

Confronting Challenges

memorial lectures and some major speeches

| Sitaram Yechury |

Prajasakti Book House

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PRAJASAKTI BOOK HOUSE

M.H. Bhavan, Plot No. 21/1, Azamabad,
Hyderabad - 20. Ph : 040-27660013



87961

Publication No : 1271

Published by
Prajasakti Book House

First Edition : 2013

For Copies
Prajasakti Book House
M.H. Bhavan, Plot No. 21/1, Azamabad,
Near RTC Kalyana Mantapam, Hyderabad-500 020.
Ph: 040-27660013, 040-27635136
E.mail : pbhhyd@yahoo.co.in

Branches :
Hyderabad, Vijayawada, Visakhapatnam, Thirupathi,
Khammam, Hanmakonda, Nalgonda Guntur and Ongole

Price : ₹ 150/-

Printed at
Prajasakti Daily Printing Press
R.T.C. X Roads, Chikkadapalli, Hyderabad-20.
A.P., INDIA

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PREFACE

I am indebted to Prajasakti Book House for continuously pursuing me to publish this collection of lectures that I had delivered during the course of these two decades on various occasions, mainly commemorating anniversaries of important personalities. These lectures deal with a vast variety of subjects like Bonapartism, the caste and class overlap in India, language, communalism, liberation theology, economic crisis etc. By this very nature it is a heterogeneous mix of various themes and ideas. However, there is a commonality in most of these. This is concerned with the consolidation of our secular, democratic republic in order to advance the peoples' struggle for emancipation through the victory of peoples' democracy, leading to the establishment of socialism in India. At the global scale some of these reflect upon the inevitability of crisis and intensified exploitation under capitalism and the imperative of socialism as the objective to end the exploitation of man by man and nation by nation.

The entire body of Marxist thought is often subjected to a relentless attack in a reductionist effort to narrow it as being applicable only to economics and politics – political economy. Marx in his famous critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law had said that neither legal relations nor political forms can be comprehended by themselves or on the basis of a so-called general development of the human mind – the conclusion of Hegelian idealism – the totality of which, Hegel embraces in the term, civil society. On the contrary, Marx argued that these political and legal structures originate in the material conditions of life and thus came to the conclusion that the anatomy of Hegel's 'civil society' has to be sought in political economy. The emphasis on the material basis of life and the consequent social conditions are often narrowly interpreted to confine Marxism as yet another economic

theory. Marxists desire to study the material conditions of human existence and development was meant to understand the multitude of human activities and endeavour more comprehensive, hence Marxism is a creative science that seeks to comprehend all expressions of human activity and creativity and therefore cannot be straitjacketed into a narrow stream of political economy. Marx at once, famously said, “Nothing human is alien to me”.

It is because of this very character and nature of the body of Marxist thought that it finds reflection in understanding every phenomenon human endeavour ranging from aesthetics, pure science, art and literature, linguistics, culture, etc. The abiding relevance of Marxist outlook and methodology can be found today in every manifestation of human activity.

However, as Marx himself famously said, the job of philosophy is not to merely interpret the world, its job is to change the world. This is what Marxism is all about – to change this world, for the better and for the first time in human history to establish a social order that would be free from any manner of exploitation. Marxism is all about the creation of a better human being, the creation of a new society and the creation of a new world. Marxists therefore are irrepressible optimists, who not merely hope, but struggle to create a new world.

The lectures contained in this volume attempt to express this idea within the constraints of the concerned topic or theme. This effort is however inadequate both in terms of the range of themes and due to my personal inadequacies in handling them more competently. At the outset, I seek the readers indulgence to accept such inadequacies.

I owe my gratitude to Koduri Veeraiah for compiling this collection. I am indebted to Suma, who has by now mastered my pronunciation to dilligently input much of the matter contained in this volume.

As always, I am deeply indebted to Anees Chisthi, who as is his habit has painstakingly and patiently edited this volume. Finally I am indebted to G. Vijaya Rao, editor Prajasakti Book House who doggedly pursued to ensure this volume sees the light of the day.

- Author

1

ON TRANSITIONAL GOVERNMENTS

It is, indeed, appropriate that this discussion on transitional governments is taking place in Kerala which produced the first democratically-elected Communist state government in a country pursuing a capitalist path of development under the bourgeois-landlord class rule led by the big bourgeoisie.

The term 'transitional governments', in my opinion, is unscientific and, therefore, unsatisfactory. In the CPI(M) Programme, we describe the Left-led state governments as “governments of a transitional character”. This is because there can be various types of transitions – there is a transition from capitalism to socialism, there is a transition in the nature of opposition to imperialism etc – as can be seen in Latin America today. As we shall see, all such governments are products of class struggle that is taking place within the concrete conditions of individual countries.

