more.

The fight against the current assault, then, will be fought not in the courts but on the ground. The fight is directly related to the most basic question of the adivasis -- control over their land and forest. We witness below the preparations for such a fight in one part of Orissa, where conscious forces are at work.

-- The Editor.

The issue comes to the Sangh's attention

In August 2002, the central zone activists of the Malkangiri Zilla Adibasi Sangh (hereafter referred to as MZAS, or the Sangh) came across the land issue of Batri Antal, in Sindhrimal panchayat (18 kms from Malkangiri town). Batri Antal is a village of six to seven hundred people comprising 69 tribal households -- Koyas, Kandhas, and Parajas. Here the officially-promoted Van Suraksha Samitis (VSS -- "Forest Protection Committee") in different villages are being projected as "people's committees". However, it was the Van Suraksha Samiti that had, with the help of a small vocal section of adivasis, captured the land of the poor.

Near Batri Antal is Padmapur village, an old MZAS village (although there had been activity there since the 1980s, there had been a considerable gap in contact in recent years). There the forest department tried to capture the land. In the first attack the forester tried to occupy 100 acres. The villagers unitedly protested under the banner of MZAS, even in the absence of MZAS activists. The villagers successfully foiled the forester's attempt. Although cases were foisted on them, they followed the MZAS line and refused to attend court. The lead was taken by the son of Sivapangi, an old MZAS activist. (In the second conference of MZAS Sivapangi had been elected acting president of the Sangh; later he moved from Padmapur village, but his son remained behind.)

Before the attack on Padmapur, the forest authorities had occupied 63

acres of Batri Antal land, and planted teak -- which is unrelated to the needs of the adivasis. After Padmapur put up resistance, the Batri Antal villagers approached them for advice. The Padmapur villagers advised the Batri Antal villagers to go to the Sangh office at Tarlakota -- 45 km away, a day's walk.

When the Batri Antal villagers came to the Sangh, the Sangh leaders felt it was necessary to investigate, and they visited Batri Antal. However, when they came, at first very few villagers came for the meeting -- in fact, many thought that some other government officers had come.

Women were the first to come forward. A meeting was fixed for September.

There was a division in the village due to the influence of the VSS. Moreover, the forester in this case was a clever, sweet-talking person, who spoke in favour of MZAS. He was practised in making progressive noises. He knew of the Sangh from the days of the Padmagiri movement against the timber mafia (in 1995-96). This forester tried to sabotage the beginnings of the movement in Batri Antal, and beat some villagers who entered the occupied land. These persons complained to the MZAS.

In these days the forester went to the general secretary of the Sangh and tried to ingratiate himself, saying he wanted to pay his dues for a progressive magazine he earlier used to receive. At a point when the general secretary did not notice, the forester left a Rs 500 note before he left, as a way of ingratiating himself.

First attempt at land occupation aborted

A meeting was fixed for the occupation of the land. However, before the meeting was to be held the authorities brought four truckloads of police and encircled the site. On the day when the action had been planned, a person of the area happened to die, and many people who would have come for the action went to the funeral instead. Twenty-five to 30 women did come. The general secretary of MZAS sent a letter to the local organiser camped there, telling him to delay. With only a handful of women present, was the programme to be undertaken or not? The programme was cancelled.

Nevertheless those assembled decided to confront the police, maintaining the morale of the gathering. The women came forward to ask

them, "Why are you here? We are trying to protect our land. What right do you have to be here? We are doing this for our children." The police tried to intimidate them, but when confronted by the women, they could not answer.

In order for the action programme to be impressive, what was needed was a gathering of 200 to 300 bearing all the ploughs of the village. The Sangh set up a camp at Batri Antal. From there the Sangh activists went to gather villagers of the surrounding villages, including Padmapur and Bijaghathi, propagating about the Sangh. During 1996-97 movement against timber smugglers, the movement had extended to Goudguda panchayat. In 1996-97 the Sangh had occupied 20 acres each in Sourismal and Khandigiguda, but had not consolidated the work there. It had also confronted EPRLF cadres in Goudguda panchayat (Satiguda irrigation project) and stopped their smuggling of forest produce. This affected Munusha, Damguda, Sorismal, and Bhimarangini villages.

Because of this background the propaganda of MZAS had immediate effect. By October 11, the Sangh had conducted three big meetings of 1,000-1,500 each in the villages of the area.

Successful occupation

For the action programme itself on October 11, about 500 adivasis gathered, of which more than half were women. Since it was not the ploughing season, ploughing was done only symbolically, and ploughs were used less than tangias and other implements. Meanwhile, between September 15 and October 11 about a truckload of police had been stationed to protect a nursery about three km away. In Bijaghathi, a village of 20 families, where people live off the forest produce, and have no land of their own. People sell charcoal for their livelihood. Although this is destructive of the forest, the Sangh did not immediately ask them to stop producing charcoal. The Sangh's slogan is that the forest belongs to the adivasis -- "*E jungle amar, e jamin amar, sarkar tumhi hati jao!*" (The forest is ours, this land is ours, government get out!) The Sangh convinced the Bijaghathi people that they could slowly shift to other produce such as leaves and bamboo, but that at any rate they should first join the movement.

In this fashion all the affected villages except for Sorismal joined the

movement. During this period, the police were continuously guarding Sorismal, where forcible plantation had been carried out on the land of 12 adivasis. The reason for Sorismal villagers' staying away was, first, the government-sponsored "Van Suraksha Samiti" (VSS) was relatively more powerful here, with about 20-25 persons working as its petty touts; secondly, the authorities had managed to generate fear with their threats.

People stand firm

After the people carried out occupation of the land, the police tried continuously to arrest the local leaders of the movement. The Sangh had already prepared the people for this. The Sangh's policy since the Padmagiri struggle in 1996 has been, first, to resist arrest; to refuse to attend court; finally, if someone is forcibly taken to the court, to fight the case to the extent possible. In Bijaghati on October 24 the wife of the leading activist locally took the lead in protesting this, saying, "how dare you arrest him?", and others joined her. The police had to go back empty-handed.

Seeing the situation, the forester tried a new tactic. He wrote a letter to the general secretary, saying that there is a controversy between the Batri Antal villagers and the VSS, and that the forest authorities wanted a solution to this. He asked that a compromise be arrived at on October 18. This letter was given to the Batri Antal villagers. The general secretary instantly replied in writing on behalf of the Sangh that "We do not recognise the VSS; it is not a people's committee. We don't know when and how it came into existence. We have recovered our land from the government, so now there is no controversy to be settled."

Spreading the issue throughout Malkangiri

Following this, the MZAS drafted a leaflet on Batri Antal, explaining to the people of Malkangiri the importance of the issue. The leaflet gave the full details of the case, and exposed that the VSS was the mechanism to grab the adivasis' land. By this time the Sangh had yet no knowledge of the Supreme Court order. The only hint it had got was that during the arguments with the forester in September, the latter had declared: "The Sangh can do nothing about this. The Supreme Court has ordered this eviction." The Sangh leaders had no further information on this, but they

had the sense that something was afoot.

On November 22 a rally of 3,000 was held in Batri Antal.

Call of the Sangh

Recognising the gravity of the issue, which threatened the land of the adivasis throughout the forest areas, the Sangh decided to widen and raise the level of the propaganda and agitation. It was in this period that the newspapers revealed the Supreme Court's autocratic directive. This news was discussed in the December 5 Sangh executive body meeting. In December the news was propagated by the Sangh through all its pockets in Malkangiri. The newspaper items were photocopied and distributed widely; people further photocopied them to the point of illegibility, as proof of the fact. These facts were then put by the Sangh into the leaflet for the January 9th rally.

The Sangh EC leaflet was titled "For real protection of the forest and in protest against eviction of tribals from the forest, attend the January 9th rally at Malkangiri in response to the call of MZAS", and ran as follows:

"Sisters and brothers:

"On December 5, the forest minister informed the Orissa Assembly that the government was planning to carry out plantation on 5,000 sq km of land in the state, and would be receiving Rs 4,000 crore in foreign aid from Japan for the purpose. At the same time, Rs 56 lakh is to be spent to arm the forest officials with weapons.

"The government claims that of the 58 lakh hectares of forest land only 47,500 hectares is under adivasi possession! The government itself has diverted 2.37 lakh hectares of forest land for non-forest uses.

"In the past, the government had accepted the dividing line of October 25, 1980 for determining who are in legitimate possession of forest lands. Even for those who have occupied plots later, it was agreed that the government should carry out a survey and consider their case. No survey has been carried out to date, so, according to the government's own earlier order, no eviction can be carried out. According to a government circular, if anyone has a podu case against him/her before 1980, that serves as proof of legitimate possession. However, none of the circulars of the gov-

ernment has been implemented. The Orissa forests minister claimed in the Assembly that '264 villages have surveyed and recognised', but this is false; there has been no survey. As the all-India SC/ST commission said correctly, if only 1980 documents are taken into account, virtually no one's rights to land would be recognised.

"The government declaration means that about 5,000 villages, in which 100 lakh adivasis reside, would have to be evicted. Land being used for homes, villages, and agriculture would be seized.

"On the other hand, after 1980 the government has handed over 25,343 hectares of forest land to business houses for non-forest purposes, in violation of the Forest Act. In this region alone, Mangalam Timbers (of the Birlas), NALCO, Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL), Rayagada Paper Mill, and the Indrabati Dam Project have all been allowed to take over forest land.

"Tribals cannot avail of the courts. In 1955 200 villages were evicted for the Macchkund project. When the Chitrakonda project came up in the 1960s, among the evictees were the re-settled Macchkund refugees! Only a handful were rehabilitated from these projects. Lakhs of acres of dense forest were destroyed, and timber looted. Since 90 per cent of the evicted were now homeless, they had to make their home again in the forests wherever they could. Are they to be evicted again?

