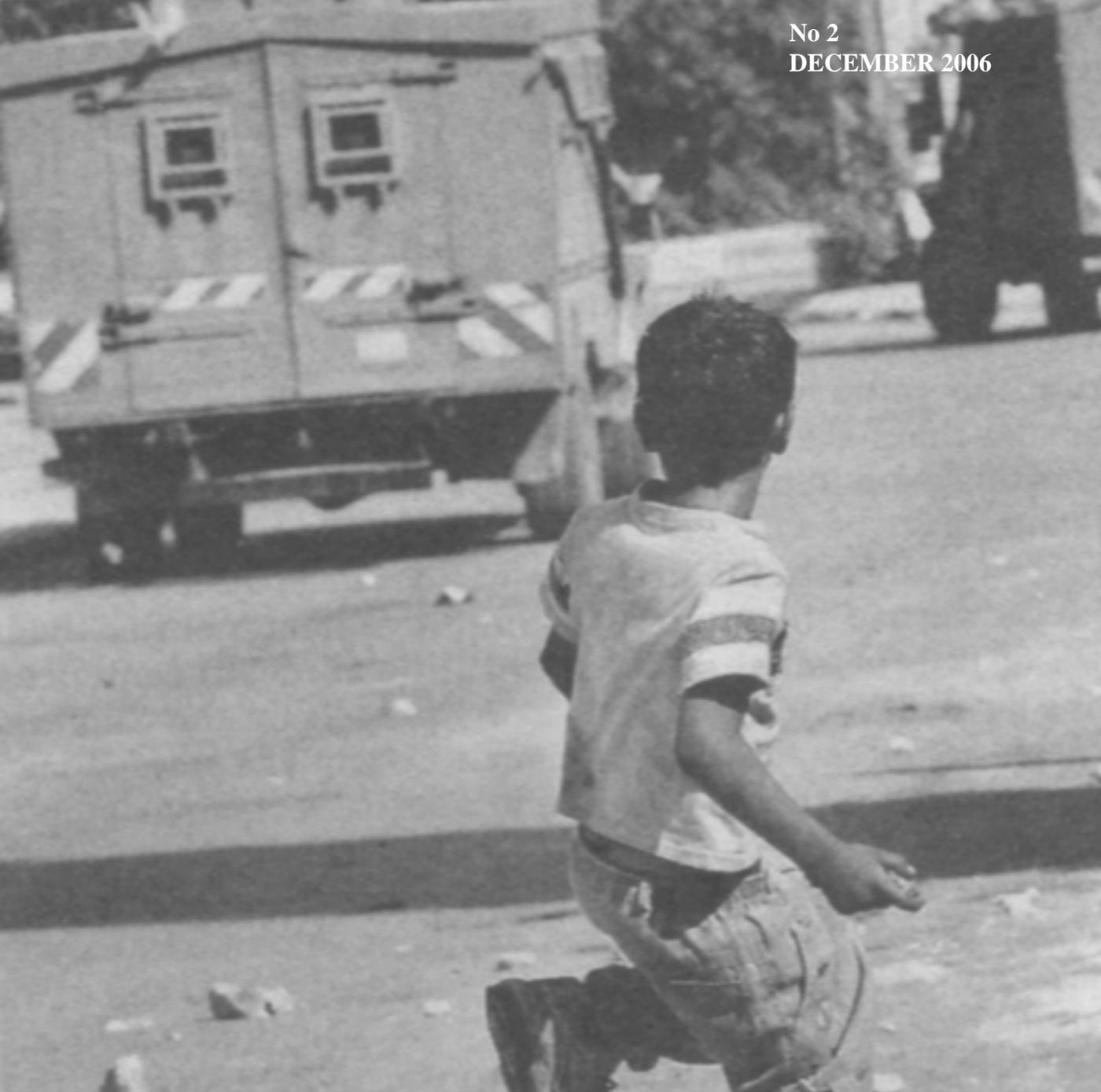


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THE

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Cover: A Palestinian boy confronting Zionists (photo: Reuters)

Kanshi Ram

The death of Kanshi Ram in early October has become an occasion for situating him and the BSP in Indian politics. For some he was the foremost leader of Dalits after Dr. Ambedkar. For others he remains an enigma.

Ambedkar had pointed out that the Indian parliamentary election system, superimposed on a social system based on the caste order, invariably reproduces an unchangeable communal majority (savarna monopoly). Though he had formed a political party that engaged in electoral politics, he remained committed to the task of caste annihilation and never turned to vote bank politics. One of the main factors that stunted the growth of that party was the impossibility contained in the effort to distance itself from caste and religious vote bank politics, while trying for social change through a parliament based on this social order itself. The leaders who succeeded Ambedkar after his death made personal aggrandisement their main agenda. This set the stage for the emergence of the Dalit Panthers in the late 1960's. Inspired by the Black Panther Party in the USA and the Naxalbari armed uprising, the Dalit Panthers advanced by trying to link up the lessons it learned from these movements to the task of caste annihilation. It became instrumental in giving impetus to the formation of a new type of radical Dalit movements in many parts of India.

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SEZ politics:

Let the Poor Perish for Comprador Capital's Growth

the economic logic of globalisation in India

George Joseph

The UPA government is going ahead to implement its Special Economic Zone (SEZ) policy, defying all the ongoing agitations of lakhs of affected farmers in various parts of the country. With the recent Supreme Court order rejecting the PIL filed against government's SEZ policy, all debates and discussions are going to die out, compelling the struggling farmers to surrender before the SEZ regime. Signaling the intention of the government, on an earlier occasion, the Prime Minister had categorically said in an interview that, "the SEZ have come to stay, but they need to operate in a manner in which the concerns will be dealt with." How these concerns will be dealt with, that is now explained in the Supreme Court order. It says that project affected individual farmers can approach the court as and when disputes arise. As in every other verdict where the livelihood of the poor masses was at stake, here too, the court stands against them.

After seeing the so-called success of SEZ in China, it was the NDA government who framed the first SEZ policy in March 2000 and incorporated its Guidelines into the EXIM policy. After that, various companies have started to acquire land for developing SEZ utilizing the provisions in that policy. Though this was going on, SEZ became a controversial issue after the central government passed its SEZ Act in May 2005 and subsequent SEZ Rule in February 2006. Now it's the turn of the BJP to talk about a balanced approach!

SEZ is projected as a panacea for economic boom through investment and development, though its economic advantage is still a disputed issue even between Ministries. The Commerce

ministry, which put forth the SEZ policy, claims that investment to the tune of Rs.45, 50,000 crores in all the Special Economic Zones will boost the economy altogether and generate additional employment of about 5 lakhs! This was contradicted by the Finance Ministry saying that there will be a revenue loss of Rs.1, 60, 000 crores by 2010, that is within a period of 4 years. Supporting the argument of the Finance Ministry, Reserve Bank of India has also openly said that revenue losses are imminent due to the concessions that are being granted to the developers and operating units of SEZ. Industrial houses have also raised concerns regarding disparity towards companies operating outside SEZ though they are producing goods similar to those by companies within SEZ. Unlike these concerns of the initiators and beneficiaries of government policies, there is a major issue associated with SEZ – that is the issue of lakhs of acres of land that are going to be forcefully grabbed by corporates and big real estate developers using government's power to acquire land for 'development'. It is reported that altogether around 1.5 lakh hectares (3.7 lakh acres) of land are going to be acquired for the SEZs that are coming up all over the country.

As such, the idea of SEZ is nothing new as far as the economic history of the country is concerned. With an aim to promote exports many SEZs were set up earlier along the line of SEEPZ in Mumbai. At that time 'export oriented economic development' was the mantra of the economic pundits. Companies operating in these SEZ were supposed to be 100 per cent exporting units. Though tax and duty concessions were

given, there was no such a mad rush as that of today to set up SEZ, neither from the part of big corporates or any foreign company. There is definitely something more attractive in the present SEZ for such a rush. If we look into the SEZ Act and its related Rules it is very much clear that, apart from extra concessions on taxes and duties, the most attractive feature is nothing but the vast tracts of prime land adjacent to urban centers and highways that are associated in the setting up of SEZ. Not only that, as per the SEZ rules only 25% land is to be used for industrial development; the remaining 75% can be used for real estate purposes!

Over and above the question of revenue losses to the exchequer due to tax and duty holidays and other concessions, provisions in the SEZ Act and Rule have wider implications for the economy and society. There is no cap on foreign direct investment on SSI reserved items. This will reduce the competitive capacity of the small and medium scale units operating outside the SEZ; they are now contributing more than 50 percent of our exports today. The result will be a new wave of large scale closure of such units, similar to the first wave of closure of industries in the 1990s, making a large number of people jobless. This will seriously affect the livelihood of people from the working class and lower middle class as they are the ones mostly employed in such units.

The provision to subcontract production outside the SEZ, that is to the Domestic Tariff Area, will enable the entrepreneurs to reduce the number of employees in their pay roll. At the same time, this provision can be effectively utilised for production by such units which have their own facilities outside the SEZ. As a rule SEZs are exempted from labour laws, so this will be doubly profitable for the investors.

The areas incorporated in the proposed SEZs are free from environmental restrictions. This will

create serious environmental problems in the long run affecting the very life of the people in their vicinity. Economic loss due to these environmental problems will be another aspect we will have to face.

Whether the SEZ will be economically beneficial or not, at the cost of the natural resources and economic activity of the people in that area, such a cost benefit study is never carried out on any of the proposed SEZs. Going blindly with a mere idea of development alone brings disaster, not development. That is why in our country most of the 'developments' are becoming 'disastrous development'!

The SEZ Rules formulated in February this year speaks about the quantum of land being associated with SEZ. Minimum area requirements stipulated for various categories are as follows: Multi-product SEZs would have an area of 1,000 hectares (2470 acres) or more; service-sector SEZs must have an area of 100 hectares (247 acres) or more; gems and jewellery, IT, biotechnology and other sector-specific SEZs could be set up over an area of 10 hectares (25 acres) or more; for all other sectors, the area must be *at least* 100 hectares (247 acres). The area requirement for multi-product SEZ has been relaxed to 200 hectares and for sector-specific SEZs to 50 hectares for certain special category States of North East, Himachal Pradesh, Uttaranchal, Jammu & Kashmir, Goa and Sikkim and all Union Territories keeping in view the difficulty in finding *large tracts* of adjacent land in such places.

As this rule is minimum-specific, maximum can be of any size according to the availability of land in various states. Effectively this is an unspecified provision in the SEZ Rule to facilitate comprador capital to grab maximum land for cheap prices. This is evident from the size of the land being acquired in the name of SEZ

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The Socialist State System*

Ajith

A vigorous debate on some fundamental questions, such as the dictatorship of the proletariat, its institutions and socialist democracy, has emerged within the international communist movement. Far removed from academic exercises or post-mortems on the socialist project, this debate is guided by pressing theoretical and practical concerns over the prevention of capitalist restoration. It is timely, in the context of the emerging new wave of world proletarian revolution, which is visible not only in the People's Wars and other revolutionary movements led by the Maoists but also in the growing ranks of struggle and resistance against imperialist aggression and occupation and globalisation. The revolutionary masses are today divided in different camps. There are also a lot of false flags. Reformist and revisionist solutions to globalisation, consolidated in the World Social Forum, are one of them. Islamic fundamentalism is yet another. But contradictions driving revolution are intensifying and revolution is the main trend. In itself, this points out that the world situation is more favourable for the revolutionary masses than for the imperialists. Turning that into an actuality, establishing Maoism at the head of the emerging wave of world revolution, calls for bold advances in revolutionary practice, particularly People's War. While our present grasp of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism (MLM) is certainly capable of accomplishing this, it also demands advances in theory. The debate on the socialist state system has a particular relation to both these tasks. Because the question, 'what happens after revolution wins victory', is very much present in the present world. It is used by the apologists of imperialism and reaction to turn the masses away from revolution with the argument that "one can't make revolution without answering this." Such an orientation blocks all possibility of resolving the issue and paves the way to liquidationism.

The debate on dictatorship of the proletariat and proletarian democracy is not new. In the early 1990's a sharp polemic was waged within the RIM against the liquidationist positions of the erstwhile CRC, CPI(M-L) on these issues. While the present debate is progressing on the better footing of the actuality of revolutionary practice, it also touches on some of the issues and views of the past. Some of the key topics of this debate are the refutation of bourgeois democracy, lessons of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (GPCR) and synthesising experiences on the institutions of proletarian rule. The liquidationist positions of the CRC, CPI(M-L) also dealt with these topics from a bourgeois standpoint. As such, they remain as a useful negative example. Hence, it wouldn't be irrelevant to revisit questions posed by that struggle. They relate to philosophy, such as class stand, method and the fundamentals of Marxism and to scientific socialism, such as the role of the party in the socialist state system.

We will begin with the concepts underlying the CRC, CPI(M-L)'s criticism on the dictatorship of the proletariat.¹ They can be summarised as follows: 1) The contradiction between individual

*This is a revised and expanded version of an article written in 1998 as part of the rupture from the CRC, CPI(M-L) line, with the title 'On the Theory of Non-class aspects'.

and society is distinct from class contradiction; 2) While democracy is a form of state, it is also a form of social organisation, which effectively deals with the individual-society contradiction; 3) Thus, though democracy as a form of state is a class dictatorship, it also has a non-class aspect.

These concepts were later expanded on by K. Venu, who had been trying since the mid 1980's to formulate a 'theory of non-class aspects' (TNCA). This theory shares a lot with bourgeois, petty bourgeois critics of Marxism and their latest fad 'post modernism'. In the Indian context, it lends support to those who argue that Marxism cannot address the caste question or similar issues because of its class stand. TNCA claims that this weakness emerges from 'class reductionism' and pretends to be a 'dialectical correction'.

Democracy as a form of social organisation

Marxism teaches that the state emerged at a specific period in the history of social development, marked by the emergence of classes. Ever since then, class struggle has been the motive force of social development. Though it pretends to agree with this, TNCA really negates this. In its view, different social and political organisational structures 'also' reflect the evolution of a fundamental contradiction of human society, namely the individual-society contradiction. To prove this, it argues that even in tribal society (that is, classless society) social organisation was centred on the resolution of this contradiction.

This is sheer sophistry that ignores the

fundamental distinction between forms of social organisation in classless societies and the state systems of class societies. Even in a tribal society undergoing transition to class society, this social organisation (tribal council, chiefhood etc) is not yet alienated from society as a force standing above it. Whereas in class society, the state and other similar forms of social organisation that have a direct political role, have this distinct character. This is because they emerge from class antagonisms and serve to handle these antagonisms in the interests of the ruling class.