Broadly speaking, we can identify, among others, four different types of transitions which have throw up governments as a consequence of popular struggles :

Intervention in the concluding session of International Congress on Kerala Studies on January 3, 2011, Thiruvananthapuram

- a) The transition towards building socialism following a triumphant revolution like Russia in Lenin's time, or, in a completely different context, Cuba today;
- b) Governments that have emerged through massive popular struggles against imperialism and its neo-liberal economic offensive like in various countries in Latin America;
- c) A government that emerged after a heroic and a long-drawn national democratic revolution defeating the apartheid regime in South Africa; and
- d) Left-led state governments in India working within the constraints of a bourgeois-landlord Constitution.

Needless to say, the character, the functioning and the policies and programmes adopted by these different categories of governments would, naturally, be different.

The policies and programmes implemented by these governments, however to a large extent, determine their success in achieving the transition that they have set out to do. It must always be borne in mind that a period of transition is, by definition, a period of intense class struggle when those who seek to advance and those who seek to regress this transition come into sharp conflict. The success of achieving the declared objectives of such a transition by the Left progressive parties leading such governments, in the final analysis, depends crucially on whether these governments succeed to keep politics in command, i.e., the political objective determining the content of economic policy and not the other way around which is the neo-liberal prescription that its economy needs (read maximizing profits) that will determine its politics.

II

Soon after the Russian revolution, Lenin advanced his new economic policy (NEP) as the basis for the transition towards building the socialist economic foundations in order to consolidate socialism.

Lenin, himself, noted on the 4th anniversary of the October Revolution: "Borne along on the crest of the wave of enthusiasm, rousing first the political enthusiasm and then the military enthusiasm

of the people, we expected to accomplish economic tasks just as great as the political and military tasks we had accomplished by relying directly on this enthusiasm. We expected -- or perhaps it would be truer to say that we presumed without having given it adequate consideration -- to be able to organise the state production and the state distribution of products on communist lines in a small-peasant country directly as ordered by the proletarian state. Experience has proved that we were wrong. It appears that a number of transitional stages were necessary - state capitalism and socialism -- in order to prepare -- to prepare by many years of effort -- for the transition to Communism. Not directly relying on enthusiasm, but aided by the enthusiasm engendered by the great revolution, and on the basis of personal interest, personal incentive and business principles, we must first set to work in this small-peasant country to build solid gangways to socialism by way of state capitalism. Otherwise we shall never get to Communism, we shall never bring scores of millions of people to Communism. That is what experience, the objective course of the development of the revolution, has taught us." (Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 33, p.58; emphasis added)

But, does this mean the restoration of capitalism? To this Lenin answers quite candidly during the period of the NEP that: "It means that, to a certain extent, we are re-creating capitalism. We are doing this quite openly. It is state capitalism. But state Capitalism in a society where power belongs to capital, and state capitalism in a proletarian state, are two different concepts. In a Capitalist state, state Capitalism means that it is recognised by the state and controlled by it for the benefit of the bourgeoisie, and to the detriment of the proletariat. In the proletarian state, the same thing is done for the benefit of the working class, for the purpose of withstanding the as yet strong bourgeoisie, and of fighting it. It goes without saying that we must grant concessions to the foreign bourgeoisie, to foreign capital. Without the slightest denationalisation, we shall lease mines, forests and oilfields to foreign Capitalists, and receive in exchange manufactured goods, machinery etc., and thus restore our own industry." (Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 32, pp. 491)

Characterising the process of building state capitalism as a war, Lenin says: "the issue in the present war is -- who will win, who will first take advantage of the situation: the Capitalist, whom we are allowing to come in by the door, and even by several doors (and by many doors we are not aware of, and which open without us, and in spite of us) or

proletarian State power?" (Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 33, p 65) He proceeds further to state: "We must face this issue squarely -- who will come out on top? Either the Capitalists succeed in organising first -- in which case they will drive out the Communists and that will be the end of it. Or the proletarian state power, with the support of the peasantry, will prove capable of keeping a proper rein on those gentlemen, the Capitalists, so as to direct Capitalism along state channels and to create a Capitalism that will be subordinate to the state and serve the state." (Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 33, p 66)

It is precisely this understanding that reflects the firmness of keeping politics in command. The subsequent developments, both international and domestic, however, did not permit the Soviet Union necessary time and space for the transition to take place in the circumstances outlined by Lenin. Encirclement of the Soviet Union, the civil war, the preparations for the Second World War by the fascist forces did not allow the Soviet Union a peaceful period necessary for a protracted period of transition towards the consolidation of socialist productive forces. The pace of the socialisation of the means of production had to be hastened for the very survival of socialism itself. The fact that it did succeed in socialising the means of production through 'collectivisation', bore the brunt of fascist assaults during the Second World War and decisively defeated them will go down as one of the most remarkable and liberating experiences of the 20th century.