"It is the outside rulers -- earlier the British Raj and now their successor 'Indian' government -- who are truly invaders of, and encroachers on, the land. These rulers are seizing adivasi land to steal the timber. The adivasis do not destroy the forest wantonly; it is their mother and god, sustaining them in a multitude of ways. For four months of the year, they get their food from the forest. That is why they even sacrifice their lives for the defence of the forests. During the 1995-96 Tulenguda-Padmagiri struggle, the 1997 and 2000 struggles against the Forest Corporation's attempts to cut trees (in the name of clearing "salvage timber"), the 1998 anti-Hamco agitation, and the 1998-99 agitation of tribal tenants defending their timber, the adivasis under the Sangh's banner have fought to defend the forest. It is the forest officials, contractors, traders, industrialists, forest mafia, revenue officials and police officials who loot the forest.

"The secret behind this new attempt to evict the adivasis from the

forest is the vulture eyes of foreign exploiters and their agents to loot precious minerals and timber, and to seize land for the planting of acacias, teak and eucalyptus -- trees of commercial value but of no relevance to the adivasis. In the name of forest protection, then, this is actually destruction of the forest. The Government is like the British colonialists.

"Adivasis must defend every village, every forest. Resistance has already started in Batri Antal. The MZAS was born (then known as the Jan Pal Sangh) out of a movement against eviction in 1977. In Manaskhunda reserved forest 50-60 villages were to be evicted. The struggle gave birth to the Sangh. The villages which resisted eviction then have still not been recognised. Even when refugee settlers were given land, tribals were not given patta for their land.

"We won't obey any of the black laws of the Government. Our last drop of blood will be shed for this. This is our oath."

Role of consolidation

The period before this rally was a period of lull in mass programmes of the Sangh because the focus was placed on consolidation activities. Small struggles were carried out in the consolidation period, but they did not have an impact on the whole organisation. However, the issue the Sangh now took up directly affected all the adivasis, so the programme had a much wider impact.

The effect of the consolidation work of the Sangh in the recent period was to be seen in various ways.

In October 2002, a class had been held in one area for the preparation of a self-defence team. This area had been chosen as the target area for the development of a system of self-defence. About 50 militants attended this class for three days. The question arose: for the members of the force, what would be their engagement in periods when there was no immediate attack on the people? The volunteer team was given certain tasks: for example, to enumerate the persons in the village below the poverty line, the condition of the land in the village, the wages of workers working for contractors and cheating regarding wages. The message was sent out that wherever there is *zoolum*, the volunteer team will fight against it.

Three villages in the Hamco zone formed vahinis beyond expectations. Two more villages did so later.

The following is a small example of the initiative and enterprise shown by the self-defence teams. These teams carried out an action programme. A non-tribal trader had occupied the house of a tribal and was refusing to vacate it. The tribal came to the Sangh with his problem. The Sangh formed a unit in the village and enrolled membership, collecting Rs 10/- as membership fees per head. The team was called. It gheraoed the village. The Sangh unit of the village then dispossessed the non-tribal. The trader went into the police station. The Sangh women comrades in a very capable and disciplined manner vacated the house, making a seizure list of the contents and making an interim arrangement for the womenfolk of the house. When the police came they were stopped by the volunteer team, which told the police, "Our Sangh is holding a vichar (a meeting to decide on an issue). You do not have the Sangh's permission to enter." In this fashion the police was detained for three hours. The whole operation went on for eight hours.

After the operation was complete the police was allowed to enter. By this time the tribal was in possession of the house. All the people told the police, "It's his own house. Why should he come to the police in such a matter; if it were your own house, what would you have done?"

Effects of the consolidation work were also seen in the response of other areas. Even before the decision was taken for the rally, on November 21 itself, the Hamco area sent Rs 500 towards the printing of the leaflet. The Batri Antal people bore the costs of their own leaflet. For this movement they collected Rs 1,100. Posters were printed for Rs 1,000.

Preparations for the rally

On December 5th the Sangh organisers decided to have a volunteer camp in Batri Antal area and a second one in Tandki-Chalanaguda. A leaflet for the purpose was printed by December 20. The camp was to start on January 1st. The maximum mobilisation was to be from this area. From other areas, the target was 1,000 at most. From this area, the minimum target was 5,000 and the maximum 10,000. The target zone was Gaudguda panchayat, Sindhrimal, Birlakhanpur, Tandki, Chalanaguda, Tarlakota panchayats. In the remaining, just propaganda was to be carried out.

In Tandki-Chalanaguda panchayat, a camp was set up at Sukhraguda,

six kms from Malkangiri. Those in charge of this area were told, "you wanted May Day celebrations to be held in Malkangiri; so take it that this is your May Day in Malkangiri and mobilise all your forces."

In the hills and forest areas, where the terrain was difficult, five teams were formed of five to six youths each. These teams worked for eight days consistently. Arrangements were made for food and other such needs.

An office team of five youth was formed to coordinate with Malkangiri and arrange for the mike, the stage, and so on.

Four teams were formed for the mobilisation in Batri Antal area. A cycle rally was staged of 15-20 Batri Antal youth. They went touring the villages for eight days. A women's team toured the nearby villages. And two more teams were formed for other panchayats.

It was decided that Hamco area people would camp at Batri Antal, as would the Birlakhanpur people. The majority would come in processions. In order to do this, it would be necessary to cook at night, eat in the morning, and start by 9 a.m. The march would take three hours.

The opposing forces attempted to make the programme fail, but it was their attempts instead that failed. (i) The CPI organised teams of cyclists in the Hamco area who were collecting money from the people in the name of the Sangh rally. They were caught by the Sangh, and confronted. (ii) In the central zone, Gangadhar Buruda, chairman of Malkangiri panchayat, who was one of the targets of the timber struggle of 1995-96, went from village to village campaigning for his rival programme on the same date as the rally, where he promised meals to attract the people. His programme was a grand failure; no one went. (iii) In the Tapu area the police went round warning the villagers that there was sure to be a firing at the rally site. (iv) Rival political forces in the region too campaigned against attending the rally.

Impressive rally

In fact, the march was executed on time as planned. Preparations were made well; all the participants came in columns, and each column knew where to go, where to camp. The Tandki-Chalanaguda people came half an hour late and set up the stage. Batri Antal people arrived at 12 noon, exactly on time.

The mobilisation was as follows: from Batri Antal area and Hamco

area: 3,000. Tandki-Chalanaguda: one big column of 2,000 and two small columns totalling 500. Tapu area: 100. Gumma: 100. Maribeda: 30. Tarlakota: 300. Nakamadi: 30. The total mobilisation came to 6,500, although newspapers variously reported it as between 6,000 and 10,000. Journalists claimed that there had never been such a big rally in Malkangiri's history. The rally served to focus on the issue of land and forest, and to highlight the implications of the Forest Minister's statement.

All parts of the Sangh were employed, from all the panchayats. The Tapu area people walked 85 kms to reach the site, through the hills -- 50 km in one day (to Chitrakonda 25; then 30 km more to the office; and further). One woman was sweating black sweat from the strain.

Significantly, the whole procession was armed. The processionists in all carried about 1,500 bows, 2,000 tangias, 1,000 lathis, and 1,000 other assorted weapons. Every processionist was carrying a weapon, except for those who were carrying placards. There were young mothers carrying a baby in one arm and a weapon in the other.

Thanks to the work of the volunteer teams, the police were unable to carry out any arrests in Batri Antal area in order to foil the rally. About 200 members of volunteer teams guarded the rally at Batri Antal and police were not allowed to approach the rally, but had to shift to a distance.

The Sangh organisers took care before the rally to train new activists in conducting the rally. The forces rose to the occasion splendidly. The self-organisation of the adivasis emerged, with the members taking care of all aspects.

Volunteers of the Sangh mobilised water from the townfolk, and about 15-20 youth of the town joined in the procession.

Conscious conduct of rally

One sign of the heightened consciousness and organisation of the adivasis was their attitude to the Collector of the district. In earlier years, there would be high expectations among the people at the time of handing over the memorandum to the Collector, and after this had been done, the procession generally dispersed. This time, there was no special interest among the adivasis to know what the Collector had to say, and after the

handing over the procession continued its march.

The speeches made were brief, sharp, and to the point. The full wrath of the adivasis was expressed in the speeches, leaving an impact on the youth of Malkangiri town who had come merely to listen. The guests at the rally were familiar friends of the Sangh from nearby -- Harihar Patro from Koraput and the Nari Sangathan of Kotpad.

Four adivasi women spoke at the rally. Most striking was the speech of a young widow, the mother of two children (including a suckling baby). She spoke first in Koya and then in Desia (a common language of the region containing a mixed vocabulary) fluently, faultlessly, and brimming with emotion and challenge. She said: "We have occupied the land, and we will continue to do so." Addressing the people of a village near Batri Antal, who, for fear of the touts of the Van Suraksha Samiti, had not joined the movement, she said: "People of Sorismal! You cannot live on wood (ie the trees forcibly planted by the forest department on land seized from the adivasis), but on rice and mandya. Why do you fear? If we have any love for our children in our hearts, then we have to do as we are doing."

Another tribal woman said: "The government thinks it can frighten us as it frightened and drove out the people for the Macchkund project. It will not succeed." She spoke with the natural poetry of the masses when she referred to the revolutionaries: "Only if you people (ie the revolutionaries), though you are few, sacrifice for the cause of the people and give your bones for making weapons, can the sun of fortune rise."