'Form of social organisation' is a favourite of TNCA precisely because it helps in covering up such distinctions. Any organisation

Contradictions driving revolution are intensifying and revolution is the main trend. In itself, this points out that the world situation is more favourable for the revolutionary masses than for the imperialists. Turning that into an actuality calls for bold advances in People's War. While our present grasp of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism (MLM) is certainly capable of accomplishing this, it also demands advances in theory.

or institution formed by a group of individuals coming together to carry out a common interest is a form of social organisation. But, depending on their social origins and role, they will differ from one another qualitatively. If democracy is to be analysed as a form of

social organisation, one must necessarily start from its qualitative distinctions. These consist in the following: 1) it deals with the political, social and economic functioning of a society as a whole; 2) it emerges at a particular historical stage. Since the topic of discussion is bourgeois democracy and proletarian democracy (class democracies), attention must be paid to analyse them in relation to the distinct features of the emergence and historical evolution of the state. This is how Marxism treats the question. And this is exactly what is given up by TNCA.

TNCA claims to have discovered something new by stating that democracy is not only

a form of state but also a form of social organisation that deals with the individual-society contradiction. It declares that Lenin missed this and projects this omission as the fundamental theoretical fault in the theory and practice of the dictatorship of the proletariat. What does Marxism have to say on this? We will quote from "German Ideology", one of the earliest works of

"...(T)he division of labour implies the contradiction between the separate individuals ... and the communal interest of all individuals who have intercourse with one another...(T)his communal interest does not exist merely in the imagination...but first of all in reality, as the mutual interdependence of the individuals among whom the labour is divided.

"And out of this very contradiction between the interest of the individual and that of a community, the later takes an independent form as the state, divorced from the real interests of individual and community, and at the same time as an illusory communal life, always based, however, on the real ties existing...especially...on the classes, already determined by the division of labour... of which one dominates all the others."²

What does this mean? In the first place, it is quite clear that the founders of Marxism were quite aware of the individual-society contradiction. Moreover, they were well aware of its relation to the state, to the fact that the state handles this contradiction also. But Marx and Engels were not satisfied with appearances. They applied dialectical materialism to get at the essence.

They pinpointed the qualitative transformation of the individual-society contradiction caused by the emergence of division of labour, private property and class society. In class society, this contradiction contains something new; a new motion. Because of private property and class exploitation, individuals seek only their particular interest. But, they can do so only as part of the division of labour. Such division of labour also implies the mutual interdependence of the individuals among whom the labour is divided. Thus, this contradiction and its motion become quali-

The state itself is a form of social organisation. It handles the new conflict between individual and 'common' interests by imposing the particular interest of the ruling class as a 'common' interest. To claim that bourgeois democracy "effectively deals" with this contradiction and to argue that there cannot be any other form of state better than this is absurd and ahistorical. The slave states and caste-feudal kingdoms were just as "effective" in dealing with it, in keeping with existing historical conditions and the class interests of ruling class.

tatively different from classless society. It can only be handled through a new type of social organisation, the state. But the state can only be an illusory social life. In reality, society is split apart as classes. Individuals are members of this or that class. There is no real community of interests between the antagonistic classes or all members of society. Hence, "... imposed on them as an interest

'alien' to them and 'independent' of them ... as ... a particular, peculiar 'general' interest; or they themselves must remain within this discord, as in democracy."³

In other words the state itself is a form of social organisation. It handles the new conflict between individual and 'common' interests. But it can handle it only by imposing the particular interest of the ruling class as a 'common' interest. Hence it is necessarily alien and independent - a force 'standing above society'. This imposition may be done in different forms. It can be naked feudal despotism. It can also be

bourgeois democracy. In this case, the constitution, proclaimed in the name of all citizens, merely formalises an imposed agreement. It is an agreement to “remain within this discord”. That is, to remain in a society marked by the antagonistic conflict of classes. (The individual-society contradiction now expresses itself through this conflict.)

In view of these Marxist positions what has TNCA achieved? It separates a feature common to all states (that is, dealing with the individual-society contradiction) and limits it to bourgeois democracy alone. All that is new is its variation in the revisionist vulgarisation of the Marxist theory on state. The TNCA does this to claim that bourgeois democracy “effectively deals” with this contradiction and to argue that there cannot be any other form of state better than this. This is absurd and ahistorical. The slave states and caste-feudal kingdoms were just as “effective”

Marxism abstracts and uses categories, such as individual and society, as tools to deepen analysis and arrive at a synthesis. But it does this by dealing with their contradictory motion in the actual course of historical development. It does not pick up such abstractions and fit historical development into them.

in dealing with this contradiction, in keeping with existing historical conditions and the class interests of the respective ruling class. In essence, TNCA denies the withering away of the state and any possibility of re-establishing a real community of interests in society. It is true that one can grade various state forms on the scale of historical development. But all of them, including fascism and social fascism, necessarily deal with the contradiction between individual (particular) and social (general) interests - primarily as members of antagonistic classes.

There is a basic difference between the Marxist method of analysis and the TNCA’s methodology. Marxism abstracts and uses categories, such as individual and society, as tools to deepen

analysis and arrive at a synthesis. But it does this by dealing with their contradictory motion in the actual course of historical development. It does not pick up such abstractions and fit historical development into them. Marxism grasps human society as a complex ensemble of social relations. It points out that every human being is primarily a social being. The consciousness of individuality itself emerges from social relations. The methodology of TNCA is opposed to this. Its analysis tends to the position that there is first such a contradiction (individual-society contradiction), which then evolves through social development. It deals with categories not as tools of analysis, but as abstract ideas from

which analysis should emerge. Thus, in its analysis, the individual-society contradiction is not abstracted from real social relations. It tries to derive such relations and the motion of this contradiction itself from its ‘idea’

about this contradiction. This is not dialectical materialism. It is idealism and metaphysics.

Equality of average individuals

TNCA charges that there is a “total absence of a theory of individual” in Marxism, because individuals are considered only as class individuals. It accuses Marxism of neglecting ‘non-class factors’ like biological and sociological influences in the making of an individual. It claims that, instead of class analysis, ‘a comprehensive analysis of the interrelationship among different aspects like biological and other material background, historical and sociological conditions, economic and class structure and the superstructural realm’ must be carried out. Furthermore, it declares that biological and other factors also play a determining role under certain

conditions. These accusations are baseless. Breaking away from both idealism and metaphysics, Marxism points out that

“...the human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations.”⁴

Any theory of individual that separates it from this ‘ensemble of social relations’ is bound to end up in the worst form of idealism.

Similar to its use of ‘form of social organisation’, TNCA brings up the question of biology and so on to confuse the issue. The individual can be a subject of different types of analysis. One can study this category as a biological entity, just as much as one studies it as a social being. So the question is not whether biological

and other similar factors are ignored or not. What is to be settled is whether the individual as a bio- sidered as a prime category of social or historical analysis. For example, a study of biological sex differences between indi-

viduals cannot be done through the category of individual as used in social analysis. On the other hand, to carry out a fruitful analysis of men and women and their interrelationship in a given society, we must analyse them principally as genders, not as biological entities. In such an analysis, what are of interest are not the biological particularities of the two sexes, but the social role these particularities assume under gender construction. Unlike biological sex differentiation, gender differentiation is a social construct. And, like all other social constructs in class society, class relations determine it. Not just in general but always.

Contrary to TNCA’s accusation, Marxian class analysis offers the only way for carrying

out a materialist analysis of the individual as a social being. It unravels the contradictions, which both form it and propel it in class society. Marx pointed out:

“The separate individuals form a class only insofar as they have to carry on a common battle against another class... (the) class in its turn achieves an independent existence over and against individuals, so that the latter find their conditions of existence predestined, and hence have their position in life and their personal development assigned to them by their class...”

“In the course of historical evolution, and precisely through the inevitable fact that within the division of labour social relationships take on an independent existence, there appears a

This analysis of the division of the individual into personal and class individual and the subjugation of personal development to class gives a piercing insight into the individual in class society. It enables Marxism to grasp the historical significance of the individual stepping onto the stage of philosophical and political discourse in bourgeois society and guards against any mechanical reductionism.

division within the life of each individual..(t)he division between the personal and the class individual ...”⁵

This analysis of the division of the individual into personal and class individual and the subjugation of personal

development to class gives a piercing insight into the individual in class society. It breaks away from the idealist and ahistorical concept of individual and opens up an analysis of the historical motion of this category. It enables Marxism to grasp the historical significance of the individual stepping onto the stage of philosophical and political discourse in bourgeois society and guards against any mechanical reductionism. It also allows it to expose the real chains that fetter this ‘darling’ of bourgeois, petty bourgeois theories of freedom and democracy.

Marx wrote:

“(O)nly in community with others has each individual the means of cultivating his gifts in

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The Social Relevance of Death Sentence

CR

Translated from an August 1998 article in Munmaniporali reprinted by PORATTOM as part of its campaign to annul the death sentence on Afsal Guru. A broad platform including PORATTOM and a number of human rights and mass organizations will be organizing a convention on the 20th of December at Thrissur, Keralam, to mobilize public opinion in support of this.

The notorious court verdict handing down death sentences to the 26 accused in the Rajiv Gandhi murder case has once again stirred up debate on the death sentence. That various punishments were adopted to prevent crimes is a tale repeated by the ruling classes over centuries. But it has always carried the stamp of exacting revenge, as a means of oppression to protect private property and political power. The primitive rule of "an eye for an eye" has undergone many a reform through the pressure of class struggles and democratic movements. But its basic nature and the interests it serves has not changed.

Crimes are the offspring of specific social circumstances. The consciousness and argument that calls for a new approach considering the influence and motivation generated by society, family and the street in the criminal and the crime, instead of exacting revenge, came up in this context. This lies at the origins of modern criminology backed by modern psychiatry. But the clever evasion of the Indian supreme court from definitively calling for putting an end to the death sentence, while stating that it should be used only in the 'rarest of rare cases', only reveals its class bias. And when the protectors of the social system responsible for crimes try to apply this approach and philosophy while remaining within the confines of ruling class interests sustained by this society, even their reformism quite often ends up in the old mould of exacting revenge.

Crime and punishment, including the death penalty, are as old as class society. Throughout this period, most of the accused and punished were those denied an equitable life or livelihood and those who fought for justice. Since the acts

decried as crimes by the ruling classes were invariably related to the nature of the social systems they ruled over, even the most stringent punishment like the death sentence couldn't prevent or end crimes. This has been confirmed through the studies done by a number of social scientists. As an example, the old Thiruvithamkoor-Kochi state of the late 1940s didn't have the death sentence. This couldn't be continued once it joined India and the death sentence was reinstated. But, instead of falling, the number of murder cases actually went up. If the lesson this gives that death sentences or similar punishments don't influence the incidence of crimes is accepted, then the question to be answered is – why is this punishment retained, whom does it serve?

There is yet another injustice involved in this. Modern criminology records many instances where the accused turned out to be innocent after the death sentence was carried out. How can such wrong verdicts be rectified? Moreover, even if someone has committed a crime, a death sentence denies the opportunity to repent and reform. This is only about death sentences. Other than this, there are many murders carried out by the exploiters and numerous victims of state terror. In short, punishment by death is irrelevant and unscientific, even when viewed from a moral, democratic or humanist stand. The only function it has today is that of exacting revenge or as a means of oppression.

Yet, the question of how those who consciously commit acts to serve interests that endanger the existence of a social system, in which crime is unnecessary for an equitable life or social justice,

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The True Lesson of the Punnapra-Vayalar Struggles

October 24th marked the 60th anniversary of the historic Punnapra -Vayalar struggles led by the Communist Party of India in 1946. Punnapra is a seaside village and Vayalar is a small island in the Vembanad backwaters of the present Allapuzha district, a strong hold of the communist party in Kerala. As part of the political general strike called for by the party, the Punnapra police camp was stormed on the 24th. In a battle lasting nearly two hours 9 rifles were seized. In the days to follow martial law was declared and the army was unleashed for a genocidal campaign of suppression against resistance camps set up by the party. Among them, the attack on the Vayalar camp on the 27th took the highest toll in lives. The bodies of those mown down by machine guns were piled up in a tank. The following article, translated from Munnapporali, No: 58-59, June-July 1999, takes a deep look into the politics of those struggles.

Even though the question of what freedom and for whom is becoming sharper in these days of globalisation, the haggling over whether the Punnapra-Vayalar struggles should be considered a part of the 'freedom struggle' continues. Just as much as those who accuse the communist party leadership of having sent its rank and file to sure death for sectarian party interests, the CPI-CPM revisionists too are keen in keeping this alive. It helps them to keep the true lessons of the Punnapra-Vayalar struggles hidden from the masses who search for a path to destroy imperialism and the ruling classes.

What was the line of the undivided communist party during the Punnapra-Vayalar struggles of 1946? It had held its first Congress in 1943. This was a period when it was collaborating with British imperialism in the war against the German-Italy-Japan fascist Axis, and justifying this by citing the alliance of the USSR with the US-British-French imperialist powers. The line that came out of the First Congress was guided by this collaboration. In its deliberations there was nothing like a class analysis of the Indian National Congress (INC) and the Muslim League (ML). It called for the united leadership of these parties in the struggle for independence, though

they had repeatedly proven their subservience to British imperialism. It forced the working class to tail them. This line was totally opposed to the Comintern's position that the anti-colonial struggle could only be led by the proletariat.

The smashing victory of the Soviet Red Army in the 2nd world war and the advance of the people's war in China unleashed a high tide of revolutionary storms in the oppressed countries. This was seen in India also. The British colonialists realised that they wouldn't be able to continue direct colonial domination. They initiated moves to hand over power to the INC and the ML. Nehru's interim government came to power in 1946. This was acclaimed by the communist party leaders as a step towards independence. So the first thing to keep in mind while drawing lessons from the Punnapra-Vayalar struggles is that it took place at a time when the party's line was collaborationist. None of the party leaders in Kerala fought against this line. (EMS has noted that P. Krishna Pilla doubted the line to be collaborationist, but there is no indication of his struggling against it)

The class collaborationist line of the party leadership was evident in the politics guiding the

Punnappa-Vayalar struggles. It was not attacking the Thiruvithamkoor monarchy, serving imperialism and caste-feudalism, but a particular form of its rule. This was the essence of its call “Drown the American Model in the Arabian Sea”. ‘American Model’ was the reform proposed by Sir CP Ramaswamy, the then Diwan of Thiruvithamkoor. This reform consisted in having a legislative assembly with limited rights under a Diwan with overriding executive powers, appointed by the monarch. It was aimed at preserving the monarchy and was against the democratic aspirations of the masses. But the counter slogan of “Responsible Government” was, in its essence, no different from this. Without bothering to analyse and expose the class interests underlying this slogan raised by the new landlord-comprador classes willing to compromise with the King, the class collaborationist leadership of the communist party simply took it over. It never bothered to examine whether, in the existing circumstances, the establishment of a government responsible to an elected assembly instead of Diwan’s (or monarchical) rule would make any essential difference in the class content of political power.