The success of the countries in the process of post-Capitalist transition depends crucially on keeping such politics in command while determining the economic policies.

III

The emergence of popular governments riding the wave of massive popular upsurge against imperialism and its neo-liberal offensive in Latin America has been popularly described as a "pink tide – turn to the Left". In 2005, the BBC reported that three out of every four people living in South America lived in countries ruled by "Left leaning Presidents". This, according to BBC, was both a reflection and a consequence of a 'clean break with the 'Washington Consensus'.

Many countries in Latin America are ruled by either Left-wing governments or progressive governments. For the past few years, they have drastically reduced their economic dependence on the US and

increased trade amongst the countries of the South. This in a way limited the effects of the economic crisis on the continent and helped them recover fast. Venezuela, Ecuador and Bolivia are nationalizing various public assets that were placed under private control by the earlier regimes. Many banks were nationalized by Venezuela, Ecuador has recently nationalized its energy resources like Bolivia had done earlier. With their increased emphasis on social spending and state playing a major role in the alleviation of socio-economic inequalities, these countries are leading the way for the other governments.

Various forums are formed to encourage regional trade between the countries of the continent like the MERCOSUR, ALBA, OAS, etc. All these forums are being used not only to forge close bonds between these countries but also put up a united face in resisting the pressure of the US. The US is trying hard to regain its lost hold in the continent, it once famously considered to be its backyard. It is increasing its military presence in the area. Seven new military bases have been set up in Colombia, one of the few countries that is still close to the US. Using the earthquake in Haiti as a pretext, the US had virtually put the country under its military control. The role played by the US in the coup in Honduras and the subsequent sham elections is well known. The progressive governments in the region and the Left-wing forces in the continent are deeply engaged in the fight against the US, exposing its nefarious designs and mobilizing the people against the imperialist offensive.

Take, for the purpose of illustration, the experience of Venezuela during the last decade. As can be seen from the following table, there has been substantial improvement in social indicators since 1998. Poverty and income inequality have declined sharply. Indicators of health and access to education have substantially improved as have access to water and sanitation. The number of students in higher education more than doubled from the 1999-2000 school year to the 2007-2008 school year.

VENEZUELA : ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL INDICATORS

Category	Year	% or other measure	Year	% or other measure
Poverty (individuals)	1998	52%	2008	31.5%
Extreme Poverty	1998	20.1%	2008	9.5%
Gini Index(measure of inequality, 0=total equality; 1=total inequality)	1998	.48	2008	.41
Infant Mortality/100,000	1998	21.4	2006	14
Nutrition related Deaths/100,000	1998	4.9	2007	2.3
Access to Clean Water	1998	80%	2007	92%
Access to Sanitation	1998	62%	2007	82%
Social Security, % of Population	1998	1.7%	2008	4.4%
Unemployment rate	1998	11.3%	2008	7.8%

Note : The end year is the last year where data was available, in most cases 2007 or 2008.

However, today the economy of Venezuela is still a capitalist dominated economy although definitely not a neo-liberal one. There are three different types of production and social relations, private, state and social economy sector. The largest is the private sector, meaning that it is primarily organized with the goal of maximizing profits and that the capital--money structures, equipment and inventory--are privately owned. This capitalist sector comprises about 2/3rd of the economy. It is integrally linked with transnational capital either through imports of their consumer and capital goods and/or with transnational corporations having subsidiaries in Venezuela.

The second major sector is the state sector—enterprises that are owned by the state and whose employees are public employees.

This public sector includes PDVSA, the huge state owned oil company. Although much of the revenues of PDVSA now goes directly or indirectly to fund health and education programmes, to build housing and infrastructure, it is run in a top down and hierarchical manner with large wage and salary differences among its employees. Wages are also much higher than the national average. There is little worker self-management in most of the state sector. This sector produces about 30% of Venezuela's output, a proportion similar to its share in 1998.

The third sector is the social economy. This includes what are often called Socialist Enterprises such as farms that are publicly owned and self-managed. This sector includes cooperatives and firms that are jointly run and owned by the workers and the state. This social economy is only about 2 per cent of the economy.