In all 20-25 speakers, all tribals, spoke at the rally. The speakers maintained discipline in timing: Hardly two or three of them spoke more than three minutes.

The next day all the main organisers assembled at the Sangh office to review the programme. Extra fund collections from each zone were deposited with the Sangh. Five to seven persons from each zone took part in this meeting -- 25-30 in all. The gathering noted a gap in slogan shouting; there was a shortage of trained slogan shouters for the processions. Some gaps in the stage management and in practical arrangements were noted.

Some important improvements were made regarding finance. Normally for such functions the Sangh's senior activists wind up paying about Rs 12,000 for the stage. But on this occasion, with lower ranks made

arrangements and the stage cost only Rs 4,000. Normally, the Sangh has to make some arrangements for food for the participants. However, this time, because of adequate prior preparation, people brought their own rice, so the Sangh did not have to spend anything on food. The total cost of such a large programme was just Rs 10,000, which was raised from the people. The activists reviewing the programme felt that even more funds could have been raised.

The review meeting concluded that the next programme would be a higher form of struggle. A demand also came up among the participants that the Sangh should hold its traditional May Day rally this year in Malkangiri. •

January 2003.

A Struggle of Landless Labourers of Punjab

-- by a correspondent

In some parts of Punjab, persistent and determined efforts are going on to build a revolutionary mass organisation and movement of landless labourers, despite various limitations of forces and resources. Though the following report of a struggle is more than two years old, it is relevant in the sense that the reader can see some glimpses of how this build-up is going on at the ground level. In particular, it shows the type of painstaking mass approach required to build up such a movement, and how such a mass approach yields rewards.

This report is limited to some selected activities in a particular area (Lambi sub-division of Muktsar district). This is the native area and pet assembly constituency of Parkash Singh Badal, president of Akali Dal, who was chief minister at the time of the concerned struggle. His family is one of the biggest landlord families of Punjab. This area is a part of the region of Punjab where land holdings of the landlords are of the size of hundreds of acres and the contradiction between the feudal landlords and the masses is sharp. This is also the area where the PKMU (Punjab Khet Majdoor Union), an organisation of landless labourers, had successfully fought most of its struggles against feudal oppression and repression. Singhewala-Fatuhiwala are twin (neighbouring) villages which have been the hub of the struggles of PKMU in this area.

Months-long campaign of exposure and struggles

About six months before the assembly elections of February 2002, the Akali-BJP government of the time had announced some so-called welfare schemes for the scheduled castes (S.C.) of the rural areas. These schemes included a free plot from the village common land and a house-building

grant for those S.C. families who either had not houses of their own or had houses too small to accommodate their families; Rs 5,000 as a "shagun" (gift of money traditionally given by the relatives and friends of the family of the bride, on the occasion of her marriage); free electricity up to 100 units; old-age pension and widow pension etc.

In fact, this decision of the Akali-BJP government was a part of the preparations of the ruling Akali-BJP combine for the subsequent assembly elections. As usual, a few selected elements from the villages loyal to the local Akali leaders were to be given these doles and the vast majority of the S.C. landless labour and other sections of the people were to be misled and influenced as voters through the propaganda of the populist measures.

The state committee of PKMU had decided to initiate an exposure and struggle campaign: exposure of the populist motive of the government and struggle against partiality in the implementation of these schemes (wherever they were in fact implemented). It was decided to build a pressure, wherever possible, such that either the Akali leaders and concerned government authorities would be compelled to implement these measures impartially or would face political isolation among the landless labourers.

A meeting of all the activists of PKMU of Muktsar district was called by the state secretary of the union. All the aspects of the campaign were thoroughly discussed. It was discussed and decided that the people should be made to grasp the point of basic importance -- namely that the demands which are going to be represented before the government are not alms we are begging from the government; that we are only asking for our rights in the form of these demands; that our full rights far exceed these petty doles announced by the government. It was decided that basic demands of the landless labourers, particularly the demand of land to the tiller, should be projected, linking them with the partial demands and other current pressing problems to make the people aware of their full rights and of the solution for all their current problems. It was also discussed as to which points of political understanding of the PKMU can be disseminated linking them with the specific demands of the campaign and with the current and concrete situation of the targeted villages and of the district as a whole.

One of the important aspects of the ongoing training of the activists and mass leaders of the PKMU is to inculcate in them the importance of

investigation and study of the concrete objective situation. So during this campaign too, this need was thoroughly discussed and it was decided that teams of activists and mass leaders should conduct systematic investigations to know how many families in a village are genuine claimants to these welfare measures and how many and who had actually got these government doles. Because most of the village and area-level mass leaders are illiterate, it was an uphill task to conduct such a systematic survey in all of the villages where units of PKMU existed. Therefore only a few villages of Lambi area were selected for such investigations, although the propaganda based on the factual findings got from these villages was to be carried out in all areas of this district.

The broad picture that emerged after the investigations was that there were 61 families in the six investigated villages who had no houses of their own and did not get plots under the announced government scheme; there were 48 women in five villages, married after the announced "shagun" scheme who did not get the shagun amount of Rs 5,000 each; there were 99 cases in these villages of people who were genuine claimants to government pensions (35 cases of persons eligible for old age pension, 34 cases for widow's pension and 30 cases for handicapped persons' pension) who did not get any pension. Similarly, far from getting 100 units of free electricity, the supply of 25 families was disconnected for non-payment of bills.

These reports about Lambi area (and also about many other areas of Punjab) were continuously published in the Punjabi, Hindi and English newspapers, sometimes even on their front pages. This concrete informative material made the activists and leaders of the PKMU relatively well prepared for the exposure and propaganda campaign. Even the illiterate activists and mass leaders were visibly more confident while addressing and while confronting the government authorities and ruling class opponents.

A well-planned propaganda campaign was launched in the area. One thousand wall posters and 5,000 leaflets were distributed despite the very poor financial condition of the area committee of PKMU. Mass meetings were organised in 15 villages in which in all 885 landless labourers (men and women) participated. Charters of demands on behalf of every active village unit of PKMU were presented by mass deputations to the concerned government officials. A mass deputation (consisting of three to

four dozen men and women) used to start its march from the village and travel to the place where it would present the charter of demands; and it would conduct mass meetings, rallies and flag marches in each village it passed on the way. So by such flag marches through 26 villages, the politics of PKMU and the 'message' of the campaign were disseminated among about 3,000 landless labourers.

The first phase of this campaign was concluded in the form of a rally and demonstration (on September 12, 2001) at Lambi, the headquarters of the sub-tehsil.

The process of building PKMU is as yet mainly going on at the village and area level. Therefore efforts of the state leadership often remain focussed on the development and training of village and area level teams of mass leaders. One of the important aspects of this training is to make these lower level teams self-reliant in political mass activity, to the possible extent. The state leadership is thus grappling with the difficult task of developing illiterate and diffident union activists into orators. The problem is particularly acute in Muktsar district, because of the relatively higher rate of illiteracy among landless labourers here.

Owing to the shortage of mass leaders at their area level, the Lambi area committee used to take the help of state leaders of PKMU and mass leaders of other fraternal mass organisations during big campaigns and struggles. But during this particular campaign in Lambi area (and other areas of the district) it was decided that the team of mass leaders of the district would not ask for help from the state leaders of PKMU or the mass leaders of any fraternal organisation. They would organise the campaign, including the speeches from the stage, on their own, even though as a result of this decision the sweep of the exposure campaign and the gathering at the concluding rally would be limited to an extent. Of course, the whole campaign was to be organised under the guidance of the state secretary of PKMU, who was in charge of the district. It was decided that even he would play just the role of a mass organiser and would not speak in lower level mass gatherings.

According to this decision, promising speakers were seriously and properly prepared to speak at the stage of the concluding rally. However, a problem was coming in the way. The same persons who were supposed to speak were heavily laden with duties of mobilising the people and leading them to the venue during the same period in which they were

supposed to prepare their speeches. The problem was solved by cutting down their field engagements, even at some cost to the mobilisation for the rally. Four topics were selected and allotted to the four speakers to be. Each speaker was encouraged and helped to grasp his topic to the extent possible in the available short span of time. Apart from the main speaker (the state secretary of the union), all the speakers were members of the team of mass leaders and activists of this district. They collectively projected all the planned ideas successfully. Of course, there was scope to improve their speeches, and it was also noted that they were not given enough time for the preparation and rehearsal of their speeches. Another encouraging feature was that, apart from the planned and prepared speakers, a few other union activists dared to speak on their own, perhaps for the first time in such a gathering. One of them, who came to the rally straight from his work of loading cement-bags, began his speech with the words: "I am very thankful to the PKMU which has given the opportunity to speak from its stage to a person like me, with shabby, soiled and patched clothes..."

Attempt by the rulers to buy over the union leaders

The Akali leaders tried a cunning move to win over and silence the foremost leader of the Lambi area committee, who is a resident of Singhwala-Fatuhiwala villages. They announced a list of 144 families of these villages who were promised residential plots. The name of this leader was calculatedly included in this list, while many other genuine claimants of the villages were left out. To project this decision with fanfare, a "*sangat darshan*" programme was organised in Singhwala-Fatuhiwala villages where the letters of title were to be distributed to the 144 persons included in the list. (The meaning of "*sangat darshan*" is the reverent joy experienced by a devout Sikh glimpsing a Sikh congregation. The term was misused by the then-chief minister Badal for his feudal *darbars* throughout the state. In these *darbars* he would dole out government money in the form of grants to loyal Akali supporters, as an advance payment for the wholesale purchase of votes for the coming assembly elections.) There was a gathering of about 500 persons in this public function presided over by the biggest landlord of the area, Gurdas Singh Badal, who is the brother of the then-chief minister. The deputy commissioner and other officials were also present. A deputation of PKMU

headed by the top leader of Lambi area went to the venue of the *sangat darshan* to present their grievances about the implementation of the declared government schemes and to present a charter of demands. The security men at the entrance tried to keep them out, but seeing that they were bent upon going inside, and worried that they would create a scene if not allowed to do so, grudgingly allowed them to enter.