It was true that while the monarchy was a continuation of caste-feudalism, an elected assembly and government corresponded to modern capitalism. But the Thiruvithamkoor monarchy wasn’t serving caste-feudalism alone. Diwan’s rule was a part, a form, of the British colonial political power protecting the colonial, semi-feudal system. It also served bureaucrat capitalism, which had emerged from the colonial, semi-feudal system. The Thiruvithamkoor royal family was not only the biggest landlord; it had become a part of the comprador-bureaucrat bourgeoisie by investing in imperialist owned plantations and industries, besides forming joint ventures with Tamil and Gujarati compradors. If the then party leadership had

followed the Comintern’s directives and the lessons of the Chinese revolution, if it had paid attention to the question of the class interests that united in the colonial power existing in the monarchical form of rule, it could have easily concluded that “Responsible Government” could never be a real alternative to the ‘American Model’ proposed by the Diwan. It would have arrived at the conclusion that the democratic aspirations of the masses can never be satisfied by replacing the monarchy with an elected assembly and government subservient to imperialism. What was needed was a People’s Democratic Dictatorship led by the proletariat. But this was beyond the collaborationist leadership. Though the exploited masses heroically fought against savarna landlords and the Thiruvithamkoor army in Punnappa-Vayalar, the political line guiding them was one of collaboration with their enemies. The seizure of political power was really not aimed at. This was the greatest betrayal of the party leadership.

This teaches us that the presence or absence of militant struggles can never be a sufficient criterion to judge class collaboration. What is decisive is ideological-political line. This is borne

While the monarchy was a continuation of caste-feudalism, an elected government corresponded to modern capitalism. But the Thiruvithamkoor monarchy wasn’t serving caste-feudalism alone. Diwan’s rule was a part of the British colonial political power, protecting the colonial, semi-feudal system. It also served bureaucrat capitalism, which had emerged from this system. The Thiruvithamkoor royal family was not only the biggest landlord; it had become part of the comprador- bureaucrat bourgeoisie.

out by both the opposing poles, of militant struggle and cowardly flight, which came out through the Punnapra-Vayalar struggles. These poles were best represented by KV Pathrose who declared that “The Diwan shall not rule from Ambalapuzha to Cherthala”, and the terror stricken Thiruvithamkoor party leader KC George. The first thing he did on hearing that weapons were seized from the Punnapra camp was to demand their destruction! This was the very same leader who, just a few weeks earlier, had written to the all-India leadership, “We have become forced to confront the army”. What more proof is needed of the despicable betrayal of the valiant fighters of Punnapra-Vayalar who faced the machine guns of the army with wooden spears? But, while we must uphold and honour the determination and commitment of comrades like KV Pathrose, we must not overlook the errors in their own thinking that shackled them. Apart from the overall class collaborationism of the party, we also must note their spontaneity and lack of military thinking.

The proclamation that “The Diwan shall not rule” touched on the key issue of political power. This was its merit. But this demanded serious

The proclamation that “The Diwan shall not rule” touched on the key issue of political power. But this demanded serious thinking on various questions such as how the enemy’s army would be defeated, how a people’s army capable of this would be built up and the military strategy to be followed. While local weapons like wooden spears were made and ex-servicemen sympathetic to the party gave training on evading enemy fire, there is no sign of anyone raising or trying to deal with decisive politico-military issues.

thinking on various questions such as how the enemy’s army would be defeated, how a people’s army capable of this would be built up and the military strategy to be followed. While preparing for the Punnapra-Vayalar struggles, local weapons like wooden spears* were made and ex-servicemen sympathetic to the party gave training on evading enemy fire. But other than such practical measures there is no sign of anyone, including KV Pathrose, raising or trying to deal with decisive politico-military issues. If the call to seize power is raised without even an approximate idea at the level of line about the politico-military tasks involved in realising it, it will lead to plan-less struggle, to spontaneity. Even if victories are gained initially they won’t be consolidated. However high the militancy of the combatants, the cowardice of capitulators will eventually gain ground. The tragedy of KV Pathrose, who led the storming of the Punnapra camp, being forced to supervise the sinking of seized rifles in the Vembanad lagoon, burns this lesson into our minds.

What exactly was the military character of the Punnapra-Vayalar struggles? Though it is often characterised as an armed insurrection the truth is quite the contrary. It was neither a conscious nor a spontaneous armed uprising. An armed uprising is an extremely dynamic affair, breaking out suddenly and spreading quickly. Unlike a conscious uprising, a spontaneous one won’t have pre-determined targets or follow a plan. But it will certainly reflect the dynamism, mobility, inherent to any insurrection. It won’t be marking time. In the Punnapra-Vayalar struggles, marking time was the rule and mobility the exception. Apart from some isolated instances, it was a negative military model of passive resistance guided by wrong strategy and

*It should be stressed that these spears made of seasoned areca wood were quite lethal. The tips were almost hard as steel.

tactics. While we see dynamism in the assault on the Punnapra camp and the sabotage of the Mararikulam bridge, these too were of the nature of resistance struggles, though of an active type.

The local social-political context for the Punnapra-Vayalar struggles was set by the spread of the communist party from its initial base among the coir worker's to the landless, poor peasants (most of whom were from the oppressed castes) and the fisherpeople through the anti-feudal struggles led by it. Police camps were set up when the goons of savarna landlords failed to suppress peasant struggles. Meanwhile the strike of the coir workers raised political demands. This became a pretext for the Thiruvithamkoor state to launch an all out attack. Resistance camps (places where people stayed together and guarded against attacks) were set up to face this suppression. Other than giving these camps an organised form and training camp members in self-defence, the party leadership never tried to develop a strategy that would transform this spontaneous passive resistance into even active resistance. It never tried to bring into play favourable factors such as topography full of sand dunes, brush forests, numerous canals, streams and islands, the near total support and active participation of the masses, and the strong organisational structure of the party and the unions it led. Instead it pursued a suicidal path of immobile, passive, resistance based on the camps. Even though the history of Keralam gave the examples of the Pazhassi, Kurichya and Malabar rebellions where protracted guerrilla struggle was employed to face up to the British colonial army, the party leadership preferred to concentrate the combatants in specific locations, offering easy targets to the enemy. Some historical accounts have recorded that the leadership tried to disband the resistance camps when army suppres-

sion intensified following the Punnapra camp assault. If that is true, then the decision of the combatants to reject this delayed 'realisation' by the leaders and stick on in the camps was sounder. Other than directing them to disband, there was no plan to continue resistance in the new situation. What the leadership couldn't foresee the combatants intuitively understood: the Diwan's suppression wouldn't end just with the disbandment of the camps and the unarmed masses would be totally at the mercy of the Thiruvithamkoor army. They decided that it would be far better to rely on their numbers and morale to put up a life and death struggle, rather than trying to flee their hunters only to be picked up and killed individually. In that situation this was certainly not a sign of suicidal desperation. The resistance put up in the Vayalar camp will forever remain as a glorious episode in the heroic struggle of the oppressed "who dared to storm the gates of heaven".

A correct military line, strategy and tactics, flow from a correct political line. On the contrary, a political line that has not ruptured from collaboration with the enemy can never conceive of standing up to its attacks and defeating it by relying on its own strength. Its 'strength' will be the foolish belief that there will be a limit to the enemy's suppression. This was what the party leadership exhibited during the Punnapra-Vayalar struggles. It never tried to situate the Diwan's suppressive measures in the world, or all-India political context.

In those days, British colonialism was faced with the crucial task of overcoming a powerful revolutionary wave that had come up in the wake of the 2nd world war and working out a new mechanism to continue its domination. In order to create division and isolate the fighting masses of workers and peasants by promoting illusions of independence, it set up Nehru's interim government. Simultaneously, severe suppression was

On Developments in Nepal

The political situation in Nepal has arrived at a new stage after the signing of the Peace Accord between the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) [CPN(M)] and the Seven Party Alliance (SPA). A comparison of the present accord and the proposals put forward by the CPN(M) will show that it has retained political initiative and has succeeded substantially in its aims. After the April mass uprising led to the reinstatement of the old parliament and formation of the SPA government, US imperialism and India made concerted efforts to force the CPN(M) to disarm as a condition for implementation of the agreement made with the SPA. The main parties in the SPA—Nepal Congress, Nepal Congress (Deuba) and UML—were only too willing to toe this line. Having come back to power, and with the King in check, their vision of Nepal was basically nothing more than a continuation of the

past. But the mood of the Nepali people was something totally different. They wanted an end to the monarchy and a basic restructuring of the state and society. This was represented by the political demands of the CPN(M). Over the past six months, particularly in urban centres, these demands gained wider acceptance among diverse sections. Even sections of the ruling classes had to admit that making the disarmament of the CPN(M) a pre-condition was going against the sentiments of the people. This was the build up to the present agreement. Though US imperialism kept intervening in Nepal's political affairs and tried to strengthen the Nepal Army with the help of Indian rulers, its plans have been frustrated for the time being.

According to the new agreement, more or less on the lines proposed by CPN(M), the weapons of the PLA will be kept within its cantonments,



courtesy: Kantipur Publications

under UN supervision. But the CPN(M) has retained the right to carry weapons to safeguard its leadership and the cantonments. The Nepal Army will be confined to its barracks, except for guard duties, and an equal number of its weapons will also be locked up under UN supervision. It will be governed by a new Military Act and the necessity to democratise and downsize it has been accepted. The trusted servitor of Indian expansionism, prime minister GP Koirala, has been forced to back off from his arrogant position that the Maoists cannot be accepted as a political force so long as they keep their weapons. All of this is also a sharp blow at the attempts of US imperialism and Indian expansionism to prevent any granting of equal status to the PLA in relation to the Nepal Army.

Another major achievement is the removal of all executive authority from the King. The fate



courtesy: AFP

of the monarchy will be decided by the newly elected constitutional assembly. Meanwhile, the properties of the late King Birendra and his family members will be brought under the control of the Nepal government and used for welfare purposes through a trust. All properties acquired by King Gyanendra by the virtue of his being the King (like palaces, forests and conservation areas, heritage sites) would be nationalised. This property, most of it land, represents a major chunk of feudal-comprador property in Nepal.

The contentious issue of granting citizenship to the Madhesi people (inhabiting the Terai) has also been settled. This has been a long standing demand of the Madhesi people and a divisive issue often used by the reactionaries. The demand of the CPN(M) to restructure the present state into a federal one, based on recognising the right of self-determination and autonomy of oppressed sections and regions has been kept for decision of the constituent assembly. But the ending of discrimination based on class, ethnicity, lingual, gender, cultural, religion and region and the necessity to deconstruct the centralised and unitary structure of the state, and reconstruct it into an inclusive, democratic and forward looking state, has been incorporated into the present agreement.

What will be the nature of the interim government once the CPN(M) representatives enter it? It will not be a new democratic one. Apart from the unfinished task of destroying the old state, this is evident from the new agreement itself. The demands of the CPN(M) relating to ending feudalism, developing a self-reliant national economy and similar issues have been included only as directive principles. Demands on ending all unequal treaties with other countries and controlling the open border with India, as well as the insistence on a two thirds majority in the interim government for adopting any agreement concerning national resources or security have been left out. Yet the interim government

won't be merely a new form of the existing old state. At present this much can be said with certainty - it will be one more forum of the sharp political struggle now going on in Nepal. One can expect quite contradictory positions and policies from it, reflecting its contradictory class composition.

This is something new, though a similar form of government had been envisaged in the proposals put forward by the CPC during its negotiations with the Kuomintang in 1946. It was never realized because the Kuomintang broke off negotiations and launched an offensive. But a reading of Mao Tsetung's writings of that period shows us that the CPC didn't consider its proposals as mere tactical gestures without any possibility of being materialised. What would have been the nature of that government? It never came into existence and the question remained unanswered. But this recollection of history is at least sufficient to warn against jumping into simplistic judgements.

The outcome of the political struggle in Nepal is far from decided. So too is the fate of the present agreement. Though the US has welcomed the accord, there are reports about its trying to use the UML and the NC led by Deuba to sabotage the agreement. The process of polarisation is also rapid, even among the SPA parties. What has emerged so far is decisively related to the great advances made by the CPN(M) through its 10 year long People's War. It is also shaped up by the balance of forces within Nepal and internationally. Within this there are favourable and unfavourable factors on both sides. One important factor is the US being tied down in Iraq by the resistance. But by its very nature and in the context of its drive to establish unchallenged hegemony over the whole world, US imperialism cannot live with an outcome in Nepal that further opens the way to a revolutionary transformation of that society. This is true of Indian expansionism also. Conspiracies can

quickly change into counter-revolution, waving the flag of 'defending democracy'. The question that needs to be examined is whether the present agreement and the entry of the CPN(M) into an interim government will be of use in tackling this threat.

The dynamics of the political scene in Nepal over the past few months have definitely demonstrated this potential. Each agreement has been broken by the SPA, pushed by its foreign mentors. And each betrayal has led to its greater isolation, a sharper polarisation in favour of the CPN(M) and wider support to its political platform. But it is not necessary that the SPA will stick to this record. The balance of forces, international situation and past experiences of utilising rightists within the revolutionary camp to subvert it, can well allow imperialism and reactionaries to seek the fulfilment of their aims within the present arrangement. But if the CPN(M) succeeds in maintaining its initiative and independence even while being a part of the interim government and persists in its political mobilisation guided by the aims it set for itself at the initiation of the war, any reversal of the present agreement, whether armed or peaceful, can quickly become the rallying point for a new upsurge. This is what makes the present agreement a significant step forward, demarcating a new turn.

The course of Nepal's revolution, with its twists and turns, is rich in its experiences as well as challenging in the questions it has thrown up in theory and practice. Quite naturally, the lessons being drawn from it are also extremely contrasting. For the Maoists the most important issue is the light Nepal can shed on the tasks of making revolution in the present world. This demands a serious engagement with the complexities it has delivered, not doctrinaire judgements. As for the revisionists, they have been quick in declaring a confirmation of their parliamentary cretinism. □

Battlelines at Oaxaca, Mexico

Members of the Oaxaca People's Assembly (APPO) forced their way into the Ley 710 radio station on 22nd November to transmit a message rallying followers to a weekend march. A few days earlier APPO and supporters filled over 3 miles of federal highway No:190 with hundreds of thousands of protesters all shouting for governor Ulises Ruiz's ouster in response to his claim that the conflict in Oaxaca is limited to "one avenue in the capital." Oaxacan teachers are among the lowest paid in the country. It was the outrageous repression of the teachers that precipitated the bursting forth of APPO, which united 350 social organisations. Although the teachers had originally begun their protest around economic demands, they united around the demand together with APPO to stay on strike and maintain the struggle until Ulises Ruiz Ortiz was forced from office. For nearly four months, teachers and supporters took over the zocalo (town square) in the capital of Oaxaca, shut down highways, blocked government buildings, and took over radio and television stations. The city was guarded by 1,500 barricades manned by the people. Though the government seized back the zocalo by employing a huge armed force and despite continued attacks, the resistance stands firm and has drawn wide support from all over the country.

courtsey: www.indymedia.org



US Elections

What They Do—and Do NOT—Mean

Last Tuesday's mid-term elections marked a significant turn of events. For the first time in 12 years, Republicans in the House of Representatives and Senate were voted out, and Democrats were returned to power. As soon as the results were in, the much-hated Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld was forced to resign. Yet the question of the day remains: what is the actual significance of these elections? What changes are—and aren't—likely to result? What will—and won't—they mean for the overall Bush agenda and the Iraq war? And what challenges and responsibilities confront those who oppose everything Bush and his regime stand for, and understand the need to reverse the whole direction they've been taking the world?