The “Bolivarian alternative for Latin America”, popularly known as ALBA, has emerged as a political project that is directly opposed to the imperialist design of a Free Trade Agreement for the Americas (FTAA). Although it was born as an alternative proposal to the FTAA, the ALBA responds to an old and permanent confrontation between Latin American and Caribbean peoples and imperialism. Perhaps a better way of presenting the conflicting projects is by contrasting Monroism and Bolivarianism. Monroism, usually referred to as ‘America for the Americans’, is in reality ‘America for the North Americans’. This is the imperialist project, a project of looting and pillage. Bolivarianism is a proposal of unity between Latin American and Caribbean peoples, following the ideals of Simon Bolivar, who intended to create a Confederation of Republics. It was in sum, the opposition of an imperialist proposal by a proposal of liberation reflecting the contrast between the FTAA and the ALBA.

As the Organisational Secretary of the Bolivarian People’s Congress said: “The ALBA must be a political tool for liberation. Like any other tool, it must be efficient and flexible in the face of changing circumstances. Why do we mention this? We believe that the ALBA will have to act as a retaining wall against the new tactics that imperialism will use to dominate us. For example, we have seen how many ‘little FTAA’s’ appeared once the attempt to impose the FTAA failed, indirectly forcing the region to accept this commercial proposition.

“The United States government hopes to take advantage of the slightest weakness shown by Latin Americans and Caribbeans. If they sense dissension, they will try to put us against each other to later defeat us.

We, the peoples of the ALBA, the peoples of the Americas, supported by our progressive governments and popular organizations, will refuse to accept the new colonialist imposition - one or many ‘little FTAA’s’. On the contrary, they will be faced with our ALBA and ‘little ALBA’s’. Every one of the agreements signed within the framework of the ALBA will be like a solid brick that will help construct a Confederation of Latin American and Caribbean Republics. This is the current responsibility of the popular forces of integration.”

The success of such governments of transitional character in Latin America, therefore, depends on how firmly they exercise and maintain ‘politics in command’.

IV

Following the historic and heroic victory over apartheid and the victory of the National Democratic Revolution in South Africa, the ANC government based on a tripartite alliance – ANC, South African Communist Party (SACP), Confederation of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) – was seriously engaged in transforming the highly exploitative and discriminatory apartheid structures and to provide the predominantly Black population with economic empowerment. Initially, it had tried this through a policy known as GEAR – growth, employment and redistribution – adopted in 1996. However, it was later realized that the workers’ share in the GDP which stood at 51 per cent in 1994 declined to 42 per cent in 2008 and the share of profits as a percentage of GDP went up from 25 to 33 per cent in the same period. South Africa is now in the midst of affecting a serious course correction.

The following extracts from the resolution of the SACP will clarify the nature of the ongoing struggle:

“The economic policies pursued were characterised by rapid opening up and liberalisation through drastic tariff reductions and the dropping of exchange controls. Impressing foreign investors became more important than developing a national industrial policy. In spite of terming the economic policies as Growth, Employment and

Redistribution (GEAR) strategy, formal employment continued to decline and the country's wealth remained unevenly distributed along racial lines. Although economic growth has improved, GEAR, with its focus on stringent monetary and fiscal targets, failed in the goal of growth based on job creation, meeting people's needs, poverty reduction and a more equitable distribution of wealth.

" Market, rather than popular mobilisation and engagement, became the new motive forces of change. It was believed that the 'invisible hand of millions of willing-sellers and willing-buyers' would drive change. The SACP calls these disastrous economic policies that fundamentally differ from the 'freedom charter' as the '1996 Project'. They have termed this as a result of 'class alliance between sections of global and domestic capital, a certain cadre in the state, together with the emergent sections of the black bourgeoisie'. A new technocratic elite that 'managed' the capitalist economy, rather than grass-roots activists, became the new leading cadre of the ANC. And the key alliance was no longer the Tripartite (ANC, SACP , COSATU), but the compact between established white capital and an emerging, ANC-aligned black Capitalist stratum. This project was highly dependent on the control of the ANC and the state in order to achieve its objectives. To achieve its aim, the 1996 project had also sought to marginalise allies, and often the ANC itself from key strategic policy decisions by government. This was an attempt by the Capitalist class to stamp their authority on the post-colonial state and pursue policies suited to their interest. "

"To carry out this project substantial changes are necessary in the functioning of the government and the ANC. It required an aloof, behind-closed-doors style as opposed to the democratic traditions of the ANC. The ANC has to be converted into a 'ruling party' from a broad platform providing space to all the sections committed to the 'freedom charter'. So also is the need to blunt its capacity to mobilise and conduct movements on people's causes. All this led to the demobilisation of the ANC, a dysfunctional alliance, serious divisions within organisations and a movement enmeshed in corruption, scandals and factionalism based not on ideology, but on spats over tenders and deals.