The PKMU leader requested the person conducting the function to give him time to present his views. When, after repeated requests, he was ignored, he stood up and caught hold of the arm of Gurdas Badal, and asked him angrily, "Why are you not giving me time to address the gathering?" Gurdas Badal, sensing the mood and intent of the PKMU leaders, suddenly announced the termination of the *sangat darshan* programme. The PKMU leader tore up the official title letter given to him for the allotment of a plot, and handed the pieces over to Badal. He began to address the people, saying that the rulers had wanted to shut his mouth by allotting him a plot. The *sangat darshan* programme got disrupted, and the chief guest and government officials made a hasty departure from the venue.

After this incident the union leaders converted this function into a rally of the union. They explained to the people that the tearing up of this title-letter did not mean that they are against taking or demanding anything from the government. However, they wanted to protest and struggle against the selfish and deceptive motive behind the populist content of all these welfare schemes announced by the government. All the people except a few pro-Akali elements were happy and proud of the fact that their leaders could neither be frightened away nor bought over by the mighty and resourceful landlords and the administration.

After the failure of this *sangat darshan* programme, the chief minister himself decided to organise another *sangat darshan* programme. The Akali leaders decided to buy peace by offering 40 more plots to the landless labourers of the twin villages along with an offer to the union leadership that the distribution of these plots would be made with the union's consent.

The union leadership understood well this cunning manoeuvre of their opponents. It was clear that even after the addition of these 40 plots there remained a large number of needy families who would not be able to get

the plots. If the union leaders participated in the distribution of the plots they would definitely face the ire of these needy families deprived of this opportunity of getting the plots. So the union leadership rejected this offer of the Akali leaders. On the day of the *sangat darshan* by the chief minister in the village, there was very heavy deployment of police forces not only around the venue of the function but even in the streets of the village, particularly in the streets of the landless labourers. The union leadership decided to boycott the function. A small incident on that day reflected the spirit of defiance and hatred against the administration. A policeman rushed into the house of a landless labourer and deployed himself on the roof of the house as part of his security duty. (This is the normal practice of policemen when sealing off a locality during the visit of VVIPs even in towns and cities. Even upper class persons do not dare challenge such trespass by the police gangsters.) The owner of the house fearlessly asked the policeman how he dared to enter the house without his permission, and ordered him to get out immediately. The policeman quietly had to leave. This striking example of courage from an ordinary villager, particularly a landless labourer, when hundreds of policemen were present in the village, points to the political effect of PKMU's activities.

Struggle for the occupation of the allotted plots

Allotment of a residential plot to a landless labourer in government records is one thing, but actually getting the plot is quite another. There are numerous examples from throughout Punjab where agricultural labourers could not get the actual ownership of plots allotted to them from the village common lands, and the plots remained forcibly occupied by one or the other influential person. For example, in one village of this area, Mithry, 67 plots allotted to landless labourers have been usurped by a cousin of Parkash Singh Badal, despite high court orders to vacate the land.

After the allotment of 150 plots to the landless labourers of Singhwala-Fatuiwala villages, the task before the PKMU unit was to get actual ownership of these plots. Mass deputations met gram panchayats of both the villages to press them to hand over the allotted plots. About 80-90 people went to see the Block Development Officer (BDO) and held a

protest rally in front of his office. However, nobody took any notice of this demand. Nevertheless, the people were not disappointed. They had fought many successful struggles against the trinity of landlords, police and ruling class politicians. By experience they were of the firm opinion that without a struggle no one was going to give plots to them. But for a militant struggle an extensive mobilisation was required of all the units of the district. This was possible with the help of the state leadership of PKMU.

As mentioned earlier, PKMU was trying to implement the direction of self-reliance by the area-level teams of mass leaders. According to this direction, the Lambi area committee decided to adopt a form of struggle in accordance with their capacity. They decided that the people of the twin villages should be fully mobilised and a demonstration against the sarpanches (the chiefs of the gram panchayats) should be organised as a first step of the struggle. Although a demonstration against bureaucrats and ministers is a common occurrence in towns and cities, a demonstration against a village chief in a village is considered to be a challenge to his feudal pride and authority. The date of the demonstration was announced and hectic mobilisation of the people was initiated. As a result, on the day of and before the time of the demonstration, the panchayat of Singhewala brought the concerned government official to the village and announced that the plots were going to be handed over that day. The question arose for the PKMU leadership whether the announced programme of a demonstration should be cancelled or carried on as planned. After consulting the masses the leadership decided to hold the demonstration, for two reasons. First, the demonstration was to be organised against panchayats of both Singhewala and Fatuhiwala villages, but the announcement of the handing over of plots was made only on behalf of Singhewala village, and the panchayat of the other village did not respond on the issue. So to pressurise the panchayat of the other village, this demonstration was necessary. Secondly, even the panchayat of Singhewala village had only announced the decision to hand over the plots, and had not yet implemented the decision. So the pressure of the struggle had to be maintained to ensure implementation.

When the demonstration of about 150 men and women reached a spot near the house of the sarpanch of Fatuhiwala, the demonstrators came to

know that he was out of town. Then again it was discussed whether or not the demonstration should be taken to the house of the Singhewala. One view was that as he had handed over 67 allotted plots to the respective persons, a demonstration should not be taken to his house. Rather, some persons, on behalf of the union, should go to his house to convey that by handing over 67 plots he had done the needful, but it was not sufficient; he should similarly give plots to the other needy families as well. The other view was that the full demonstration should be taken to his house, shouting slogans to press him to give plots to the remaining needy families. The latter view prevailed and the demonstration was taken to his house. He was already in a provoked state of mind because he had had to hastily hand over the plots on that day against his will and under the pressure of the struggle by PKMU. Seeing the demonstrators in front of his house he got infuriated and burst out, "Now when the plots have already been given, why do you play this dirty game of slogan-shouting with a rowdy crowd?" This arrogant and crude behaviour by the sarpanch inflamed the anger of the already agitated demonstrators. But for the capable handling of the situation by the leadership, the raised tempers on both sides were sure to turn into a physical clash.

After this incident the sarpanch instigated the 67 landless families who had received plots against the PKMU leadership, saying, "These union leaders want your ownership of plots to be cancelled under the pretext of discrimination in the distribution of plots. So if you want to protect your plots you must support me." These plot owners got infected with the malicious propaganda of the sarpanch and their support to the union got neutralised for a while, although the union leadership had explained time and again their policy of not opposing the allotment of plots to any landless labour family whether the family qualifies for the allotment or not according to the criteria set by the government. After a concerted campaign of exposure against the sarpanch, the Akali leaders and the administration, the union leadership turned the tide within a few days and again won the support of the overwhelming majority of the landless labourers of this village (including these 67 families). Thus, in effect under the leadership of the PKMU, the people of Singhewala succeeded in getting 67 plots, worth about Rs 20 lakhs.

After this a mass-deputation met the sarpanch of Fatuhiwala and asked

him to hand over the allotted plots. He posed the problem that the piece of village common land which constitutes the allotted plots had been given on rent to a peasant who had sown a wheat crop on it, and that to hand over the plots at that time the panchayat would have to give compensation to the concerned peasant for premature harvesting of the crop, and the panchayat had no money to pay such compensation. Therefore the plots could be handed over just after harvesting the wheat crop. The union leadership decided to wait until the harvesting season.

Second phase of the struggle

The state committee of PKMU had postponed this campaign against the Akali-BJP government for a few months due to some more pressing engagements, ie propaganda and education campaign about the Punjab assembly elections (February 2002), wheat harvesting season, and delegate conference of PKMU.

In July 2002, the state committee had decided to start the second phase of the campaign. By that time the Congress (I) had replaced the Akali-BJP combine, as a ruling party in the last assembly elections. The ruling Congress had promised the same welfare measures in its election manifesto as was announced by the Akali-BJP combine, for the landless labourers. So, now, the second phase of the campaign was against the Congress government to get these promises of the Congress election manifesto implemented.

In Lambi area, the area committee had fought many successful struggles against the repression of local landlords and the police. Therefore the union had established its identity as a force to reckon with while dealing with them. But the officers of the civil administration (the Block Development Officer, the tehsildar, the Deputy Commissioner, etc.) were yet to recognise the PKMU as the representative body of landless labourers. On some occasions, the BDO of Lambi had refused even to meet the deputation of the area committee. So the issue of getting recognition for the PKMU was of top priority.

A Scheduled Caste certificate is a must for every family belonging to these castes even to apply for any concession announced by the government. But it is an uphill task for a landless labourer to get this certificate. Numerous applications from this area had been gathering dust in the of-

fice of the tehsildar for eight to nine months. The area committee had decided to take this as an important issue of struggle along with other demands.

Secondly, although the issue of plots had been solved to a considerable extent in Singhwala-Fatuihala villages, in almost all other villages of the area, this demand was yet to be fulfilled.

Thirdly, there was a serious problem of the lack of any proper latrine facility for the womenfolk of the landless labourer families.

So, for all these and for some other demands being projected by the state committee, the Lambi area committee had decided to initiate an indefinite sit-in before the office of the BDO at Lambi.