Many people see the vote as a popular referendum repudiating Bush, his administration, and the Iraq war. Millions of those who voted did so out of anger and disgust with the war. But in reality the war was not up for a vote—at least not in the way people may think.

The Bush team had thought they'd quickly be able to turn Iraq into a pro-U.S. client state, a platform for further aggression in the region, and a signal to the world that U.S. power was unchallengeable. Instead, U.S. forces have been unable to either quell the growing insurgency or cobble together a new Iraqi ruling class with the power, cohesion and legitimacy to stabilize the situation. All this has the potential to turn Iraq into a center of anti-U.S. hatred and instability, further strengthen Iran, destabilize the region, weaken the U.S. military, and open the door for rival powers. In short, exactly the opposite of what Bush and company set out to accomplish.

This caused forces within the ruling class to manoeuvre to force Bush to adjust his strategy.

These forces want to prevent a strategic debacle and to salvage what is possible from Iraq—in order to maintain U.S. military, political, and economic domination over the Middle East. They are not aiming for an immediate end to the war but instead for a shift in tactics within Iraq and, perhaps, in regard to other forces in the region. They are not questioning the morality or justness of the war, merely its execution. For these forces, the elections became one means of both criticizing the Bush team and forcing (and creating political cover for) a serious reassessment of the war's conduct and adjustment in strategy.

The Democrats' calls for a "new direction" and "competent" leadership in Iraq and their criticisms of Bush's "failed policy" served these objectives. The Democratic denunciations of the war were vague. Few candidates spelled out specifically what they would do, and fewer still called for immediate withdrawal. Some called the war a "mistake," but none called it what it actually is: reactionary, criminal, and immoral.

This vagueness had two major virtues for the ruling class. First, it enabled the Democrats—who have consistently voted for and supported the Iraq war and continue to support its broad objectives—to divert the broad anti-war anger into a framework that doesn't question the whole nature of the war. Second, it gives the Democrats the flexibility to join into a "bipartisan consensus" to "adjust," rather than end, the war.

The fall of Donald Rumsfeld has to be seen in this light. Rumsfeld is most associated with his insistence on attempting to conquer and occupy Iraq with the minimum number of forces necessary. His exit is at least in large part a signal that this strategy is open for "re-evaluation."

The pledges of the Democratic leaders like Nancy Pelosi for "civility and cooperation" must

also be seen in this light. She is pledging to hold tight, to not do anything that could possibly endanger the stability of the whole thing, and to keep “her base”—those who do look to the Democratic Party as an agent of change—firmly in check. The elections, therefore, by themselves, will not signal a fundamental reversal of course on Iraq, still less a repudiation of the logic that led to the invasion. Instead—absent a massive movement in determined opposition—they will end up as a vehicle to adjust, sustain and rehabilitate this hated war.

But Iraq is only one part of the Bush package. What about the other Bush horrors? Where was the Democrat, for instance, who came out against the legalized torture and gutting of habeas corpus that was passed in September? Where was the Democrat who went on the offensive against the mounting moves toward a theocracy—the rule by Christian fundamentalist fascists? Where was the Democrat who sounded the alarm against the Bush regime plans to invade Iran, or who criticized the support for the brutal Israeli invasion of Lebanon over the summer? Or who stood up for the rights of gay people to marry and dared to uphold the morality of a woman’s right to an abortion? Instead, the Democrats not only tacitly—and in some cases openly—went along with the Bush agenda on these and other questions, they took great pains to claim the “war on terror” as their own, even as that “war on terror” forms the logical underpinning of a huge part of Bush’s agenda. And despite widespread sentiment to hold Bush accountable for his many and horrific crimes, Nancy Pelosi denounced any idea of impeaching Bush.

Many commentators have remarked that the current election is unlike 1994, when the Republicans took over Congress with a clear-cut program for radical overhaul. This is because the forces behind the Bush regime (and behind that 1994 takeover as well) have developed a

“package” that speaks to some of the main underlying economic and political dynamics in the world—and the Democrats haven’t. This package includes aggressive international projection of the overwhelming military power of the U.S., a huge intensification of repression domestically, a drastic cut in government-funded social welfare programs, and the increasing buildup of a Christian fascist movement in the politics and culture of society (with some of the key forces in this mix pushing for an outright fascist theocracy).

The Democrats, try as some of them might, have not come up with either the program or the organized social and political forces to counter that—and they are not willing and they are not able, at this point, to oppose it with anything more than what Lenin once called “pious doubts and petty amendments.” The top Democratic leaders make their main priority the preservation of this system... we should step back here and look at the whole system that both Bush and the Democrats maintain is the “greatest country on in the world.” What, after all, is it that U.S. military force defends in the over 100 countries in which U.S. soldiers are based? Fundamentally, it is the “right” of U.S. capital to go anywhere and do anything, no matter how monstrous, in search of the highest possible profits; to dominate and despoil whole countries and even regions, sometimes if only to make sure that their rival imperialists do not; to drive people off their land in the blind pursuit of profit and then to use those same people as “cheap labour” either within their home countries or the imperialist countries themselves; to fortify repressive social orders and customs so long as they serve the needs of imperialist expansion; to crush whoever gets in their way, even fellow reactionaries and gangsters; and to violently and viciously suppress any revolutionary or radical movements that arise when people dare to throw off their chains, or even resist.

excerpted from RCP, US organ, Revolution #69

POLITICAL RESOLUTION OF CCOMPOSA 4th CONFERENCE



We the Maoist parties of South Asia are advancing the revolution under the conditions of a big imperialist and reactionary offensive in this region. Brutal and fascist repression against the revolutionary and nationality forces has become the norm by not only the state but also extra judicial forces in the respective countries like the Retaliatory Teams in Nepal, Salwa Judum, Cobra and Sendra in India amongst others, JMB (Jagroto Muslim Bangla) leading Bangla Bhai in Bangladesh, etc. Yet with the intensifying crisis the ruling classes of the respective countries are locked in internecine strife while the masses are rising up in mass discontent.

International events and those in South Asia are developing rapidly. Both are in a deep flux. Development never takes place in a straight line; there are numerous twists and turns. Over the past year this is to be clearly seen. Of course, this is taking place within the general framework of the present period marked by the massive attacks of finance capital worldwide — economic, political, military and even social, cultural,— going under the signboard of ‘globalisation’. Particularly since 2001 and the 9/11 attacks, it is manifested by: a growing economic crisis and political instability worldwide; increasing war-like policies of the number one imperialist, US imperialism, and greater unilateralism; greater and more ruthless attacks (economic and also military) by the imperialists, particularly the US imperialists, on the backward countries of the world; increased impoverisation of the working class in the developed countries and mass scale destitution in the backward countries; and greater fascisation of the state in all countries of the world in the name of fighting the ‘war on terror’.

US imperialism continues to be the number one enemy of all humankind and the only superpower existing today. It is the most aggressive and hegemonistic power in the world. It resorts to the worst forms of terrorism to maintain and extend its hegemony throughout the world. It is continuing to maintain over 100 military bases all over the world. But it is also facing severe problems.

The economy of the world is showing increasing fragility due to its increasingly speculative character. Though there has been a partial recovery since the severe downturn in the world economy in 2001, this

Proletarian Party of Purba Bangla-CC; PBSP (CC) [Bangladesh]

Communist Party of East Bengal(ML)(Red Flag); CPEB (ML)(Red Flag) [Bangladesh]

Bangladesher Samyobadi Dal(Marxist-Leninist) BSD(ML) [Bangladesh]

Communist Party of Bhutan (Marxist-Leninist-Maoist) CPB(MLM)

Communist Party of India (Maoist) ; CPI(Maoist)

Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) Naxalbari CPI-ML (Naxalbari) [India]

Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist-Maoist) CPI(MLM)[India]

Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist); CPN(Maoist) [Nepal]

has been faltering, weak and exceedingly fragile. Many an economist is predicting another crash, notwithstanding the high growth rates shown by official data for the US. Besides, this halting recovery has been accompanied by jobless growth, leading to further impoverisation of the masses worldwide. Also much of the so-called growth is illusory as it is not due to dynamism in the economies of the developed countries but the high growth rates recorded in the backward countries, most of which are based not on a sound economy but on imperialist induced artificial booms accompanied to a large extent by speculative capital.

While the economies of Europe and Japan are virtually stagnant that of the US is like a bubble being blown to the point of burst. Its economy is exceedingly fragile, with mountains of debt and deficits. After gigantic budget and current account deficits in 2004 it has gone up even higher last year. Last year the budget deficit was \$ 400 billion and the current account deficit \$780 billion. The confidence in the dollar as the only international currency is shaky and the Euro, with some ups and downs, has been rising to challenge the hegemony of the dollar. The US must get investments at the rate of \$ 2 billion per day to cover its trade deficit. If governments start investing their reserves in euros or other currencies the economy will be pushed to the brink.

Today, inspite of the weaknesses in the European economies, it is a major contender to the US. This contention is reflected in both countries seeking to make trade

blocs outside the WTO and strengthen existing ones. Though united in their attacks on the backward countries, the economic contention between the two is also reflected in the WTO.

Relatively the economy of Russia has seen some recovery which has enabled it to once again begin asserting its imperialist might in many parts of the world, particularly its backyard. And together with China's their combined strength are becoming a threat to US hegemony. Russia has already pushed back the US in much of the CIS (Confederation of Independent States) countries, and is pushing aggressively in West Asia. China is using its economic clout to gain markets like Sudan, Myanmar, many countries of South East Asia, etc besides their traditional hold of North Korea and Mongolia. Russia and China are forging a powerful bloc in the Shanghai Corporation Organisation (SCO) which has a clear anti-US trend.

Though collusion amongst imperialists continues to be principle, contention is intensifying, specifically compared to the early 1990s.

If we turn then to the backward countries, the situation is getting worse each day due to the continuous increase in the imperialist/comprador loot. Not only do the imperialists siphon off the loot from these countries abroad so do the compradors, destroying the local economies. The compradors too hold about 50% of their wealth in foreign countries. Africa is virtually in a state of chaos with western robber barons looting its natural resources, while Latin America is just coming out of one of the worst crisis it has ever faced. East Asia, that was battered by the 1997 imperialist financial attack, is yet to recover.

South Asia is being devastated with the growing imperialist/comprador loot. The smaller countries are in addition reeling under the jackboot of Indian expansionism, backed by imperialism, particularly US imperialism. The masses are resisting this onslaught in all ways possible and where they are led by the Maoists the

PLGA Fighters, India



struggle is taking a revolutionary turn, as in Nepal, India and Bangladesh. Where the revolutionaries are not present the masses take to spontaneous outbursts, going well beyond the limits set by the revisionist and bourgeois parties, which are mostly crushed by brute force.

The policies of Liberalisation, Privatisation and Globalisation have been devastating the lives of the masses throughout the world and each day pushes thousands more into the depths of poverty and destitution. This has affected both the developed and the underdeveloped countries, but it has hit the latter the worst. In addition these policies have given unimaginable wealth to a hand full of global sharks with a spill off to their comprador stooges in the backward countries. The gap between the rich and the poor has gone to unprecedented heights, and continues to grow. Thereby the contradictions between the haves and the have-not continue to sharpen; class contradictions intensify. The deepening crises in the imperialist economies are further intensifying their contradictions. Though no fixed blocs have as yet occurred and alignments are in a flux the scramble for markets is intensifying.

This situation is resulting in the US flexing its military muscle in many parts of the world. Using Israel as its front paw in the West Asia it is pushing aggression and threatening all the countries of the region. Though bogged down in Iraq and Afghanistan by the continued resistance of the people of these countries, using Israel it has launched a new adventure against Lebanon. Though resorting to mass massacre of the people of this country, they have been facing a heroic and stiff resistance. No doubt the entire West Asia will turn into a noose around the neck of the US imperialists and their Zionist stooges.

In South Asia, over the recent years the Indian ruling classes are becoming the front paw of the US imperialists in the region

and even beyond. While maintaining good relations with all the other countries of the region it is more and more drawing the servile Indian rulers into its geo-strategic interests. Indian expansionists backed by the US gangsters are being used to subvert all movements of the people in South Asia utilizing its gigantic army, paramilitary, intelligence and sophisticated weaponry. They have been ruthlessly attacking the revolutionary and nationality movements in the country, and assisting reactionary governments in the region both materially and physically. Kashmir and the North East States have become garrison states under Indian army occupation, where lakhs have been brutally killed. The Indian expansionist rulers are hated by the people of South Asia, including the people of India. The Indian Army's presence has been strengthened in Bhutan under the pretext of attacks on the ULFA.

But South Asia has also become a burning cauldron of the revolutionary, and more particularly Maoist, movements. The people's war in Nepal is reaching new heights, the merger of the two major Maoist forces in India have created a formidable force in India, the efforts of the Maoists to unite and extend the people's war to new areas in Bangladesh, and sprouts of the new Maoist movement in Bhutan, make South Asia a flaming field of Maoist revolutions. Together with these the armed nationality movements in the region have created an explosive situation.

The Maoists of Nepal have liberated the bulk of the countryside

PLA Fighters. Nepal



of their country and have successfully fought back the brutal onslaughts of the RNA and the genocidal monarchy. The US are intervening directly in all aspects of the political and military life of Nepal. Their movement has reached the stage of the strategic offensive with a powerful PLA and a vast militia. The massive people's upsurge in the country led by the Maoists has forced the monarchy to step back, and has created an unprecedented revolutionary situation in Nepal. The heroic Nepalese people, led by the CPN(Maoist), have recently come forward in lakhs to take the revolution forward, exposing the vacillations of the 7-party alliance. Nepal has today reached a critical juncture; and a great bright future awaits the people of that country.