"This project pursued by a section of the leadership of the ANC and the government created discontent among the people and the members of the ANC not to speak about its trusted allies - SACP

and COSATU. They began to register their dissent and resist these attempts that were regarded as a blow to the National Democratic Revolution (NDR). The working class took its ideological and mass offensive to where it mattered most, in the local and mass structures of the alliance, while not abandoning its independence and its own campaigns. All these resulted in the 'eruption' of dissatisfaction at the ANC's 2005 National General Council, and subsequently in its Congress in Polokwane. Polokwane marked a significant revolt by the ANC grassroots membership against the 1996 class project.

"In December 2007 the African National Congress (ANC) had their 52nd Conference - the Polokwane Conference where the incumbent president Thabo Mbeki was defeated in their organisational polls by Jacob Zuma. This Conference was in many ways a truly historic conference. Apart from demonstrating the best of the ANC's democratic traditions in practice, it was also marked by a radical change in its leadership and adopted many progressive policies recommended by its mid-2007 policy conference. Polokwane marked the severe dislodging, albeit not total defeat, of the 1996 project inside the ANC. It also marks another failed attempt of the Capitalist class to break the alliance between the ANC, SACP and COSATU and wean away ANC from the path of NDR and the promises made in the 'freedom charter'. In fact it had been commented that the ANC needed a Polokwane to consolidate and deepen a radical national democratic revolution."

Once again, the success of the transition of South Africa to consolidate the national democratic revolution crucially depends on its ability to keep politics in command. The SACP has come to the conclusion that this success can only come under working class hegemony. It says: "The struggle for working class hegemony is not an alternative to the multi - class character of our national democratic struggle – on the contrary, it is the precondition for its successful advance, consolidation and defence."

V

The Left Front governments in India belong to an entirely different character as noted above. On the basis of our strategic understanding, the success of people's democratic revolution requires the forging and strengthening of the people's democratic front (PDF). This is a front of classes and not political parties. In order to achieve

the PDF, there may be various intermediate stages, including the formation of Left Democratic Fronts with other political parties. This process may bring into existence the possibilities of forming governments in some states. The CPI(M) Programme in 1964 had stated : “The Party will utilize all the opportunities that present themselves of bringing into existence governments pledged to carry out a modest programme of giving relief to the people. The formation of such governments will give more fillip to the revolutionary movement”. While tendering our bonafides to the people and sharing the differences with bourgeois parties, these governments should serve as instruments of struggle “to win more and more people and more and more allies for the cause of people’s democracy and at a later stage, socialism”.

The updated Programme (2000), in the light of the experience of the governments in West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura, stated that such governments must “carry out a programme of providing relief to the people and strive to project and implement alternative policies within the existing limitations”.

On the basis of this understanding, at our 18th Congress in 2005, the Party adopted a document on “Certain Policy Matters”. It clarified many policy matters connected with the objective “to project and implement alternative policies within the existing limitations”.

Without going into the details of the functioning of these governments, much of which has already been covered during these days, it must be noted that with reference to the four foundational pillars of the Indian Constitution, the performance and contribution of these governments have been distinct from other bourgeois governments. The implementation of land reforms meant the economic empowerment of crores of people – the worst exploited and oppressed people. The establishment of grassroot democratic institutions and structures (Panchayati Raj began in West Bengal a full eleven years before Rajiv Gandhi amended the Constitution to this effect and the Kerala experience of decentralization through the people’s plan has pioneered ways to deepen democracy and decision making at the grassroots.

The role of these Left-led governments have been exemplary and serve as a beacon in upholding and strengthening secularism in our

country and meeting the onslaught of communal forces. It is not a matter of coincidence that the BJP cannot muster to win a single MP or an MLA on its own in any of these three states.

Likewise, these governments had played and continue to play a pivotal role in safeguarding the federal principles of the Indian Union by seeking the strengthening of Centre-State relations when the autonomy of the state governments is constantly sought to be eroded through efforts to impose a unitary structure by the Centre.

Thus, on all these counts – economic empowerment of people; strengthening and deepening democracy; safeguarding and strengthening secular democracy; upholding federalism and advancing social justice – these Left-led governments have become both instruments of struggle and implementers of alternative policies that provide greater relief to the people.

It is precisely for this reason that there is a concerted attack against the Left by the rainbow coalition of all reactionary forces. The Left's hallmark in contemporary politics is its firm anti-imperialist positions. It is this concerted onslaught against the Left principally targeting the Left-led governments in Bengal and Kerala that constitutes the current neo-liberal reactionary onslaught on the Left. These challenges have been met in the past and will continue to be met today by keeping our politics in command.

Let me conclude by repeating what I have stated earlier: In the final analysis, the success of these governments in advancing the specific transition that they are engaged with will crucially depend on how successfully they are able to meet and defeat the imperialist-backed reactionary offensive against them. From our part, we can only wish them success and assure them of our continued solidarity.