Overcoming an acute problem

Acute shortage of funds was a major obstacle in the way of starting the struggle. None of the village units of the PKMU of this area, nor even the area committee, had a single rupee in their funds. The area committee had already collected funds for a district level sit-in called for by the state committee just 12 days before (on September 4, 2002). There was a lean season of labour demand and it was very difficult to once again collect funds from landless labourers just two weeks after the first collection. But the area committee and its followers were determined to overcome this problem.

The first hurdle for the people of Singhwala-Fatuihala villages was to arrange for a vehicle to reach Lambi town, the venue of the sit-in. To solve this problem, the owner of a tempo (a three-wheel vehicle which carries about 15 passengers) offered his free services provided he received just the price of the petrol consumed. But the local unit of the PKMU was not in a position to give even this. A loan of Rs 100 was arranged, and thus the people could travel to Lambi.

Despite such trying conditions, about 125 men and women of four village units of PKMU gathered in front of the office of the BDO Lambi on September 16, 2002. The indefinite sit-in was started on the bare ground (without any *durries* underneath, or any overhead protection from rain or sunshine). There were neither arrangements for the supply of food, nor for latrine facility for the womenfolk.

No sooner did the the landless labourers start their sit-in than the BDO

simply disappeared from his office. Instead of dampening the fighting spirit of the gathering, his disappearance merely whetted it. The participants continued propagation of their demands and expressed their determination to fight throughout the day, through slogan-shouting, songs, speeches and "*siaapa*" by womenfolk (*siaapa* is a ritual of mourning -- hitting one's chest and thighs with both hands along with simultaneously singing death-songs. This mocking ritual is used to express hatred and anger against the targeted person in agitations and struggles.) In the evening, leaving 70-75 persons at the venue, the rest went to various villages to mobilise support. The men-folk at the sit-in suggested to their female comrades to return to their respective villages for the night, but the women rejected this suggestion and insisted on sharing the lot of their male counterparts during the days and nights of the sit-in. As a result of the mobilisation carried out by groups of agitators sent to various villages, the very next day, the number of participant villages rose from four to six, and the number of people from 125 to 250.

The area committee called a meeting of the activists of the area to ensure the continuity and progress of the sit-in. Various problems and requirements of the struggle were discussed. One was to ensure the continuous participation of the masses in the sit-in. The second was to ensure the continuous supply of food. It was decided that for mobilising all types of support for the struggle, the union leaders and activists should visit new villages every day, particularly those where units of the union were formed in the past but could not be maintained.

First of all a group of eight to ten men and women went to the people of all walks of life in Lambi market place and its rural part. Demands of the struggle were explained and projected. All kinds of requirements of the struggle were shared with the people. They urged the people to support the struggle in whatever form they could, from direct participation in the struggle, to the contribution of money, milk, bread, vegetables, cereals, pickle, sugar, tea, tent-*durries*, tarpaulins, utensils, firewood, and permission for the women of the sit-in to use the latrines of people living nearby. The union leadership completely relied on the local people for all kinds of support, from the smallest to the largest. They discussed with the people various practicable forms of support. Demands of the struggle were explained in a lucid and convincing style. For example, the issue of

the caste certificates was projected in this fashion: the upper caste rulers call us various insulting names linked to our "low" castes; we are merely demanding from them that they give us in writing that we belong to "low" castes. But they refuse to give us in writing what they tell us orally (ie they refuse to issue us caste certificates). What greater injustice could there be!

Overwhelming response of the people

The response of this propaganda and mobilisation campaign was far more than expected by the leadership of the PKMU. Landless labourers of Lambi immediately donated three shamianas (overhead covers for a gathering) and *durries* from their community tents. They announced that they would daily provide milk and food, in the morning as well as in the evening, to the gathering. Some families immediately collected and contributed wheat flour. Four hundred rupees in cash was collected on the spot. There was no shortage of houses of landless labourers where the womenfolk at the sit-in could go to use the latrine. Apart from this some men and women from Lambi even participated in the sit-in. When this group of agitators and mobilisers went to the market place of Lambi, they succeeded in collecting Rs 900 as funds. A tea-shop owner contributed ten kilos of milk and a vegetable vendor contributed three kilos of onions.

Similarly, landless labourers of a nearby village (Khudian) where an active unit of PKMU had once existed immediately donated a bag of wheat flour. They also began to participate in the sit-in. About 15 men and women daily participated, and they regularly carried some food with them for the gathering. The local unit of the mass organisation of the landed peasantry, the Bharti Kisan Union, also contributed 40 kilos of wheat grain.

The organisation of the technical workers of the electricity board, Technical Services Union (TSU), and the block committee of the union of registered medical practitioners contributed Rs 1,000, and 30-35 persons also participated in the sit-in on behalf of these organisations. The Rationalist Society of the area also contributed Rs 600. Bags of wheat flour began continuously reaching the venue of the sit-in from landless labourers of various villages of the area.

On the other hand the BDO and other government officials were so

being felt even more strongly now than before. The task of confronting the imperialist onslaught unitedly, to the extent possible, with all types of pro-people forces has become ever more important. Thus the greater pressing need to develop united activities.

However, there are serious problems and hurdles in the way of such united activities. Many sections of communist revolutionaries themselves exhibit tendencies that are harmful for developing united activities. Some concrete manifestations of such tendencies can be mentioned here. (However, this note is limited, as the title states, to some aspects of the question of anti-imperialist united activities, and is not intended as a complete treatment of the question.)

While deciding the commonly agreed frame of understanding for a joint platform, some organisations try to push through elements of their *maximum* understanding, instead of trying seriously to thrash out the *minimum common* understanding for the specific purpose of the joint platform. Then they try to propagate their own views without restraint by misusing the literature and the stage of the joint platform, and thus violate the platform's political discipline. They show, instead, a lack of earnestness in implementing common decisions. There is a lack of seriousness on their part in observing the organisational discipline of the joint platform. There is a lack of sense of accountability on their part to the other participants in the joint platform.

In this situation -- of an urgent and indispensable need of united activities on the one hand and serious hurdles in the way of such activities on the other hand -- some aspects of the problems in building anti-imperialist united activities are being touched on here.

In most cases, when a political mass organisation under the guidance of communist revolutionaries gives a call for mass action on a political issue concerning the imperialist onslaught, the number of participants remains quite limited. This happens primarily because at present the relatively developed layer of the people who understand the nature of imperialist policies, and are interested in opposing them, is thin and only a part of this layer is organised under the leadership of communist revolutionaries. Only this latter part participates in such actions. Quite commonly, such mass actions with their meagre participation inspire neither the communist revolutionary activists who have organised such actions nor the

people participating in those actions. Rather, in some cases, such actions give them the feeling that they are fulfilling a formality and practising a duty-bound routine. Such feeling arises because many sections of revolutionaries are yet at a stage of political development where they assess a political mass action on the basis of the number of participants in it, rather than on the basis of its political content and significance or the planned targetting and execution by the revolutionaries themselves.

Artificially inflating the mobilisation

This gives birth to the wrong practical political thrust of trying to increase the number of participants in such mass actions through non-revolutionary methods of mobilising the people. What is really needed to increase the people's participation in these mass actions with a revolutionary perspective is to make strenuous efforts to *disseminate anti-imperialist consciousness among the struggling people through a difficult and protracted process of political education and propaganda linked to their life-experiences and concrete struggles*. Instead of this process, when some sections of communist revolutionaries seek to push the people into such mass actions merely by dint of the influence of certain mass leaders, or the discipline of the mass organisation under their leadership, they are actually slipping into a non-revolutionary method. By the use of this method, the very basic purpose for which these mass actions are organised gets lost. Consequently, with this kind of mass actions, neither does anti-imperialist consciousness get disseminated among the masses nor does the anti-imperialist organisation of the people get advanced.

Some communist revolutionaries adopt such wrong methods out of impetuosity. The comrades concerned are very eager to make people quickly join the anti-imperialist movement and so they seek the short-cut methods, by-passing the onerous and protracted process of disseminating anti-imperialist consciousness among the masses. This impetuosity expresses itself in the form of commandism (making people do something because the leaders so demand).

(This method, the main concern of which is to inflate the gathering, suits the revisionists and reformists. The purpose behind the political mass actions they organise is not promotion of class consciousness and organisation of the people from the proletarian standpoint. Rather, cer-

tain extraneous vested interests and considerations shape the political mass actions which the revisionists and reformists organise. Therefore, it is not merely that they do not try to develop the political consciousness of the people; rather, it is that such consciousness of the people actually militates against the interests of the revisionists and reformists.)

Tendency to feel nothing can be done single-handed

Another wrong thrust emerges from the fact of the layer of the people participating in anti-imperialist activities being thin. The meagre numbers give birth to a feeling among some sections of communist revolutionaries, that each communist revolutionary organisation as such can do nothing single-handed to confront the rapid and sharp attacks of imperialism. Something can be done only through the anti-imperialist united activities of several communist revolutionary organisations.

There is, of course, an urgent *objective* need for the communist revolutionary forces to come together in united activities at least against the enemy. And this need demands an appropriate response from every communist revolutionary organisation. However, when the thrust of united activities emerges from the feeling that "nothing can be done single-handed" then this thrust becomes a wrong element in any correct response to the objective need. For it creates an overdependence on just united activities of communist revolutionaries and diverts attention from the necessary focus -- namely, what is to be done by each communist revolutionary organisation for the development of the anti-imperialist consciousness and movement.

Why is this feeling, that "nothing can be done by our organisation single-handed to confront imperialist onslaught" present among many sections of communist revolutionaries? Why are communist revolutionaries becoming over-dependent on their united activities? We need to go into the meaning of such expressions as "we can do nothing" or "can do something". We need to go into concretely what is to be done by communist revolutionaries for the development of the anti-imperialist movement.