The recent unity of the major Maoist parties in India has been a path-breaking advance of the Indian revolutionary movement and has led to an intensification of the people's war. Some other Maoist parties in India are also making preparations in this direction. The CPI(Maoist) and the PLGA have been able to successfully beat back the massive onslaught on them in Chhattisgarh going on in the name of Salwa Judum. The unification has created panic in the Indian ruling classes and their imperialist backers (particularly the US) and today the Maoists are for the first time being targeted as the number one internal enemy of these ruling gangsters. The growing ability of the PLGA to beat back the state's cruel offensive is creating a new hope in the people of this vast country.

In Bangladesh in spite of the divisions in the Maoist ranks and most brutal repression, particularly by the RAB (Rapid Action Battalion), Maoists have made strenuous efforts to advance the people's war in their country. They have also been making efforts to end their divisions and unite into a strong Maoist force in the country. In Bhutan the Maoist sprouts continue to grow notwithstanding the massive repression of the feudal State, total lack of democratic rights, and the presence of the large Indian forces stationed in that country. All are mobilised to crush the new sprouts of the Maoist movement and justice-loving people in Bhutan.

Today, though the worldwide situation is ripe for a major advance of the genuine revolutionary

movements of the world the subjective forces are weak. Though the Maoist forces are recovering their strength from the setback in 1976 with China turning revisionist, and are united more firmly on MLM, revisionism has eaten into the vitals of many communists and turned them into a spent force. Today it is revisionism that is the main danger to the communist forces throughout the world. It is impossible to advance the revolution without a consistent and thoroughgoing struggle against revisionism, whatever the form it takes. As part of this, dogmato-sectarianism is also having a negative impact on communist movements in the world. Today, more than ever before, there is urgent need for all genuine communists to creatively apply Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, including the experiences of the GPCR, to the concrete conditions of their country and advance the revolutions for the seizure of power by armed force towards building socialism and advancing towards communism. In this process with the advancement of the revolution and the class struggle MLM too develops. Along with major challenges, there are great revolutionary opportunities in the present world and the Maoists must dare scale new heights.

There have been vast people's upsurges throughout the world against the aggressive policies of the US imperialists which have shaken the imperialists to the core. The massive violent outbreaks in France have created a panic in entire Europe. The growing national liberation movements around the world have created a new fear in the imperialist minds. And most important the Maoist People's wars of Nepal, Philippines, India, Turkey and Peru are the sparks of a new awakening towards a bright socialist future. A new wave of great revolutionary struggles are appearing on the horizon. The principal contradiction in the world continues to be between imperialism and the oppressed nations and peoples of the world.

CCOMPOSA, an organization of the Maoists of South Asia, vows to deepen and extend the links between the genuine Maoists of the region, help sharpen the weapon of MLM and increase coordination to fight back the enemies in their respective countries, actively being led by their US imperialist masters. With the ruling classes of most

countries of South Asia assisting each other in the region to suppress the revolutionary and nationality movements there is ever greater need for the people's movements of these countries to draw closer together and assist their respective struggles. More particularly it is the Indian expansionist rulers, backed by the imperialists, particularly the US imperialists who are aggressively supporting the governments of the respective countries to suppress or subvert the movements. In addition it is the US imperialists that are directly intervening in all the countries of the region, with military training,

political manouvering, and blatant and outright intervention in suppressing the Maoist movements.

CCOMPOSA vows to beat back the attacks of these reactionary rulers, the Indian Expansionists and kick the US and all imperialists out of South Asia. CCOMPOSA vows to deepen and advance the new democratic revolutions in the different countries of South Asia as a part of the world socialist revolution. Let South Asia turn into a flaming field of peoples' revolutionary upsurges and burn to ashes imperialism (particularly US imperialism), Indian expansionism and all reaction in the region. □

The Muslims in India

Even the few details revealed by the Rajendra Sachar commission, appointed to go into the social, economic and educational status of Muslims in India demolish the Sangh Parivar lie of Muslims being pampered at the cost of a 'Hindu' majority. With a population of 13.4 percent the Muslims come to only 6.4 percent of government employees. Only 7.2 percent complete secondary school. But in 8 states where they are nearly 15 percent of the population nearly a quarter of prisoners are Muslims! According to a Kerala Shastra Sahitya Parishad study of 2004, even in Keralam, where Muslims are better educated, they are *behind* Dalits and Adivasis in acquiring college education, are at the bottom in population-wise government employment and rank just above Dalits and Adivasis in poverty.

The appointment of the Sachar commission emerged from the concern among a section of the ruling classes that growing hatred against the discrimination they suffer is attracting wider sections of Muslim youth to radical Islamic fundamentalism. That the previous NDA government led by the BJP had also started thinking along these lines towards the end of its term, shows that this is more than a Congress ploy to rebuild its vote bank. Discrimination against Muslims is an intrinsic characteristic of the Indian ruling classes. A few sops here and there is the most that can be expected even if the Sachar commission recommendations are accepted.

The commission has recorded the widespread existence of castes and caste discrimination among the Muslims. It estimates that nearly half the Muslim population are backward castes, one percent Dalits and half a percent Adivasis. Since caste certificates are not granted and Muslim Dalits are not eligible for reservation they doubly suffer from their social oppression. This exposes the casteist roots of religious discrimination in India. It also indicts the Brahmanism contained in the thought and practice of Islamic revivalists and fundamentalists, who are vocal about discrimination towards Muslims but silent about the casteism existing among them.

ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Domestic violence is a symbol of male domination cutting across class, caste, religion and country. Despite the overall democratisation, domestic violence is a major issue even in western countries. In most matrimonial relations, violence on woman is a common method to 'discipline' the wife or teach her a 'lesson'. And in most cases the economic dependency of the woman on her husband aggravates the situation further. But every dissent of the tormented woman is suppressed culturally, emotionally and physically behind the walls by the husband and relatives. Prevailing patriarchal values gives them a customary support to perpetrate such crimes. Though there is a law in the Indian Penal Code under section 498A to deal with this cruelty, it has been proved ineffective and inadequate long before, as there is no let-up in the violence against women within the family. The law provided no emergency relief to the victim; the remedies that were available were linked to matrimonial proceedings; and the court proceedings were always protracted, during which period the victim was invariably at the mercy of the abuser. At the same time relationships outside marriage were out of the purview of the law. This set of circumstances forced a majority of women to suffer in silence.

In this situation, the recent notification of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005, may give some relief to the woman tormented by domestic violence. Unlike Section 498A of IPC, the provisions in the current Act are made more stringent through its definition as well as well as remedies. Section 3 of the law says any act/conduct/omission/commission that harms or injures or has the potential to harm or injure will be considered 'domestic violence'. Thus the law considers physical, sexual, emotional, verbal, psychological, and economic abuse

or threats as punishable. Coercion for dowry or other properties is also treated similarly. Relationships outside marriage are also covered. Women do not have to suffer a prolonged period of abuse before taking recourse to the law as even a single act of commission or omission may constitute domestic violence. Unlike Section 498A this new law provides the abused women a legal right to continue to stay in the matrimonial home and seek maintenance if thrown out from there.

India has no dearth of progressive laws. See the fate of the people even after having laws like the Dowry prohibition Act or Prevention of SC/ST Atrocities Act. The latest example in the series is the brutal attack and murder of four members of a Dalit family in Khairlanji in Maharashtra, by the upper castes notwithstanding a powerful Act to prevent atrocities against Dalits. Considering the prevalence of patriarchal values all around, a law alone is not going to make any drastic change in the subjugated condition of women within the family or in the society. Law enforcing agencies are patriarchy biased. By persuasion, they can prevent a woman from making a complaint against the abuser which they were doing all along. So, unless there is a change in the patriarchal norms and values existing in the society this kind of laws will remain as ineffective progressive laws.

The demand for such a law has been raised by feminist and progressive organisations for quite a while. But the present law is not just a response to it. It is part of a series of Acts adopted, or in the making, to formally meet the Indian state's obligations at international fora. So while such progressive laws are adopted, we have instances of a registered book publisher being arrested at a book fair for displaying progressive literature and web sites being closed.□

GANDHIGIRI 'S GOONDAGIRI or the message of 'Lage Raho Munna Bhai'

Gargi

When a Munna meets Gandhi's ghost Gandhigiri is born. This can be the definition of Gandhigiri after one sees the film 'Lage Raho Munna Bhai'. Being adapted to the likings of a flamboyant but timid young middle class generation of today, this film got wide acceptance among them and the word 'Gandhigiri' became one more slang in their campus vocabulary. It is not that Gandhi is being forgotten as the director laments through his Munna in the film. Gandhi is still among us, though rather washed-out by the turbulent flow of social contradictions, and people like the producer Vidhu Vinod Chopra and director Rajkumar Hirani will consistently try to reinvent his rubbish. At the same time one would doubt whether they are really portraying the philosophy of Gandhi, in the name of 'Gandhigiri' in the film. Actually Gandhigiri is nothing but the most reduced form of Gandhi's nonsenses to suit the stupidity of Munna and his sidekick Circuit.

Munna and his accomplice Circuit are local goondas. Munna is fascinated by the voice of Jhanvi, Radio Jockey (RJ) at an FM Radio in the city and dreams to have a life with her. Jhanvi is running an old age home in a leased-in bungalow named 'Second Innings House' (SIH). Munna wins a radio contest on Gandhi using his and his sidekick Circuit's Goondagiri, the reward of which was a meeting with Jhanvi. Actually, it was this reward that prompted Munna to participate in the contest so that he can meet Jhanvi in person. He poses as a history Professor and upon her request agrees to deliver a lecture on Gandhi. So Munna has to read up on Gandhi and in that process Gandhi's ghost appears, promising to appear whenever he is in need of

getting over a difficult situation. Lucky Singh, a city business man, who used the Goondagiri of Munna and Circuit for his business purposes, utilises Circuit without informing Munna, to get the SIH evicted. And it is done in the absence of Munna and Jhanvi who are sent away on Lucky's expense to Goa along with the SIH inmates. This forces Munna to confront Lucky but he threatens that he will disclose Munna's identity to Jhanvi. In this confused situation Gandhi's ghost advises him to shed violence and follow his non-violent path. Jhanvi and Munna together start a radio program called 'Gandhigiri', which gives peaceful solutions to the distressing personal problems of the people of Mumbai. The program becomes popular and people start to send flowers to Lucky along with a message saying 'Get well soon' since he is sick with greed. In that process, Munna takes up the Gandhi ghost's advice and confesses to Jhanvi. Jhanvi, feels cheated and breaks her relation with Munna. But he becomes popular among the people through his radio program. In this situation, Lucky, in the name of handing over the SIH to Munna, conducts a press conference and exposes Munna's delusion of seeing the ghost of Gandhi with the help of a psychiatrist. Losing heart, Munna and Circuit plan to go back to the village. Meanwhile Munna happens to save the life and marriage of the daughter of Lucky Singh through his Gandhigiri program and Goondagiri at the cost of landing in jail along with Circuit. Jhanvi, realising Munna's goodness, reunites with him and Lucky also turns up to hand over the key of SIH and ends everything happily.

The movie has all the ingredients needed for a popular film, an entertainer within the wide

spectrum of mass culture. Love, sorrow, violence, sex, laughter, tragedy and comedy. But the script is so written that the undertones of sex and violence are covered under the tones of laughter and comedy! Gandhi and his philosophy of non-violence are selectively applied by the director in accordance with the need of the comic-tragic-comic transformation of the storyline.

The manner by which the movie recreates Gandhian non-violence is itself contradictory. On many occasions, Munna contradicts what he has learned from Gandhi's non-violence. Munna's dreaming of name and fame inside the lock up; his Goondagiri towards Atmaram's son, the company manager, in order to force him to come for Atmaram's birthday; threatening the radio station staff with a gun in a drunken state in order to talk to Jhanvi through the radio; threatening the jyothish Batuk Maharaj with a gun asking him about his own fate- all of this goes against the character of Munna who is already enlightened by Bapu. A similar example is the use of the popular notion "after you have shown the other cheek also what next, Bapu didn't tell about this". Though contradicting Gandhi's views, the director has deliberately used them because they are the reflections of common sense in the specific situation. In other words, violating his own endeavor to reinvent the non-violence of Gandhi, the director is forced to present the commonsense view on violence, because that is the truth of life. Of course, all of this adds to the overall humor and relieves the viewer from what would otherwise have been a monotonous film on Gandhi's passivity.

Everybody is sympathetic to Munna and Circuit. All their deeds are justified by the unjust world around them. This actually transforms the concept of hero itself. Munna in his first avatar (in 'Munna Bhai MBBS') and in his second avatar in this film, does not represent the conventional hero. Basically he is a goonda. But a good

goonda- a goonda having a heart in a heartless world. The moral degeneration in social life is one of the basic reasons for the admiration of a negative hero. Admiration for Bin Laden or Saddam Hussein or Verappan demonstrates the same psychology of populist culture. Jhanvi's radio announcement also speaks about the degrading moral status of daily life in a city like Mumbai. This degenerated moral life demands a philosophical and ideological way out. Either you break the chains or move along the beaten tracks after refashioning it in your mind. The director opts for the second by reinventing Gandhi.

Films of this genre are not burdened of being honest to the historical characters they take up, like Gandhi or Bhagat Singh, whatever their views on the ideologies they upheld. These historical figures were created by a social upsurge and their ideologies related to that. Whereas in films like 'Rang De Basanti' (where Bhagat Singh was the ideological hero) or 'Lage Raho Munna Bhai' (where Gandhi is the ideological hero) they are ideologically trivialised through their portrayal by the protagonists. True, the protagonists in 'Rang De Basanti' end up fighting against an injustice inspired by their role acting of Bhagat Singh and his comrades, not for some petty cause like Munna turning to Gandhi in order to win the heart of Jhanvi. But the larger context of injustice Baghat Singh had seen gets covered up, and struggles that really strive to realise the ideals of martyrs are blacked out.

What ever might have been the wishful thinking of Gandhi, violence remains a universal law. Antagonistic contradictions are ultimately resolved through violence, without exception. This is proven by history and that is why Gandhi's ahimsa was dumped in its rubbish bin. No doubt, as said by Gandhi's ghost in the film, his ideology will remain as a 'chemical locha' (chemical imbalance) at least in somebody's head who will

again and again try to reinvent ahimsa! But only a fool would think that he can overcome corruption in our government offices by shedding his clothes, like the old man in the film trying to get his duly sanctioned pension. Imagine a situation where the people of Iraq sit in for a Gandhian style 'Sathyagraha' in the war fields of Iraq against the US occupation or the people of Palestine or Lebanon sit-in against the Israeli invasion in their respective countries! Why doesn't the Indian government practice ahimsa towards the Kashmiris or the Manipuris or the struggling people in various States of this country? Everywhere violent suppression of people is the rule of law while speaking endlessly about peace and nonviolence. This is the real Goondagiri of Gandhigiri- ideologically and politically !