LANGUAGE : A UNIFYING FORCE

Esteemed dignitaries and my dear friends,

At the very outset, let me express my deep sense of gratitude to the organisers for inviting me to this World Classical Tamil Conference. This conference stands out in history because it is the first conference being held after Tamil was conferred the status of a 'classical language'. We feel specially proud because this status was conferred during the period of the first UPA government, when the Left parties were supporting it along with some other parties like the DMK.

I am happy to be here on a personal note too. Though born in a Telugu family, I can claim a share of Tamilnadu – I was born in the then Madras or today's Chennai or what we used to call as Chennapatnam. And of course, we share many common traits in terms of language and culture. “Yathum Oore, Yavarum Kelir”? : 'Every place (in the world) is my home town; Everyone is my kin'

There is an interesting episode in the BBC series "*The Story of India*" which talks about the earliest human migrations from Africa. Thanks to the development of science and technology and the Human Genome Project, it was found that the gene M130 which was found in

Address to the World Classical Tamil Congress, Coimbatore September 2010

the remains of the earliest human migrants from Africa was found among the Kallar people in the Western ghats of Tamilnadu. Professor A. Pitchappan of the Madurai University, who had stumbled upon this discovery states that these people might have provided the “basis for the genetic inheritance of the rest of us. In other words, the world was populated from here: If Adam came from Africa, Eve came from India. So it is truly Mother India, indeed”. We should be rightfully proud of today's Tamilnadu, for being the place where this process started from.

It is this long history that we are celebrating today, noting that the evolution of language is intricately linked with the evolution of the society.

I

Karl Marx had called language as “the immediate actuality of thought”. Tracing the origin of language in the German Ideology he states, “Language is as old as consciousness, language is practical consciousness that exists also for other men, and for that reason alone it really exists for me personally as well; language, like consciousness, only arises from the need, the necessity, of intercourse with other men”.

Explaining the evolution of language over the years, in his *'Marxism and Problems of Linguistics'*, Stalin writes “Language is one of those social phenomena which operate throughout the existence of a society. It arises and develops with the rise and development of a society. It dies when the society dies. Apart from society there is no language. Accordingly, language and its laws of development can be understood only if studied in inseparable connection with the history of society, with the history of the people to whom the language under study belongs, and who are its creators and repositories.

“Language is a medium, an instrument with the help of which people communicate with one another, exchange thoughts and understand each other. Being directly connected with thinking, language registers and fixes in words, and in words combined into sentences, the results of the process of thinking and achievements of man's

cognitive activity, and thus makes possible the exchange of thoughts in human society.

“Language has been created precisely in order to serve society as a whole, as a means of intercourse between people, in order to be common to the members of society and constitute the single language of society, serving members of society equally, irrespective of their class status. A language has only to depart from this position of being a language common to the whole people, it has only to give preference and support to some one social group to the detriment of other social groups of the society, and it loses its virtue, ceases to be a means of intercourse between the people of the society, and becomes the jargon of some social group, degenerates and is doomed to disappear”.

The very fact that Tamil language continues to develop and thrive, unlike other classical languages in the world like Latin, is because of the fact that it had maintained its liveliness by being constantly among the people and common to the entire people.

II

The logo of this conference depicts Thiruvalluvar's statue in Kanyakumari, lashed by tsunami waves and encircled by seven icons from the Indus Valley Civilisation. The depiction of the icons of Indus valley civilisation in the logo deserves a mention. It brings out the continuity and coalescence between the various cultures and the common thread that runs through them. A research paper submitted in one of these earlier conferences by Dr Iravatham Mahadevan an archaeologist of repute, pointing out that Indus Valley inscriptions may belong to Dravidian culture, in fact, tries to establish the link between the people of the Indus Valley with those who had inhabited these lands. The work of Dr Asko Parpola, *Deciphering the Indus Script*, winner of the 'Kalaignar M. Karunanidhi Classical Tamil Award' also gains its importance from the fact that he had suggested Dravidian, close to old Tamil, as the language of the Indus script.

And of course the motto of the conference inscribed on the logo “*pirapokkum ella uyirkkum, ;* All living humans are one in circumstances of birth; portrays this universalism. Its relevance today, as Thiru Karunanidhi explains, lies in its emphasises on the “ideal of

humankind, that it should always be free of narrow walls of race, creed, and caste”. This is one important lesson that the history of our country, particularly this region, teaches us.