Need to expand the relatively developed layer

The most important task of communist revolutionaries concerning the development of the anti-imperialist movement is to *expand the relatively*

developed layer (democratic revolutionary layer) of the people which is the core of the anti-imperialist mass movement. This is the layer of people which is serving as the main base of political mass actions now organised by communist revolutionaries. It is the existing deficit in this base that is creating the feeling that "nothing can be done single-handed" and the resultant thrust towards overdependence on united activities.

There are two major forms of the anti-imperialist mass activities which the communist revolutionaries undertake to expand this relatively developed layer of the people.

The **main form** is that when various sections of the people are on the move with their pressing class demands communist revolutionaries strive to make each section of the people realise how the imperialist policies are becoming hurdles in the fulfilment of every specific demand of that section and why each section of the people will have to struggle against imperialist policies to get its demands fulfilled. Thus communist revolutionaries constantly propagate anti-imperialist policies, in a partial and specific form, among various sections of the people.

The **second form** is that of organising special mass campaigns, from time to time, on pressing anti-imperialist political issues. During these campaigns communist revolutionaries propagate among all sections of the people, simultaneously, how the imperialist policy or set of policies underlying the concerned political issue is detrimental to the interests of all sections of the people; therefore, all sections of the people need to struggle unitedly against imperialism. In this way, a general and more comprehensive form of anti-imperialist politics is disseminated among the people to draw them into the anti-imperialist movement.

The relatively developed layer of the people who constitute the core of the anti-imperialist movement cannot be expanded without integrating the first form and the second form of anti-imperialist mass activities. If the strenuous work of anti-imperialist propaganda in the first form is not done constantly, then the common people cannot comprehend the general and comprehensive anti-imperialist propaganda done during the special campaigns organised from time to time on anti-imperialist political issues. Consequently people cannot be adequately motivated for and made interested in such campaigns. If the second form of activity is not done then the anti-imperialist consciousness of the people cannot be developed

beyond a partial and limited extent. The urge for solidarity among various classes and sections of the people cannot be developed. Consequently, the base of the anti-imperialist movement cannot be strengthened and expanded.

Now, if a communist revolutionary organisation is not doing considerable amount of anti-imperialist work in the first form, then the resultant gap in its work-field can in no way be filled through united activities with many communist revolutionary organisations. And the resultant gap in the foundation-laying work of developing anti-imperialist *consciousness* among the people reflects in the fact of almost the same small numbers participating again and again in the anti-imperialist activities organised by that organisation. The numerical growth of this layer of people remains stunted, and the feeling arises that a communist revolutionary organisation "can do nothing single-handed". Even when a number of such communist revolutionary organisations unitedly organise anti-imperialist activities, and the number of participants becomes somewhat larger, the process of expansion of the relatively developed layer of the people still does not go forward.

(The above observation does not mean that a mass action on an anti-imperialist political issue by a small number of people is futile. When imperialist powers or pro-imperialist international institutions take decisions or steps of far-reaching consequences but the targeted broad sections of the people have not yet begun to feel the pinch of such decisions or steps, a wake-up cry by even a small number has its political significance. But this significance fructifies only when the action is done *as a link* in the larger process of disseminating anti-imperialist consciousness, or as an initiating act.)

Thus the communist revolutionaries who feel that they, being short of capacity, can do nothing single-handed to confront imperialist onslaught, overlook the reality that those who on their own can do nothing in the building of anti-imperialist cannot collectively do anything of consequence, either, through united activities.

So, communist revolutionaries should start by realising that the most important task for developing the anti-imperialist movement is to expand the democratic revolutionary layer of the people which is the core of this movement.

Efforts needed to reach sections opposing neo-colonial domination

There is another important aspect of united activities against imperialism, which calls for greater consideration today than in the past. That aspect concerns the efforts required on the part of the core of the anti-imperialist movement to reach out, through united activities, to sections of the people who do not belong to the democratic revolutionary movement but are interested in opposing neo-colonial domination.

The imperialist colonialists gave a serious blow to the national independence movement of India by their neo-colonial policy. For a long period post-1947, the deception perpetrated in the form of formal independence by the British colonialists and Indian comprador classes caused disorientation in the overwhelming part of the national independence movement; being an anti-neo-colonialist and being communist was considered to be almost the same thing. Expressions regarding neo-colonialism and the comprador character of ruling classes exclusively belonged to the language of communist revolutionaries in India. But as the imperialist exploitation and oppression of India went on increasing, even the relatively conscious sections of the people outside the democratic revolutionary movement increasingly felt the pinch of the neo-colonialism.

In the current period of implementation of the neo-colonialist globalisation policies in India, imperialist exploitation and oppression has taken more pervasive and cruder forms. Consequently, anti-imperialist resentment is growing fast among the above-mentioned sections of the people too. Now, in these circles one frequently hears expressions such as "the country is mortgaged" and "instead of one East India Company many East India Companies have come", etc. (The pent-up anti-imperialist resentment among these sections could be sensed in their reaction to the news of the suicidal attacks the WTC and the Pentagon -- which they saw as attacks on the prominent symbols of the might of imperialism.)

Thus the development of neo-colonialist globalisation has generated or revived a resentful layer of people outside the democratic revolutionary movement consisting of literate intermediate sections with anti-imperialist consciousness, as well as other patriotic elements. This layer can be linked up, through united activities, with the anti-imperialist revolutionary movement.

The basic thrust of anti-imperialist activities of communist revolu-

tionaries would of course be to integrate these activities with the actual class struggles of workers and peasants. Beyond that, and without losing this basic thrust, communist revolutionaries would make serious efforts, and seek out suitable forms, to facilitate the participation in these activities of other democratic and patriotic sections of society.

A tendency is apparent in many sections of communist revolutionaries to go for a set pattern of united activities. When they feel that they are short of capacity to confront the accelerating imperialist attacks, their mind turns to only the other communist revolutionary organisations for united activities against imperialism. They don't think with the same intensity about the above-mentioned sections of the people -- the building of a struggle-unity with whom is necessary for the growth of the anti-imperialist movement.

If these sections of the people don't participate in the anti-imperialist mass action organised under the guidance of communist revolutionaries, then the communist revolutionaries should search for the reasons for that. In this connection communist revolutionaries must examine where the inadequacies lie in their political approach or method of work.

The task of bringing these sections of people into the fold of anti-imperialist movement is not that easy. It requires tireless efforts and removal of many kinds of inadequacies and solving of problems. Elements of a sectarian approach, and lack of flexibility in the conduct of many sections of communist revolutionaries, are coming up as a major hurdle in this matter. Mainly for this reason, the required initiatives are not being taken and active efforts are not being made to the extent possible for anti-imperialist united activities with these sections of the people.

There would be many variations in the anti-imperialism of democratic revolutionary forces and the anti-imperialism of the above mentioned sections of the people. The anti-imperialism of the people of various classes is stamped with their own respective class angles and class interests. Therefore the anti-imperialism of the above-mentioned sections cannot be so comprehensive, determined and consistent as that of democratic revolutionary forces. So the political content of the joint platform which also carries the sections of people unrelated to the democratic revolutionary movement will obviously be less than the full content of democratic revolutionary politics.

Thus it is necessary that united activities with these sections of the people be in harmony with the content of their anti-imperialist understanding and with their will. No doubt communist revolutionaries are to establish their leadership over such sections of the people and help them raise the level of their anti-imperialism. But they cannot behave with these sections, in the very beginning of their interaction with them, as their established leaders. Beginning from a relation of equality, mutual cooperation, and learning from each other, communist revolutionaries have to carry these sections along a process of shared practice so that on the basis of their concrete experience they on their own accept the full scope of democratic revolutionary politics. Communist revolutionaries should remain alert, during the united activities, against the possibility of imposing a higher content of anti-imperialist politics, higher level of their activity corresponding to their own level of consciousness, on such sections of the people. This may happen because of haste by communist revolutionaries to exercise their leadership over the people. It may also arise out of the inability of communist revolutionaries to read an actual disagreement of a section of the people underlying their formal agreement or silence on certain decisions.

Identity of mass platform distinct from that of party organisation

Many sections of communist revolutionaries get anxious that the image of their party-organisation will be negatively affected if the content of anti-imperialist politics projected by any joint platform in which their activists are included is deficient. This is so because they have the notion that their party-organisation is directly accountable for the performance of the joint platform. This wrong notion pushes them towards imposing a higher political content or higher level of activities onto the joint platform.* In thinking and doing so they overlook the reality that every platform/organisation has its own distinct identity. The question of image or accountability regarding politics and performance, is related to the particular identity of a platform/organisation which itself has the authority

*At the same time, while allowing the platform to project a lower level of political content, care should be taken that its politics is not *contradictory* to democratic revolutionary politics, that it does not in fact breed illusions or become an obstacle to achieving a higher political consciousness.

to decide and the duty to execute matters. The mere fact of some party activists' participation, however significant, in a joint platform for united actions does not shift the accountability on to the party-organisation. This is so because communist revolutionaries don't claim there the identity of party representatives but the identity of the non-party organisation in which they are working. So, the wrong notion, which arises out of confusing the distinct identities of party-organisation and the united activity platform, amounts to considering that platform to be a dummy. The communist revolutionaries should get anxious instead if the content of the anti-imperialist politics projected by their party-organisation keeps its anti-imperialist activities limited to certain non-party platforms (which by their very nature cannot give full expression to its anti-imperialism) and if the party organisation does no independent work for that purpose (for example through literature, propaganda material and study circles of democratic revolutionary platforms, or of the underground political organisation itself.). Because in that case the anti-imperialist role of their party-organisation objectively would remain within the reformist confines.