When the ruling classes depict Gandhi as a man of 'sathyagraha' and 'ahimsa' we can't forget his 'sathyagraha' against Dr.Ambedkar and his 'ahimsatmak' approach toward the hanging of Bhagat Singh by the British. The hoax of his non-violence was exposed long ago by various writers on the true history of the freedom struggle of India. Writes Suniti Kumar Ghosh, in his classic work 'The Indian Big Bourgeoisie', "The people, left to themselves and uninhibited by any respect for 'non-violence', rose in heroic revolt in many parts of the subconti-

ment. Viceroy Linlithgow wired to Churchill that it was *by far the most serious rebellion since that of 1857, the gravity and extent of which we have so far concealed from the world for reasons of military security*". When India was violently confronting the British, "... Gandhi wrote to Linlithgow repudiating all responsibility for the Quit India movement and assuring him that *I remain the same friend' you have known me*". By being a bridge between the Indian comprador bourgeoisie and the British, he was betraying the struggling masses with his double-dealing. This was the actual Gandhi and the meaning of his non-violence. His theory of non-violence is nothing but a mask to cover up the horrors of violence perpetrated and still being perpetrated over the masses. Any portrayal of Gandhi as a role model is nothing but treachery and it amounts to advising the masses to adjust and live with the system.

Entertainment is never purely so. Every piece of art, as a form of entertainment, is not only cultural, it is also ideological and political to the very core. This is equally applicable to the entertainer, the entertained and to the piece of entertainment as well. And if history is also involved, art must be true to it. Otherwise it is a fad. So let us send flowers to the director Rajkumar Hirani with a message, "Get Well Soon"! □

The Court as a Weapon of Globalisation

In a spree of anti people verdicts the Supreme Court has suggested applying the 'creamy layer' stranglehold on Dalit and Adivasi reservation, ruled out granting compensation for workplace death as a matter of natural justice, approved dismissal of anyone on probation without the formality of enquiry and pushed its Tuglakian Delhi beautification programme. The courts have been hyperactive in overturning all precedents of social justice and concern. Money and hereditary merit are being made the criteria. Free of any interaction with the masses, unlike politicians who have to go to them to get elected, the courts rush in where governments are cautious. They thus become a useful weapon of globalisation. In its haste the courts are not even concerned with overturning their own precedents. So a five member bench tinkers with a nine member bench's decision, while anyone who questions its verdicts is packed off to jail. These justices are dancing on our backs!

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carried out against those who refused to be fooled by such gestures and stood firm in struggle. This was how British imperialism prepared the transfer of power. The comprador INC leadership, impatient to get into the seats of power, fully collaborated with these preparations. It had always demonstrated its readiness to stand by the British colonialists against anyone who tried to raise arms to end its rule. Nehru and Patel were firm followers of Gandhi who had supported the hanging of Baghat Singh and his comrades. Jinnah of the Muslim League was no better. When Indian sailors of the British Navy mutinied, all of them had rushed to support the brutal suppression carried out by the British rulers. This had taken place just a few months before Punnapra-Vayalar. So this was the political context of the struggles; a situation where the local exploiters were zealously collaborating with British imperialism to drown every sign of resistance in blood baths.

The gravity of this situation must be kept in mind while evaluating the sudden imposition of martial law by the Thiruvithamkoor Diwan and his deployment of a huge army detachment to slaughter the masses in Punnapra-Vayalar. But this was beyond the party leadership blinkered by collaborationism. It failed to grasp the political undercurrents. All it saw was the Diwan's thirst for power.

The Diwan's proposal on retaining the monarchical form of rule was part of his plan to make Thiruvithamkoor an independent state after British colonial rule ended. And, to a great extent, the demand of the Thiruvithamkoor State Congress for "Responsible Government" reflected the INC's policy of integrating local kingdoms like Thiruvithamkoor into a unitary India. Hence the party leadership was acting under the belief that the contradiction between the Diwan's ambitions and the plans of the INC and State Congress would come in its favour. This is proved by its later accusation of 'betrayal' against State Congress leaders. The State Congress represented a broad alliance of the various classes in Thiruvithamkoor. But it was led by the interests of the new landlords and local compradors. The contradictions they had with the masses far outweighed those they had with the Diwan. On each occasion when the masses were aroused by the agitations of the State Congress, rather than intensifying the struggle, its leadership worked overtime to compromise with

the Diwan. Yet, the party leadership ignored this recent history and the tensing up of the world, all-India political situation. It expected State Congress and INC support for its militant struggles, or at the least a neutral approach. This was an important reason for its lack of preparedness, even when it became clear that the Diwan would be deploying the army. It chose to ignore a lesson repeatedly given by history – there is no limit for the exploiters when they decide to suppress the masses.

When seen against the backdrop of that period it is quite clear that the Punnapra-Vayalar struggles were a product of those times. The unprecedented mobilisation and participation of the masses were the best proof of this. Contrary to the verdict of bourgeois historians, the party leadership's irresponsibility lay not in calling for the struggle but in its failure to lead it properly. While the masses came forward in their thousands to lay down their lives in struggle, the top leadership, paralysed by seeing its calculations go awry, took refuge in cowardly flight. This becomes all the more clear when compared with the Telengana leadership. The Telengana struggle was initiated against the Nizam of Hyderabad and feudalism. Here too the communist party didn't have a conscious plan to develop it as an armed struggle. It acquired this character through spontaneous resistance. But this was possible because of the determination of the Andhra party leadership to stand firm against suppression. It thus succeeded in developing armed resistance to the level of an armed struggle to seize political power and spreading it. Through these experiences it arrived at the Chinese path of protracted people's war and was able to persist even after the Indian army entered the fighting. Though it failed to stand firm on this revolutionary path and later surrendered to revisionism, the experiences of the Telengana armed struggle show us what can be achieved by standing firm in class struggle.

The recent accusation that the communist party was 'leading the Dalits to their death' in Punnapra-Vayalar is yet another version of the worn out chant of the bourgeoisie who see those struggles as something forced upon the masses by the communist party and proof of the futility of taking up arms. The Dalit landless peasants of Vayalar had joined the struggle in a massive way, along with other exploited, with the hope and determination of uprooting caste-feudalism. To fulfil that aspiration the struggle had to be

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West Asia: Deeper Into the Bog

Bush's gloating over the death sentence handed to Saddam Hussein after a stage managed trial was cut short by his electoral defeat and the exit of Rumsfeld. But recent incidents in West Asia, such as the ghastly car bombing in Baghdad taking more than 200 lives and the murder of Lebanese transport minister Pierre Gemayel in Beirut, show a continuity in vicious tactics, despite all talk of a change of course. Or perhaps, they indicate the direction of things to come. In Iraq, Lebanon and Palestine, religious and national sectarian contradictions have been purposefully fanned up on every occasion where the occupiers have faced heightened pressure. The resistance is kept divided. This guides the various options being explored by US think tanks and commissions on Iraq. They include the splitting up of the country into Kurd, Shia and Sunni regions, relocating US led occupation forces to neighbouring countries and initiating a dialogue with Syria and Iran to contain the resistance.

As such, the rule of the puppet Iraqi government is nominal. Actual control is exercised by locally dominant armed groups. The puppet forces are severely divided and are controlled by one or the other faction. The new constitution has strengthened divisiveness by transferring new oil operations to provinces and allowing them to take part in operating existing fields. This tempts regional compradors and feudal chieftains to go along with a division of the country to consolidate their power. Almost 71 per cent of reserves and most of the current production are located in Shia dominated provinces. The Kurdish provinces come next. But a division along these lines will intensify resistance among Sunnis. Sectarian clashes will increase, inevitably drawing in surrounding countries.

Relocation of occupation forces to neighbouring countries may help dampen growing public opposition in the US. But this assumes a fairly loyal puppet force when the existing one is faction ridden and unreliable. The third option is also of limited value. Iran and Syria may be roped in to assist the US. A working deal with the 'Satan' may be acceptable to Ahmadinejad, particularly since it can now be presented as a 'victory'. But his ability to end the resistance in Iraq is doubtful, simply because it is primarily driven by the deep hatred of the Iraqi people against the imperialist occupiers. A significant role for Iran will heighten contradictions among comprador regimes in West Asia and trigger off a search for new relations with other imperialist powers.

Many of the significant armed groups have links with neighbouring comprador regimes. But the bedrock of the resistances is the contradiction of the oppressed peoples and nations with imperialism. Those who dismiss its role by describing what's happening in West Asian countries as a war between two reactionary forces, weaken the world anti-imperialist struggle. The role played by this contradiction in world politics will be qualitatively more decisive where the leadership of communist or revolutionary forces is present. But to make this the criteria to acknowledge or dismiss the role played by struggles that reflect this principle contradiction will be sliding into imperialist economism. It will blunt proletarian internationalism and it will blunt the struggle of the proletariat in imperialist countries against their own bourgeoisie.

The deep wounds US has suffered, the tangle it has tied itself up in West Asia in a very short span of time, reveals the tremendous revolutionary potential of the world situation. It substantiates the RIM's views on an emerging wave of world revolution. It points out that the world situation is more favourable for the revolutionary masses than for the imperialists. The US is bogged down in West Asia. The options being examined by its ideologues are only going to pull it in even more deeply. This is opening up more opportunities for revolution. It is also paving the way for new equations in inter-imperialist collusion and contention. There is yet another significant matter. US is being blocked by armed resistance in West Asia, mainly led by Islamic groups. These groups are either revivalist or fundamentalist in their outlook and not firm in their anti-imperialism. This brings up two things. First, the intensity of the oppressed people/imperialism contradiction and the real weaknesses of imperialism that make it possible for even such forces to tie down a sole super power. Second, the subjective weakness of the Maoist movement and a reminder of the need to overcome it as soon as possible.

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extended beyond the savarna landlords who were the local oppressors. It had to be directed against the political power protecting caste-feudalism. The contradiction the masses, including Dalits, had with the Diwan's rule was not something separate from their contradiction with caste-feudalism. But this is ignored by those who justify the struggle against savarna landlords, yet declare that the struggle against the Diwan was unnecessary and forced on the Dalits by a savarna party leadership. The casteism of this accusation is evident. But that is not the crux of the matter. The CPI and CPM leaderships have summed up that the mistake made in Telengana lay in developing an anti-feudal struggle for land into an armed struggle to seize political power. For all its wretchedness, this summation is ap-

parently based on a class outlook while that mentioned earlier is casteist. Yet in essence they join each other to spit out a reformism that negates the struggle for political power. In essence both serve the protection of the existing political power, which sustains class exploitation and caste oppression.

Any liberation struggle to overcome and destroy a powerful enemy inevitably demands a heavy price. The oppressed and exploited have never hesitated to pay up. This blood price has never deterred them from struggle. When joined with a correct line capable of transforming their boundless urge into a determined revolutionary force, there is nothing that can stop them. When that line is absent the revolutionary energy of the masses is wasted. This is the true lesson of the Punnapra-Vayalar struggles. □

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should be handled remains. Here too education and reform should be the general principle. But, in cases of unrepentant elements involved in conscious acts of sabotage, the principle of "saving a place even by sacrificing one" will have to be adopted. The former is an instance of an anti-social criminal's oppressive act against a just society. The latter is the oppression carried out by such a society to secure its existence.

This means that an absolutist demand for continuing the death sentence or ending it, separating this form of punishment and the crime from a specific social context, would be unscientific and unjust. There can be no doubt that carrying out the death verdict on the accused in the Rajiv Gandhi murder case will only be a case of exacting revenge through legal murder... Even if we assume that there is clinching evidence (which is far from true), the existing views of the supreme court itself demands an annulment of this sentence in view of the political and social context in which the crime alleged against them took place, their motivations and age. But what has happened is just the opposite. Therefore, a powerful expression of mass opinion against the present practice of death sentencing, easily misused by the ruling classes, should be built up.

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at various places in the country. The twin SEZs coming up at Navi Mumbai and Maha Mumbai, with Reliance Industries as the main partner, will have a combined size of 35,000 acres and another one at Jamnagar in Gujarat will be 10,000 acres. Reliance has applied for another SEZ in Haryana having a size of 25,000 acres. The Adani group is setting up an SEZ at Mundra, covering 30,000-35,000 acres. DLF plans SEZs at Ambala (2,500 acres) and Gurgaon (19,880 acres) while Unitech plans one at Sonapat (10,000 acres). Both DLF and Unitech are big real estate developers. Salim Group of Indonesia is developing a SEZ in West Bengal in an area of 50,000 acres in South 24 Parganas district.

It must be noted here that, by inviting the Salim Group of Indonesia to set up SEZ in the State,

it was the West Bengal government that first showed the 'art of negotiation' to other chief ministers. The CPM chief minister, Mr. Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee had openly denounced the working class and praised the might of capital in order to persuade the Salim Co, which has a notorious past of assisting the Suharto government of Indonesia in massacring lakhs of communists, to come and set up the SEZ in West Bengal. The maneuverability and corporate-friendliness of the CPM chief minister, who was otherwise supposed to be 'anti-capital', was a lesson to other chief ministers in the country. After that, we see an unprecedented competition among them offering everything in their posses-

land and agricultural land will not be used for that purpose. But the reality is that in all the SEZs, more than 90 percent of the land is agricultural land of single to multi-crop variety. When the affected farmers came out in protest against SEZs in almost every State, the government modified its earlier position and included single crop farm land also for acquisition, as if single crop land is not agricultural land. Farmers were already agitating against the acquisition of their multi-crop land for Indonesian Salim SEZ and Tata Co., exposing the anti-peasant and pro-globalisation attitude of the pseudo-left West Bengal government. In order to contain these struggles, justify their own government's motive

- The area in a SEZ to be free from environmental restrictions
- West Bengal's SEZ Bill declares units as public utility services, making strikes illegal
- 100% foreign direct investment allowed in manufacturing units
- No cap on foreign investment for items reserved for small industries
- SEZ units exempted from State sales tax, octroi, mandi tax, turnover tax, electricity duty
- SEZ developers to have full freedom in allocating space and built up area to units, allowed 100% FDI for building townships and running basic telephone services in SEZ

sion in order to bring foreign capital to their respective States. The logic of 'take me wholly, but invest in me', is what the economics of imperialist globalisation demands from every subjugated economy. The SEZ policy is a country-wide implementation of this logic and all ruling class parties are integrated with it. If these are SEZs spread over wide contiguous land above 10,000 acres, there are more than a hundred other SEZs which are going to come up on land having size between the minimum permitted 25 acres and 10,000 acres, like the Suncity SEZ spread over 7410 acres in Ambala, POSCO SEZ in Orissa spread over 4500 acres or Bentex's multi-services SEZ spread over 415 acres in Haryana.