As the above-mentioned sections of the people (who are unrelated to the democratic revolutionary movement but are interested in opposing neo-colonial globalisation) are drawn into anti-imperialist united activities, not only does the anti-imperialist movement become broad-based but the presence of this section in it also acts as a positive factor in tackling certain persisting problems among communist revolutionary organisations regarding united activities.

The problem of irresponsible and undemocratic conduct of certain communist revolutionary trends is in the real sense a problem of their ideological-political orientation. It is necessary and appropriate to struggle against the concrete manifestations of this wrong orientation in the sphere of united activities. Here the point is to seek the involvement in this struggle of not only communist revolutionary ranks and the advanced elements in the democratic revolutionary movement but of the above-mentioned sections as well. The role of these sections in this struggle can be particularly effective in some respects. These sections are not bound to any communist revolutionary organisation. In case communist revolutionaries with the wrong orientation do not mend their conduct, they will soon have to

face isolation from these sections of the people. And this possibility of isolation can act as a pressure.

At the same time these sections, by virtue of their class background, their wide reading, and their other talents, may be more difficult to tackle when they are swayed by some wrong understanding. Their assertiveness would be tempered neither by the appreciation of the more scientific and analytic approach of the communist revolutionaries, nor by the collective discipline of any mass organisation. This assertiveness out of proportion to actual grasp can pose a threat to the functioning of the platform, unless skillfully handled.

About the Organisational Set-Up for United Activities

Many problems faced during united activities are linked with the structure and functional norms of the organisational set-up for united activities. Any organisational set-up is designed according to the purpose or needs of the political activities which are to be conducted under that set-up. United activities are acts of mutual cooperation based on the actual convergence of views and hence on struggle-unity among the organisations participating in united activities. So the discipline of the common platform can be observed only if that discipline is determined on the basis of the real struggle-unity among the participating organisations.

Often when some communist revolutionary organisations try to determine their minimum common understanding for a political issue by relying on the general statements of their respective political positions, they may perceive a higher degree of political agreement with one another. On this basis a common platform of higher political content or purpose is set up which requires a political and organisational discipline too of a higher level. However, in the course of united activities from this platform many variations and differences crop up among them even on relatively minor issues. The agreed common understanding proves of no avail in resolving such mutual wranglings. Violations of the discipline of the platform are natural to this situation. In fact, the prevalence of these variations, differences, and violations indicates that the common platform has been formed only on the basis of a formal political agreement and not on the basis of an actually achieved struggle-unity on the concerned political issue. Agree-

ment on broad views of a political issue is not sufficient to determine real struggle-unity among the participants on that issue. For that purpose, it is also necessary to have an idea of their common understanding on the *applied* version of those views and of their *orientational* compatibility in practice.

To one extent or the other, the practice of mutual cooperation and struggle-unity among various communist revolutionary organisations goes on with its positive and negative features. The experience of this practice at any point of time can indicate to what extent there can be a real struggle-unity for united activity on any political issue between the concerned communist revolutionary organisations, and on that basis what level of political content the united activities can undertake. The political content and the organisational discipline of the common platform should be determined on the basis of those experiences. It cannot be determined on the basis of formal political agreement between the concerned organisations, nor merely under compulsion of the objective need for united action.

Real struggle-unity among several organisations participating in united activities can be at various levels. Therefore it is not necessary to form only a single common platform for united activities of all those organisations. Where the formal political agreement among certain communist revolutionary organisations may be of a higher level but real struggle-unity in orientation is of a lower level, the structure of the common platform should be relatively loose. Its discipline should be of a lower level so that the constituent organisations may have ample scope for carrying on such activities according to their initiative and disposition which would promote the common platform and the united activities in suitable forms. Along with this kind of common platform, organisations having a real struggle-unity of a relatively higher level can form separate platforms with richer political content for carrying out united activities of a higher level.

Whether the platform for united activities should be of a temporary nature or a regular one can be determined according to the type of the issues of united activities. If the type of the issues is such as gets projected off and on after long intervals of time, then a temporary and issue-specific platform should be formed. On the other hand if the issues are such as come up quite often then a regular platform is required. If a

regular platform is formed for issues which come to the fore only after long intervals of time then that platform is bound to get dissipated or be ineffective.

In the present situation of rampant imperialist 'globalisation', the organising of anti-imperialist mass actions is no more an occasional need but a need crying to be met quite often. Therefore this situation demands a regular anti-imperialist platform. However, the subjective condition of most of the communist revolutionary organisations is such that they are not in a position to form a viable anti-imperialist platform on their own. In that condition, they think of attempting to form such a platform together. Here again they must understand the reality that if a communist revolutionary organisation is unable to form an anti-imperialist platform, however small, in its own field of work then even a number of such organisations together cannot form such a platform. This is so because the essential requirement for a communist revolutionary organisation to form an anti-imperialist platform on its own, or effectively to contribute to any such united attempt, is similar in both cases.

Nature of cadre force to be deployed

In both cases certain cadre force should be specifically deployed on this front. Moreover, that cadre-force should have a certain amount of skill specifically needed on this front. This is so because, in the process of raising a viable anti-imperialist platform, sections of the people unrelated to democratic revolutionary movement but having some level of anti-imperialist consciousness, would have to be dealt with. These sections may not be inclined to accept communist revolutionary activists as their leaders and they would have differing political views and a diluted kind of anti-imperialism. Communist revolutionary activists on this front must be relatively more flexible and imaginative, while themselves having a solid grasp of the revolutionary orientation. They should have the ability to innovate appropriate forms and ways of developing struggle-unity and cooperation among diverse sections of people opposed to imperialism.

If a communist revolutionary organisation is not in a position yet to form a viable anti-imperialist platform or to play an effective role by joining any such platform formed by some other communist revolutionary organisation, it does not at all mean that it can presently do nothing in

this respect. Such an organisation should seriously take up the task of making preparation for the formation of a regular anti-imperialist platform. Making preparations means it should initiate the process of developing and training a cadre-force (however small it may be) for working on the anti-imperialist front. Meanwhile, any genuine anti-imperialist platform formed by other organisations should be supported from outside to the possible extent. Along with that it should try to advance in the direction of linking up somehow its anti-imperialist activities with those of other communist revolutionary organisations and particularly with the anti-imperialist activities of sections of people who are not related to the democratic revolutionary movement. •

May 30, 2002.

Statement on Our Approach on the Communist International Organisation

1. Workers of all lands cannot unite effectively to strike at imperialism in their own countries without their vanguard, the communist parties of their countries, practising proletarian internationalism. Also, to strike decisively on the world scale at imperialism they need international communist unity and concerted action of the communist parties. These two tasks flow from the principle that the proletariat within each country fulfils its internationalist duty by carrying out revolution there as part of the world proletarian revolution.
2. The two tasks -- of carrying out revolution in one's own country and of striking at imperialism worldwide -- are distinct though inter-related. Both tasks make up the whole task of world revolution. The Third International (the Communist International, Comintern, CI, as it is variously called), in its specific historical context, had taken on both tasks. The CI, as the International Communist Party of which the individual communist parties were sections, not only worked to establish communist parties in various countries, but also guided/led the individual communist parties; secondly, through its sections, it gathered forces against imperialism worldwide. It dissolved itself in 1943 when it found that its form was no longer suitable for the first task and came in the way for the second.
3. Still there remains the strategic need for a communist international organisation i.e. a proletarian internationalist body with the credibility and authority to unite and unleash the world revolutionary forces for the onslaught against imperialism. As the revolutionary activity of the international proletariat becomes more concerted, so the elements of demo-

cratic centralism in its international organism would become more pronounced.

4. In the perspective of this strategic need, even after the CI was dissolved in 1943, genuine communist parties and forces have continued to make serious efforts to integrate proletarian internationalism with their own revolutionary practice and to develop international communist unity. The basis was created for much richer practice of proletarian internationalism with the great advance of liberation struggles and with the communist forces in several of these countries successfully solving important political problems in the path of their revolutions and so being able to mobilise and bring under their influence/hegemony the broadest possible numbers of freedom-loving people and revolutionary working classes. The most outstanding example of this was the victorious Chinese revolution, under the leadership of the CPC led by Mao. First, the CPC was able to generalise its revolutionary experience for world revolution, especially through the theory and practice of protracted people's war around the axis of the agrarian revolutionary programme and movement. Later, it was able to save and lead the world revolutionary camp effectively against the danger of modern revisionism of Khrushchev with the formulation, in 1963, of the General Line of the International Communist Movement (ICM). It was the rich experience of the Chinese revolution that provided the cornerstone for this endeavour.

5. Since the change of colour of the CPC and the overthrow of proletarian power in China in 1976, there has been a void in the world leadership of the ICM. There is now also no socialist base in the world. Efforts have been going on for some years by some communist parties to form another Communist International; but these have been unable to make significant headway, indicating a problem in the nature and ambitions of the efforts themselves. A broad look-back into the history and experience of the earlier Internationals gives clues as to the direction in which these efforts need to be made.

6. The First International (the International Working Men's Association, 1864-72) under Marx's leadership, played the role of disseminating the

working class ideology and demolishing alien trends (in particular anarchism led by Bakunin); initiating the formation of proletarian political parties; instilling the concept and practice of proletarian internationalism; and bringing the international proletariat forward as a force in influencing world development -- a force to which the future belonged. When it had fulfilled its historic task, it was dissolved by Marx as it no longer corresponded to the needs of the next historic step in this process.

Under the Second International (1889-1914) the proletarian ideology was integrated into the mass movement of the working class. A great broadening of the proletarian movement worldwide was witnessed in this period, though "at the cost of a temporary drop in its revolutionary level" (Lenin). After it degenerated into opportunism, the Second International was repudiated under the leadership of Lenin.

The Third International (1919-1943), the Communist International (Comintern or CI), was set up, and its organisational principles as the Party of all communist parties were laid down, when revolution in Europe was imminent. The CI thus took upon itself the task of organising the revolution in Europe. Though the immediate prospect of revolution in Europe receded, the CI's signal achievements stand, with the rich experience of the Russian revolution as its bedrock: its defence of Marxism against revisionism (in particular of the degenerated Second International); the initiating of Leninist parties throughout the world; the clarion call for the liberation of colonial/semi-colonial countries; and the extension of political and material assistance to revolutionary and anti-fascist movements worldwide. The USSR afforded the main material base for such assistance. The Communist International was dissolved in 1943 during the internationalist leadership of Stalin and the organisational stewardship of Dimitrov, with a resolution of the Executive Committee of the CI (the ECCI). The resolution while recognising the ideological, political, as well as organisational role played by the CI stated that in the rapidly developing situation with Hitlerite fascism, and given the complexity of the political situation in each country with respect to the anti-fascist divide, the CI was no longer an adequate tool for guidance. Rather it could constrict the development of the local communist parties for unleashing the full range of anti-fascist and pro-people forces in their own territories. It recommended, in the place of the CI, systems of mutual exchange

as independent parties while underpinning the role of proletarian internationalism in the conduct of each communist party.

The USSR being the single great and successful socialist revolution under proletarian leadership in the world, the CPSU continued to be regarded as the leader of the ICM.

7. Soon after the end of the Second World War, the victory of the Chinese revolution in 1949 under the CPC and the establishment of people's democracies in East Europe gave a major breakthrough to the ICM. Particularly the success of the Chinese revolution was an outstanding vindication of the dissolution of the Third International for the purpose of carrying forward revolution under the leadership of a country's communist party, and for unleashing of all anti-fascist forces for the bitter fight against fascism (in the case of China, Japanese fascism). The path of liberation for colonial and semi-colonial countries was thus blazed.

Thereafter, in the practice of proletarian internationalism and in developing international communist unity, the communist parties the world over had the additional base of the ongoing revolutionary experience of Red China to draw upon.

8. Within seven years, the emergence of Soviet revisionism under Khrushchev posed a new threat to the ICM. The ideological clarity, political tenacity, and fraternal spirit with which the CPC under Mao struggled first to ascertain, then to correct, and finally to fight this modern revisionism are exemplary for the ICM contingents for all time. "The Great Debate", conducted over seven years of such struggle, effectively exposed modern revisionism (revisionism in fact, socialism by face). It is important to note that the CPC was able to carry out this international task while affirming the principle of fraternity based on equality and independence of communist parties (a principle which alone could govern the relation of CPs after the dissolution of the CI).

9. The quintessence of the Great Debate as contained in the General Line of the International Communist Movement helped define and consolidate the new revolutionary camp of the ICM. The General Line remains, to

date, the ideological political benchmark for the ICM to analyse and resolve problems before it and develop unity of communist forces in the process. It is a benchmark which would have to be most seriously and responsibly addressed and debated by communists if any other is to be set up in its place, or even if any modification is to be wrought in its integral wholeness.

10. Despite this achievement of the CPC under Mao and despite being regarded as the new world leader of the revolutionary ICM (of the new revolutionary camp worldwide), the CPC did not go towards re-establishing the Communist International or establishing an International Organisation of the revolutionary communist parties. Instead, it stressed for the communist parties of the camp the importance of applying the universal truths of Marxism-Leninism to the concrete conditions of their own country. It also projected its own experience earnestly via writings, exchanges, and delegations thus fulfilling its internationalist duty. Yet it pointed at all times to the principles underlying its practice and to the general conclusions drawn from its experience. It also advised the other communist parties against the tendency to ditto the Chinese revolutionary forms but instead exhorted them to grasp their underlying principles and to benefit from the Chinese experience in the light of the subjective and objective conditions of their own revolution. In line with this, even as it affirmed the universal validity of "Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought" as the ideology of the revolutionary camp, it did not miss objecting to the organisational slogan "Chairman Mao is our Chairman" by the communist forces of another country.

11. For the world revolutionary forces, who acknowledge the path-breaking contributions of the Chinese revolution under the leadership of the CPC under Mao, it is important to comprehend the CPC's caution. That caution was derived from both its experience of its own revolution and the experience of the Third International from the 1930s (the difficulties faced by the CPC in developing the people's war path within the organisational frame of the CI and the problems faced by the CI itself in trying to lead the various sections under it).

The major interconnected elements in the CPC's caution were:

(A) Imperialism was devising through its local regimes ever new forms of neo-colonial rule in fierce contention with the progressive and revolutionary forces in each country, spawning very complex political situations locally. Only a native struggling communist party could adequately investigate, analyse, struggle on, and review such situations, paying the price in the process. An outside force, however revolutionary and well-intentioned, could not grasp the complex and rapidly changing reality and guide the required all round internal struggle. Hence the necessity of the political independence of each country's communist party and its realisation of the revolutionary responsibility that falls upon it with that political independence.

(B) There is besides a second reason, internal to the ICM, reinforcing the first. In general there is a difficulty in practising equality between communist parties -- equality which is the necessary condition for fraternity among them. Given their uneven levels of development and success, wrong tendencies tend to develop in the mutual relationships of the various communist parties. The more developed or more successful communist parties might develop a tendency to presume and dictate to the less developed or less successful communist parties, in place of identifying more closely with them and proceeding more patiently and systematically to resolve the problem of revolution through the political advance of those communist parties. The less developed and less successful communist parties might on the other hand develop the tendency to look for instruction and decision. Such tendencies, moreover, would be strengthened by the very complexity of the recipient country's specific conditions defying easy analysis and solution. If both tendencies operate simultaneously in these conditions the damage could be greater. Such wrong tendencies or practices thus take away from a critical principle of proletarian internationalism of the period since the dissolution of the CI (and hence the basis for the future unity of the communist parties, viz the principle of fraternity based on independence and equality of communist parties. Formation of an International

Organisation, in the existing situation of the ICM, would go towards perpetuating rather than correcting such tendencies.

12. The victory of a revolution in a country under the leadership of the communist party signals that certain crucial contemporary problems of the revolutionary movement have been resolved by it, creating the basis for generalising from that country's revolutionary experience at the level of that country itself, as well as at the international level. At present there is no such party in the world. The ideological political struggle against opportunism within the revolutionary camp is fierce and bitter in each country. The revolutionary communist parties/forces are engaged, everywhere, in struggling with the political twists created in their countries by the devastations wrought by the further degenerate imperialism. That is to say, political issues that have arisen in the revolutionary movement since the General Line have yet to be decisively settled by the clear advance of the mass revolutionary movement. So, while the need remains to give organisational form to the unity of communist revolutionary forces worldwide against imperialism, for that to truly materialise the struggle by a sizeable number of communist parties against their own ruling classes has to make a strategic breakthrough -- in the balance of forces and in the hegemony of the communist parties over the revolutionary sections in their countries.

13. A dialectical process is thus required to go towards materialising real unity among the revolutionary communist parties of the world. That unity in the form of the future international organisation has necessarily to combine the most effective striking force to combat imperialism with scope to each communist party to fulfil its responsibility to carry forward the revolution in its own country. To form the international organisation before such material basis of experience and of leadership capability is created would be premature, distorting the required proper process for attaining that objective.

An important part of the process of laying the foundations for securing unity comprises meanwhile the serious undertaking of exchange of views among communist parties/communist revolutionary forces. Such exchange has to be of information about the communist parties/forces'

actual experience, practice, and internal line formulations and their consistency with the General Line. This would pave the way for successively more advanced forms of collective positions on issues and successively more systematic rallying of forces worldwide. So the broad progression would be: mutual exchange and common stands -- bilaterally and multilaterally; and multilateral platforms on the basis of the General Line with specific objectives. Concerted action in the course of these various steps will require elements of organisational relationship and hence elements of organisational discipline. These organisational relationships for the evolution of such concerted action will still be predicated, however, to the principle of fraternity based on equality and independence of various parties. Simply put, this means that until such requirements of basis and process are fulfilled, there will not be any kind of higher organisational authority than the individual communist parties.

14. In India as in many other countries, the situation is even more complicated by the fact that the reorganisation of the Communist Party is still in the process of being realised. This is a serious handicap for the communist revolutionaries in India to effectively play their role in developing international communist unity. The foremost task is to overcome this handicap. To that end it is crucial to struggle to implement the correct line and establish it in contention with opportunism and rallying revolutionary forces of Indian people around it. In this process communist revolutionaries have to strive to achieve unity on the basis of settling the various line-questions in connection with the revolutionary practice of the masses of the Indian people.

Moreover, in the 55 years since the end of direct colonial rule, the ruling classes subservient to imperialism have taken advantage of the division and wrong trends in the communist camp and have spawned enough confusion, chauvinism, division and consequently intensified misery among the people. These distortions blur the real social contradictions. And such blurring makes even more intricate and difficult the tasks of applying theory to the concrete conditions and of organising the masses of people in revolutionary struggle with correct slogans. Concentration of forces and of effort for this fundamental internal task is crucial for all revolutionary communist forces in the country, whichever party

organisation they may be working in today.

Imbued with the spirit of proletarian internationalism the central bodies of all organised communist revolutionary forces need continuously to take steps towards fulfilling these internal and external tasks to the best of their ability. Only such a process can yield a reliable basis to go towards the international unity of the communist revolutionary forces.

**Central Committee
CPRCI(ML)**