Earlier on the Central Government said that SEZ will be developed only in waste or barren

and hijack the political advantage of the farmers agitations going on in other States, CPM leader Mr. Sitaram Yechuri came out saying 'multi-crop land should be used only *if it was essential*'. So, the WB government is acquiring multi-crop land because it is essential! Wah! Mr. Yechuri.

It is reported that by the end of October, about 405 SEZs have been approved by the Board of Approval in the Commerce Ministry. Also, it is reported that another 200 applications are pending expecting approval from the Board. Out of the 405 SEZs that are approved so far, 218 are Information Technology (IT) SEZs. That is more than 50 percent of the approvals. This proves the general assumption that SEZ Act would be giving chance to many IT companies, which are already in operation, to migrate to the

SEZs in order to take advantage of the tax and duty exemptions and other benefits. This would definitely lead to revenue loss as observed by the Finance Ministry and RBI. Not only that, the employment that might be created by these companies set up in SEZs cannot be accounted as additional employment, as the same amount of employment might have been there even when they were operating outside the SEZ. So no more jobs but definitely more revenue loss! Yet all are happy with this investment!

Development by itself greatly increases land value. That is one of the reasons behind the enthusiasm of big real estate companies like DLF and Unitech jumping in as developers of SEZs. But the aim here is supposedly to promote exports, not real estate. What is the guarantee that enough export units will flock to these new SEZs, especially to those in States far away from good ports, since a large part of export usually takes place through ports? Though there is a mad rush to set up new SEZs, real exporters are not seen among them. SEZ developers say they cannot give guarantees of entry from export units at the very outset; they hope such units may come up over a period of 7-10 years. But that is also not guaranteed. Ultimately what will happen to the land? Policy makers are keeping quite on this issue. If the land is taken on lease, then for how many years; and after that who will have the right?

Definitely, SEZ is going to displace a large number of peasants from the countryside once their land is acquired forcefully or otherwise. Whatever compensation they may get for their land will be used up in no time, as there remains no other source of income for survival. Ultimately they will land up in the urban slums and toil the rest of the life there. You may see the farmers who lost their land for projects like Dhabol Power Plant in Ratnagiri and Ispat Denro Plant in Raigad in the slums of Mumbai, engaged in menial jobs. While acquiring their land many of

them were even offered jobs in the industry that was coming up, but they never got the appointment! This is the story of every project of 'development' – the story of the oustees of development.

It is reported that the total amount of arable land in the country has been considerably reduced over the years due to the violence of the so-called Green Revolution, desertification and other 'developmental' projects. When agriculture remains the basic means of survival for more than 70 per cent of the population of this country, snatching away their only means of survival, under whatever pretext of development, means throwing them to the mouth of death for the sake of the growth of bureaucrat capital of Tatas and Ambanis and others. An agrarian crisis is already looming over the country and huge numbers of agrarian masses are in distress due to the agricultural policies of the government over the years, forcing more than 1,00,000 indebted farmers to commit suicide in the last 6 years. The current SEZ policy is going to worsen this situation further.

It may be argued that, development always takes place at the cost of agricultural land. This is not completely true. We have the example of the Taching oil fields in erstwhile socialist China, where industrial development was carried out at a minimal loss of agricultural land and a model of combining industry and agriculture was developed. But that was possible because of the Maoist vision of development containing the principle of working towards narrowing the difference between town and countryside and making agriculture the base with industry as the leading factor. The question here is, development for whom and what kind of development. When the so called 'development' is amounting to be disastrous for the majority and profitable only for a few, how can we call it development? Whoever raises voice for such development is actually echoing the imperialist interest. ~~This~~ Manmohan-Rajnath-Yechury axis of development must be rejected in totality.

continued from page 7...

all directions; only in the community, therefore, is personal freedom possible. In the previous substitutes for the community, in the state, etc., personal freedom has existed only for the individuals who developed within the relationships of the ruling class and only insofar as they were individuals of this class.”⁶

What Marx means here by ‘community’ is a society that has abolished class distinctions and the division of labour it is based on. He points out that in all the substitutes for this community (including the illusory community imposed by an exploiting class in the form of its state) personal freedom is not really freedom. It is as impossible as a community of interests between all people living in a class divided society. Individual members of the ruling class certainly enjoy the ‘freedom’ to share in the spoils of exploitation. But they do this not as an expression of individual choice. They do it as members of the ruling class and they can do it only thus. Obviously, even these individuals do not enjoy this freedom because they are human beings endowed with individuality. It depends on the accident or chance event of their membership in the exploiting class. They obtain it irrespective of their individual inclinations. Their individuality does not count in this, though they may display such inclinations in exercising this freedom. In essence, in relation to this freedom, they are not even considered as real individuals. As Marx goes on to point out, they are only ‘average individuals’ measured by the common yardstick of belonging to the exploiting class.

The historical significance of bourgeois society lies in the fact that all of this is clearly exposed. And the conditions are created to go beyond it to a society where the individual can cultivate his or her gifts in all directions. In pre-capitalist societies, social/class position was primarily determined by birth. For example, in a

caste-feudal society one is born into a caste. One’s position in the social hierarchy depends on the position of one’s caste, which is predestined. Individuals cannot change their position in this hierarchy, because they cannot change their caste. Hence the accidental, and therefore fraudulent, nature of personal freedom enjoyed by a member of the exploiting class is not evident. But, in bourgeois society, it is possible (though rarely achievable) for individual workers to elevate themselves into the ranks of the bourgeoisie. The opposite is also possible. In this society, what matters is capital not birth. Thus, the accidental, chance, nature of freedom an individual gains by being born into a bourgeois family is exposed under the omnipotent rule of capital itself. A poor Brahmin is still a Brahmin and a rich Dalit still bears some of the burdens of caste. But there is no such thing as a capitalist without capital. If one loses all capital (and fails to regain some) one is no longer a capitalist.

The capitalist system establishes and sanctifies the ‘average individual’ who enjoys freedom by accident or fortune. Its ideologues are satisfied with this and extol it as the fullest blossoming of individuality. This is the ideological basis of its formal declaration of equality. Thus, it clears the ground for surpassing not only its pre-

“The proletariat took the bourgeoisie at its word: equality must not only be apparent, must not only apply merely to the sphere of the state, but must also be real, must also be extended to the social and economic spheres.

“The demand for equality in the mouth of the proletariat has therefore a double meaning... either spontaneous reaction against the crying social inequalities... or... reaction against the bourgeois demand for equality, drawing more or less correct and far reaching demands from the latter. In both cases, the real content of the proletarian demand for equality is the demand for the

abolition of classes.”⁷

Why does Marxism link up real equality to the abolition of classes? We can understand this by probing the concept of ‘equal right’. Marx wrote,

“Right by its very nature can consist only in the application of an equal standard...”⁸

For example, the equal rights declared by bourgeois democracy are based on the application of an equal standard, the standard of citizenship. In the ideal case, all those who are citizens of the republic can have these rights. But, to make this measurement by a single yardstick possible, all the individuals in that society must be considered from one definite side only, only as citizens. The common standard of citizenship considers all as equals. Thus, it also covers up class, gender and other social relations (or physical qualities) that enable or disable individuals and make them truly unequal. True, the individual is given due place by his or her rights itself. But this elevation is possible only through a new degradation of the individual. Bourgeois democracy can give individuals due place only as “average individuals” and condemn them to this status. The formal equality of bourgeois democracy’s equality essentially rests on the inevitable formal nature of any equal right.

This helps us to pinpoint a basic contradiction in TNCA. It is indignant with Marxism for not having a ‘theory of individual’. It claims that bourgeois democracy is the best form of state since it accepts the ‘non-class aspect’ and deals with the individual-society contradiction. In fact, the bourgeois ‘theory of individual’ it slavishly follows forces the ‘TNCA individual’ into the prison of ‘average individuals’. What may be considered as the ‘non-class aspect’ of an individual, the “personal individual”, remains locked within class.

As opposed to this, Marxism refuses to be satisfied with the ghost of individual. It refuses

to rest with a declaration of equality or even real equality itself. It presents the need to thoroughly eliminate this heritage of class exploitation.

Marx pointed out,

“It follows from all we have been saying up till now that the communal relationship into which the individuals of a class entered, and which was determined by their common interests over and against a third party, was always a community into which the individuals belonged only as average individuals. With the community of revolutionary proletarians who take their conditions of existence and those of all members of society under their control, it is just the reverse. It is as individuals that the individuals participate in it. It is just this combination of individuals (assuming the advanced stage of modern productive forces, of course) which puts the conditions of the free development and movement of individuals under their control...”⁹

The ‘community of revolutionary proletarians’ means communist society. Later, as Marxism developed, it gained a better grasp of the leap from capitalism to communism. Marx and Engels pointed out that there has to be a transitional stage of socialism between class society and classless society. Marx further developed the analyses of individual and society and of equality. He wrote,

“Here... [in the principle ‘each according to his ability, to each according to his work’ followed in socialism]... the same principle prevails as that which regulates the exchange of commodities, as far as this is the exchange of equal values.

“...(E)qual right here is still in principle bourgeois right.

“This equal right is an unequal right for unequal labour. It recognises no class differences because everyone is only a worker like everyone else; but it tacitly recognises unequal individual endowment and thus productive capacity as natu-

ral privileges. It is, therefore a right of inequality, in its content, like every right... (U)nequal individuals (and they would not be different individuals if they were not unequal) are measurable only by an equal standard in so far as they are brought under an equal point of view, are taken from one definite side only... are regarded only as workers... To avoid all these defects, right instead of being equal would have to be unequal...

“In ... communist society, after the enslaving subordination of the individual to the division of labour and therewith also the anti-thesis between mental and manual labour has vanished, after labour has become not only a means of life but life's prime want; after the productive forces have also increased with the all round development of the individual, and all the springs of cooperative wealth flow more abundantly — only then can the narrow horizon of bourgeois right be crossed in its entirety.”¹⁰

This overview of the arguments of the founders of Marxism shows us how they demolished the advocates of bourgeois democracy, precisely by contesting their strong points. They effectively exposed the limits of bourgeois democracy, its historical relevance as well as transience. And they went on to point out the path to surpass it. All of this was done from a consistent proletarian class stand and application of dialectical materialism. In the context of the present debate on the socialist state system it will be useful to examine the extent to which their conception of communism, as a society where individuals participate as individuals, had been integrated with the socialist transition of the past.

The matter of individual, of human, rights must be subsumed within class, within the rights of the masses. But it cannot be pushed aside by either. The powerful arguments of Marxism in this regard, linked to its communist

vision, need to be further elaborated. The current wave of globalisation is on the one hand enforcing standardisation, the faceless masses; even while it promotes the worst type of individualism of the ‘me only’ brand. The reaction to this is still to a large extent influenced by post-modernist illusions on freeing the individual by getting freed of ideology. We need to demolish this. And it must be accompanied with a vigorous re-statement of Marxism's visionary communist concept on the flowering of individual capabilities in union with society, a goal that can only be achieved through class struggle and a scientific ideology to guide it.

Sticking to fundamentals and developing ideology

An important lesson of the struggle against the CRC, CPI(M-L)'s liquidationist positions was the forceful reminder of Mao's words, “... the basic principles of Marxism must never be violated, otherwise mistakes will be made.”¹¹

This also gives an orientation to the task of developing Marxism in order to tackle new challenges posed by practice and theory. As we saw in the preceding sections, one of the cornerstones of the CRC's deviation was its departure from proletarian class stand. The philosophy and method it applied for analysing categories such as individual or democracy, its idealism, metaphysics and ahistorical treatment of the issue, was a consequence. This was then put to service to deny the applicability of class stand in the analysis of various social categories. K.Venu later explicitly formulated this, after the liquidation of the CRC, CPI(M-L), through his attack on so-called ‘Marxist fundamentalism’. This was how he chose to characterise a steadfast defence of the basic principles of Marxism. Venu tried to present his attack as a legitimate struggle against dogmatism.

Leaps in the history of the development of proletarian ideology are marked both by rup-

ture and continuity. One sees a dialectical interaction between the two. Continuity through rupture, and rupture made possible by continuity. In terms of what was discussed above, this can be described as standing firm on the basic principles (or fundamentals) of Marxism by developing them through creative application to correspond to contemporary social reality and tasks. In contrast to this, the history of the communist movement also has numerous examples of revisionist deviations. All of them were sought to be justified by appealing to contemporary tasks, by calling to break away from 'outmoded' principles. Diametrically opposed, in appearance, was the dogmatist trend. It's insistence on sticking to the letter was an appeal to ignore the essence of Marxist principles and their application in given conditions. Both revisionism and dogmatism deny the dialectics of rupture and continuity. But what is it that enables one to grasp this dialectics? The universal truth of Marxism, its class stand, method and, above all, its revolutionary mission. If this is called into question, then we lose our mooring. That was what happened to K.Venu. Today when questions are being raised about 're-examining the fundamentals of Marxism' it would be worthwhile to remind ourselves of these ABCs. Moreover, the very vagueness of talk on 're-examining the fundamentals of Marxism' without elaborating on what exactly they are, carries the seeds of reducing Marxism to a methodology cut off from its proletarian stand and partisanship. It is very important to stress this today when the old charge of class reductionism is being pressed against Marxism by the influential post-modernist trend.

To give an example, during the past 50 years or so the Marxist grasp of gender, caste, and similar issues has deepened. This has come out of struggle to break away from dogmatist, reductionist thinking that blocked grappling with

the pressing questions thrown up by various social movements. But does this mean a negation of the central role of class in understanding social reality (a Marxist fundamental)? Or is it progress towards a deeper grasp of this role? The political manifestation of reductionism has always been economism (whether right or 'left' in form). So what is now achieved is not only a deeper grasp but a retrieval of the revolutionary essence of proletarian class stand. It is a strengthening of the fundamentals.

Quite often, creative application of Marxism is blocked by dogmatism. It resists even the very idea of re-examining our positions in the light of current reality or specificities. How do we struggle against this without losing grip of our basic principles? An advance in grasp, more creative application, which develops Marxism, also involves breaking away from some of the accepted models. But models are not fundamentals. And advance in Marxism is only possible when its basic principles are applied. Though such new advances in Marxism arise from concrete application and verification through practice in a particular country they contain universality precisely because they are guided by the fundamentals. And what is universal is just that. To talk of grading universality as quantitative or qualitative in the context of ideology is meaningless. But, despite containing universality, such advances need not amount to a leap justifying the qualification of 'Thought' or 'Path'. And there cannot be an ideological advance that is relevant for a particular country only, for a particular contingent of the proletariat.⁵

There is also a matter of method involved in this whole issue. Marxism is also a science. So the comparison is being made with natural sciences, where new discoveries have led to re-examination of fundamental concepts. This comparison overlooks the qualitative distinction between the natural and social sciences. The dis-

tinct character of the latter is their class partisanship. While social facts are part of objective reality, the process of identifying them and seeking out truth, as well as the extent to which truth can be synthesised, are intimately bound up with class stand. Whether something claimed as new is really new is itself a matter of class struggle, in theory as well as in practice. All of this rules out a simple extension of the methods of natural sciences into the re-examining of Marxist positions.

Socialist democracy and the threat of capitalist restoration

The political horizon of CRC, CPI(M-L)'s liquidationism was limited to the formal institutions of democracy — representative institutions and the elective principle. But, the builders of socialism kept their sights firmly on going beyond the 'right of inequality', which still existed in proletarian democracy and the distribution principle of socialism. Lenin was proud, and rightly so, that the new Soviet state was a million times more democratic and qualitatively better than bourgeois democracy. He was also quite clear that it was still a "... bourgeois state, without the bourgeoisie!"¹², since bourgeois right still existed in the form of equality.

Bourgeois right itself is one of the most important barriers to the final elimination of classes. And without the elimination of classes there can never be the 'combination of individuals' with the fullest participation of individuals as individuals in social life. In socialism, bourgeois right exists in the economic base as well as in the superstructure. (In the superstructure it is present in the contradictions between the leaders and the led and between the state and the masses). New bourgeois elements are mainly engendered by these material relations. The test of socialism or capitalism is answered by those who stand for restricting and abolishing bourgeois right and those who stand for preserving, expanding and

consolidating it. Bourgeois right itself becomes an issue of class struggle.

Summing up the experiences of the Soviet Union, Mao Tsetung brilliantly developed the Marxist concept of party and the theory of continuing the class struggle under the dictatorship of the proletariat. His criticism on the 'monolithic party' concept and development of two line struggle are well known. They had a direct bearing on defending the dictatorship of the proletariat and developing socialist democracy. The GPCR both validated and developed all of this. It was the crucible in which Marxism-Leninism took the leap and Marxism-Leninism-Maoism fully emerged. It conclusively proved that the communists can unleash the revolutionary initiative of the masses in all its dazzling diversity, to the extent they persevere in class struggle and forge ahead in restricting bourgeois right. The masses were not only involved in state affairs on a scale never seen before. The struggle to restrict bourgeois right was also deepened in theory and practice. New and rich forms of mass supervision and participation in running the state and party such as the 'big character posters' and recruitment of new party members through mass meetings emerged and were institutionalised. These, including the right to strike, were later enshrined in the new Constitution of the People's Republic of China. They were won through bitter class struggle against the capitalist roaders and could only be retained and developed through this struggle. All of this called for strengthening the all-round dictatorship over the bourgeoisie. As Mao pointed out, "Lack of clarity on this question will lead to revisionism".⁷

The restoration of capitalism in China definitely calls on the Maoists to further build on this high pinnacle achieved by the proletariat, both in theory as well as in practice. But they can do this only if they guard against the perils of an idealist vision (in both of its meanings) of

socialist democracy that ignores the threat of capitalist restoration. We must remind ourselves of the material constraints faced by the vanguard during the socialist transition. Apart from that, we must also keep in mind the particular problems posed by the state as such.

Any state represents the political power of the ruling class; its means of imposing its class interests. Precisely for this reason, we cannot extend the criticism on monolithic concept of party to the state. It is by its very nature monolithic. State power cannot be decentralised. In fact, this argument on 'decentralising power', picked up by Venu from Gandhi, was a sharp example of idealist views on the state. The state, by its nature, also necessitates some institution that guarantees the continuation of this class interest. The institution of monarchy in feudalism and permanent bureaucracy and army in capitalism are examples. But such institutions, 'standing above' society as an alienated force, are not acceptable to the proletarian state since it has the task of giving back this alienated power to society. Yet, being a state, it can't avoid having an institution that guarantees (or strives to guarantee) the continuation of the proletariat's class interest. The solution necessitated by circumstances, and later on theorised, has been the overall commanding position of the party within the state system in socialism; the institutionalised leading role of the party in the dictatorship of the proletariat. There is no point in wishing away this lesson of history.

Recently, views have been advanced on incorporating the principle of allowing dissent, of allowing positions advocated from non-communist positions, in socialist society. They call for the active involvement and initiative of wide sections of the masses and intermediate strata, even if they don't adhere to the communist ideology, or may even object to aspects of the party's line and policy. This is correct. But, for all the claims

being made, there is really nothing new in this. Similar ideas on allowing opposing ideas to contend are already well contained in Mao's pioneering work 'On Handling Contradictions Among the Masses', where the philosophical and political basis is argued out. It laid the basis for his famous call "Let a Hundred Flowers Bloom, Let a Hundred Thoughts Contend." The limits in actually implementing these policies are also a part of the historical experiences of the dictatorship of the proletariat. They have to be addressed concretely. That is, not just at the level of approach and method but also in terms of the state system. Ideological struggle was not sufficient to drive back the Rightist offensive that opened up during the late 1950's in China while letting a hundred flowers bloom. They had to be backed up by exercising proletarian dictatorship.⁸ This was facilitated by the leading position of the party in the state system.

Let us recollect Rosa Luxembourg's criticism against the Bolsheviks for suppressing dissent. She certainly had a point in drawing attention to the stifling of political life under conditions where opposition is suppressed. But, in the given conditions, sticking to this as a matter of principle would have led to the destruction of the new born proletarian state. Lenin's position on exercising the dictatorship of the proletariat through the party was a shift from his earlier position that acceded to the possibility of the opposition coming to government by winning a majority in the Soviet. It was forced by the fierce struggle against the danger of counter-revolution. In a different context and in relation to the question of involving the masses in running the state, Mao too had to rule out the Commune. Yet, the elective principle of the Paris Commune in forming new organs of power had been one of the cardinal points of the '16 point Circular' that guided the GPCR. This indicates a real contradiction a communist party in power will have to

face, the contradiction between its orientation and its concrete application in different circumstances. It emerges from the contradiction between the unique task the proletarian state has of creating conditions for its own extinction and what it has in common with all states as an instrument of coercion. Both these aspects must be addressed.

The commanding position of the communist party is indeed a decisive control over political power, in the sense that other parties are excluded from control over decisive instruments of the state. This is true even when power is exercised by drawing more and more of the masses into running the state and conditions for its final withering away are being promoted. The attendant dangers are also apparent. Apart from the new and old bourgeois elements that will make their way into the ruling communist party, the rotten baggage and bureaucratism inevitably engendered by any institutionalised role will also push away from the goal of advancing to communism. Both Lenin and Mao were aware of this and tried to develop structures and methods to tackle it. We must make further advance in this direction for two reasons. One of them is to limit the inevitable rigidity and bureaucratisation caused by the institutionalised role of the party. The other is to prepare the most favourable conditions for the communists and the revolutionary masses to struggle for the restoration of socialism in the event of capitalist roaders seizing power.

In this regard, some positions put forward on arming the masses are a correct and sound step forward, even if it won't be the only solution. In the given world situation the proletarian state cannot do without a standing army. But experiences up till now have shown us the importance of creating the best conditions to resist or wage a fresh armed revolution against a capitalist takeover. Similarly, developing better methods to retain the Red colour of the People's Army,

such as keeping it among the masses, is another important lesson. It is not without reason that such steps were bitterly opposed by the capitalist roaders in China. The contrast between the Soviet Red Army, particularly after the 1930s, and the model Mao was trying to develop by drawing on the Yen-an experience is also known. This warns us against depreciating the importance of such policies by overemphasising the necessity of perfecting the professionalism of a standing army.

On the other hand, proposals on allowing other political parties to compete with the communist party for government power do not square with the bitter lessons of history. Capitalist roaders, inevitably linked to imperialism, will never respect the socialist constitution once they get to power. Similarly, rotating sections of the party allows for checking bureaucratisation. But what about the line of those exercising power or those due for their turn? Should those with a bad line also get their turn, as a matter of principle? And who gets to control the army? With regard to the socialist state system the crux of the matter is the institutionalised leading role of the communist party. As mentioned earlier, this was a product of circumstances. There is nothing in Marxism which says that this is the only solution. But, so long as those circumstances continue to exist, Marxism must insist on one thing - the new alternative must be capable of dealing with the compulsions that made such a role for the communist party in the socialist state system necessary.

The Commune was defeated because of its weak centralisation. While this was addressed by the Russian revolution, its ultimate defeat left the lesson that centralisation through the party is not the whole answer. This was something Mao tried to deal with throughout the building of socialism in China - in the running of the state, planning, preventing capitalist restoration. We

have to advance from this. But we must do so without forgetting the lessons of history and without ignoring the need to concretise the correct approach by seeking out better, more suitable, structures for the proletarian state. All the forms of proletarian rule known till now, the Commune, Soviets and Revolutionary Committees, were thrown up by the tumultuous advance of the revolutionary masses making history. This will be true of the future also. The defeats suffered by socialism have inspired Maoists to scale new heights. The new wave of revolution will certainly throw up newer and better forms of the dictatorship of the proletariat, more advanced than the Soviets and the Revolutionary Committees. It will create new forms better able to exercise the all-round dictatorship over the bourgeoisie by drawing in the masses into running the state and arming them to create a sea of armed masses. □

Notes:

¹ See 'Repudiation of the Views on Military Line of the CRC, CPI(M-L)', Spring Thunder, No:1, 1998, for a critique on the evolution of the CRC, CPI(M-L)'s deviations. An excerpt of this article was published in A World To Win, No: 26, pp 78-88. See also 'Democracy, More Than Ever We Can, and Must Do Better Than That', Bob Avakian, A World To Win, No: 17, for the polemic against the CRC, CPI(M-L) document 'On Proletarian Democracy.'

² 'German Ideology', Marx and Engels, Selected Works, Volume 1, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1977, pp 34-35.

³ Ibid, page 35.

⁴ Theses on Feuerbach', K. Marx, SW, Volume 1, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1977, page 14.

⁵ 'German Ideology', pp 65-66.

⁶ Ibid, pp 65-66.

⁷ 'Anti-Duhring', F. Engels, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1976, pp 134-135.

⁸ 'Critique of Gotha Program', K. Marx, SW, page 10.

⁹ 'German Ideology', page 68.

¹⁰ 'Critique of Gotha Program', pp 18-19.

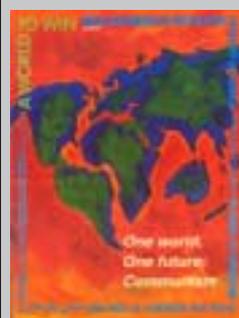
¹¹ 'Speech at CPC's National Conference on Propaganda Work', Mao Tsetung, Selected Works, Volume 5, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1977, p 434.

¹² See 'The Fight to Establish Maoism', Ajith, Naxalbari, No:2. It can be viewed at www.briefcase/naxalbari_in@yahoo.co.in.

¹³ 'State and Revolution', V.I. Lenin, Selected Works, Volume 2, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1977, p 310.

¹⁴ Quoted from 'On Exercising All-Round Dictatorship over the Bourgeoisie', Chang Chun-chiao, 'And Mao Makes Five', ed. Raymond Lotta, Banner Press, Chicago, 1978, p 209.

¹⁵ See Mao Tsetung's writings dealing with this struggle in Selected Works, Volume 5, pp 440-482.



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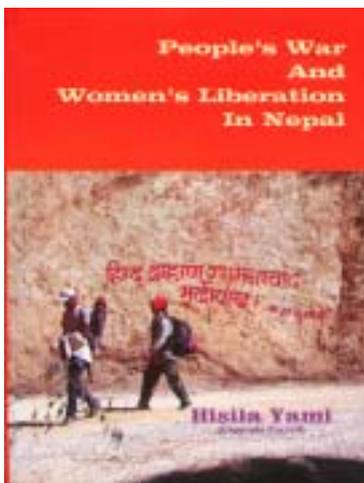
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Around this period, Kanshi Ram, then employed in a public sector company in Pune, also started his political activities. For the Dalit Panthers, the RPI experience was the inevitable failure of any attempt to emancipate the oppressed through the Indian parliament. What Kanshi Ram learned was its failure in pursuing vote bank politics. From the BAMCEF in 1973 to the DS-4 in 1981 and then to the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) in 1984, throughout this systematic organisational building under different slogans and work styles, Kanshi Ram firmly stuck to vote bank politics as his directing principle. One must credit him his wholehearted, systematic and untiring effort to realise this aim, finally succeeding in building up a Dalit vote bank, mainly in Uttar Pradesh (UP). What the Dalits gained by this success, attained at the cost of abandoning Ambedkar's caste annihilation politics, is of course a different matter. All the so-called secular parliamentary parties and media have attacked Kanshi Ram over the opportunistic alliances he made to get Mayavati into the UP chief minister's seat. Given that there is no parliamentary party that does not build and rely on caste, religion based vote banks, their criticism is certainly more obscene in its opportunism than that of the BSP. Though Kanshi Ram had always claimed to be a follower of Phule and Ambedkar the fact remains that he was never loyal to them. The opportunism seen in the BSP's switching from an anti-BJP alliance, built up in the name of opposing savarna domination, to allying with the BJP to get the chief minister post, is far surpassed by the opportunism it has shown in shifting its political stances. This party, which started out with the strident slogan of "Tilak Taraju Aur Talwar, Maro Inko Jhoote Char" (beat up the Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaisyas with chappals), has now got its ranks to chant "Hathi Nahin Ganesh Hai, Brahma Vishnu Mahesh Hai" (Not an elephant but Ganesh, its Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh. The BSP's election symbol is elephant is equated to the Brahmanic trinity) Those who had called on the Dalits to vote for them to destroy the Manuvad's monopoly over political power are now embracing Manuvad (Brahmanism) with all vigour!

By the 1980s the Congress party's vote bank maintained by mobilising Dalits, Backward castes and Muslims under its overriding savarna domination began to fracture. There was the growing hatred of these social sections to the Congress. There was the shift of the Congress from Gandhi's moderate Brahmanism to an open and rigid Brahmanism. The corresponding re-formation of vote banks took place through the controversy, agitations and riots surrounding the implementation of the Mandal report and the demolition of the Babri Masjid. This churning up created the context for Kanshi Ram's success in vote bank politics. The growth of the Samajwad party (led by Mulayam Singh) and Rashtriya Lok Dal (led by Lalu Prasad Yadav) drew strength from a similar dynamics. The growth of each one of them was also a conclusive proof that Phule's vision of Bahujan as a unity of all the oppressed against savarna domination, could never be realised through the Indian parliamentary system. These parties had claimed that they would ensure the presence of oppressed castes and religious minorities in political power. What they did was the improvement of the status and wealth of the neo-rich within these social sections. Just like the Congress and other parliamentary parties, they too utilise the oppressed as vote banks to advance their exploitative interests. Yes, we can certainly say this much – all of them have indeed added to the stink of Indian parliamentary politics.



People's War and Women's Liberation in Nepal

Hisila Yami

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