The element of commonality in the languages and the harmonious manner in which they have blossomed into what they are today, leaving along the way a rich legacy of culture, in itself constitutes an interesting study. To better understand this phenomenon, let us take a brief example of the three south Indian languages, Tamil, Telugu and Kannada. Befittingly, while Tamil was awarded the status of a classical language in 2005, Telugu and Kannada were conferred similar status in 2008. As a generation, we grew waking up early in the morning everyday to the smell of brewing coffee and listening to M.S. Subbalakshmi on the radio. The trimurthi of Carnatic music – Thyagaraja, Shyama Sastry and Muthuswami Dikshitar – all composed their music in Telugu, though having different mother tongues. Yet, the music is called ‘Carnatic’. The harmony of our diversity is such that Telugu compositions can be effortlessly rendered in Tamil – or in Kannada. This is the beauty of the universalism, that our tradition teaches us. Instead of recognising this simple truth, there were ugly expressions of chauvinism when M.S. Subbalakshmi was once sought to be prevented from performing at the annual Thyagaraja festivities, Thanjavur, simply because she used to sing in Tamil.

Language, which historically acted as a binding agent for the people, was sought to be used, against its basic characteristic, as a vehicle to promote chauvinism and divisions. These attempts need to be resisted by promoting the universal values that we learn from history.

III

We Communists, look at language as a unifying force in the struggle and development of the society. We look at it as one among the four necessary conditions, not the only condition, that defines a nationality. It is based on this understanding that from the days of the freedom struggle, the Communist Party fought for the formation of linguistic states – Vishalandhra for Telugu speaking people, Aikya Kerala for those speaking Malayalam and Samyukta Maharashtra for the Marathi speakers. Similarly in Tamilnadu, communists played a prominent role in championing the cause of Tamil. Here it is apt to remember martyr Sankralingam, who died observing fast unto death

for 64 days, to have the name Madras Presidency changed to Tamilnadu. He expressed his desire that his body be handed over to the Communist Party. P. Ramamurthy, a veteran freedom fighter and trade union leader from this part of the state, P. Jeevanandham and N. Sankaraiah declared that they would speak in Tamil in the state legislature and did speak in Tamil. A. Nallasivam, while he was an MP fought for the usage of Tamil in telegrams. Indeed they were pioneers in the struggle to get due recognition for Tamil. They believed that democracy does not have any meaning if, at least, the administration of the state is not carried out in the language of the common people. As Saint Thiruvalluvar says in his *Thirukural*,

Katchik keliyan kadunchollan allanel

Meekkurram mannan nilam

The whole world will exalt the country of the king who is easy of access, and who is free from harsh language”.

(39:386)

For a democracy to be successful, accessibility to the Administration constitutes one of the important aspects. Language is one of the many aspects that not only connects both the ruler and the ruled but also defines the level of accessibility of the ruler/ruling class. Language plays an important part in the society by the means of exchange of thoughts “both in the sphere of politics and in the sphere of culture, both in social life and in everyday life”.

It is in this context that the government of the day has got an important role to play. Without falling into the pit-hole trap of the Nehruvian model of imposing a three language formula, it should ensure that the language of the land prevails. This of course in no way should be construed as an advocacy for narrow minded linguistic chauvinism. All languages must be treated equally and allowed to thrive equally.

In today's world no person can be bound by a single identity. The frontiers of discussion on multiple identities is extended by including the coterminous use of various languages by Indians. The extension of this understanding to include languages is important in the context of it often becoming a bone of chauvinistic contention. It is shown that in much of recorded history and in today's realities, we, in India, live using, at least, three languages simultaneously – the mother

tongue, the language at work, and the language of creative expressions. This explains our earlier example of Carnatic music. It thus becomes the bounden duty of the government to nurse this interpenetration of various identities, of course without belittling the importance of the 'given' identity.

Here I am, born in Tamilnadu, mother tongue Telugu, settled in Hindi-speaking Delhi, representing the people of West Bengal in the Parliament and addressing the august gathering here of Tamil speaking people from all over the world. This is India.

IV

Before I conclude, I would like to place some suggestions before the Conference for its consideration. Tamil has a rich tradition and produced literature that is highly relevant even today. Apart from it, there are huge treasures of oral history that need to be immediately documented and preserved for eternity. Music, drama, folk arts are all repositories of such invaluable treasures. I hope the conference initiates some measures in this regard. Tamil society is also enriched by the various movements like the national movement, the self-respect movement, the Dravidian movement, the Communist movement, the Dalit movement and the feminist movement. The rich treasures of literature each of these movements have left and the way they have influenced and helped in the evolution of Tamil and the society too needs to be thoroughly studied with a scientific perspective. Organisations like the Progressive Writers' Association should not only be made part of this Conference but should also be associated with such a project.

The *Thirukural* says

Perumai udayavar aatruvar aattrin

Arumai udaya seyai

The man endowed with greatness true

Rare deeds in perfect wisdom will do. (98:975)

Let us, together, learn from the rich traditions of Tamil language in order to create conditions for it to flourish and develop further.

MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS : STATUS AND WAY AHEAD

Dear Comrades,

At the very outset, let me thank you for inviting me to share some of my views on the Millennium Development Goals, poverty alleviation and what the developing countries really need to do. This is a subject that assumes enormous significance when we look at it in the background of the present acute economic crisis we are passing through.

Pledges have been made by governments across the world for taking up cudgels against poverty and “making it history”. As we all are aware, the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) are drawn from the actions and targets contained in the Millennium Declaration that was adopted by 191 nations – and signed by 147 heads of States and governments during the UN Millennium Summit in September 2000. Among their vital goals: halving extreme poverty and hunger from 1990 levels, reducing by two-thirds the child-mortality rate and slashing maternal mortality by three-quarters and achieving universal primary education. “We will spare no effort to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions

Address at GUE / NGL Study Classes, Nicosia, Cyprus, October, 11-14, 2010.

of extreme poverty, to which more than a billion of them are currently subjected”. It was agreed to undertake periodic reviews – and in fact they were undertaken – to ensure that governments remain on course to achieve the targets that were agreed with unanimous consent.

Few days back, once again the heads of State had gathered at the United Nations and admitted that the progress “falls far short of what is needed” to meet those targets by the deadline. The developed countries had pledged in 2002 to contribute 0.7 percent of their Gross National Income as aid to meet these targets. But many countries – including the United States, Japan, Italy and Germany – have not contributed the money needed to make this a reality. Today, only Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Luxembourg and the Netherlands have met the goal. In 2009, the United States contributed only 0.2 percent of its GDP to aid, while the European Union's contribution is only 0.48 percent of its Gross National Income (GNI). On an average, development assistance amounted to only 0.31 percent of GDP of developed nations last year. Even in the recent UN meeting, world leaders have urged the developed countries to meet this aid target at least by 2015. But as experience shows, it is easy to talk but difficult to walk the talk.

Between 1990 and 2008, the mortality rate of children under 5 in developing countries declined only from 10 percent to 7.2 percent – far from the target of a two-thirds reduction by 2015. Maternal mortality declined only from 480 deaths per 100,000 live births in 1990 to 450 deaths in 2005. The 2015 goal is close to 120. Enrolment in primary education reached only 89 percent in 2008, up from 80 percent in 1991.

The Government of India has recently come out with its assessment on the progress made on the millennium development goals and had brought out a document 'Millennium Development Goals: India Country Report 2009'. To better understand the conclusions drawn in the Report, let us look at some official statistics:

- The number of people living below poverty line in 1990 was 37.2 per cent. This is supposed to be brought down to 18.5 per cent by 2015 but is expected to come down to 22 per cent. Present number of poor varies from 27 to 37 per cent depending on the various government appointed official committees. According to another estimate nearly 77 per cent of the people are living on an income of less than \$2 per day.
- There were 53.5 per cent underweight children below 3 years age in the country in 1990 and this is required to be reduced to 26.8 per cent by 2015. This is expected to come down to about 40 per cent only.
- Under-five child - mortality rate was 125 per thousand in 1990 and it has to be reduced to 42 per thousand live births by 2015. But it is expected that it would only reach 70 by that year.

In 1990, infant mortality rate was 80 per thousand live births and this is to be reduced to 26.7 per thousand live births by 2015. This is expected to reach only 46.

- In 1990 maternal mortality rate was 437 per 100,000 live births and it is to be brought down to 109 per 100,000 live births by 2015. This is expected to reach only 135 per 100,000 live births by 2015.
- Only 51 per cent of the population are covered by sanitation facilities in the country at present and this is to be brought down to 38 per cent and the government states this goal cannot be achieved.

The Report, contradicts itself when it states that the target of poverty reduction would be met by 2015, but the target of reducing the number of hungry cannot be achieved. There are many studies conducted both in India and many other countries, which establish

the fact that prevalence of hunger is intrinsically connected with the incidence of poverty. This basic fact gives rise to many apprehensions and questions on the claims that poverty would be reduced – would the number of poor be really reduced or a statistical jugglery committed. This naturally leads us to question the 'growth' and who are benefiting from it. India, as all of you are aware, is one of the few countries that is reporting a positive growth – 8.5 per cent – in these times of global economic crisis.

The answer can be easily discerned from the following statistics. During the course of this year, the number of US dollar billionaires in India doubled to 52 holding combined assets equivalent of 25 per cent of the Indian GDP. Apart from these people, there are another minuscule section who are called high net worth individuals (HNWIs). They are just 0.01 per cent (120,000) of the total population of our country and their combined worth is close to one-third of India's Gross National Income. According to the 2010 World Wealth Report brought out by financial services firms Capgemini and Merrill Lynch Wealth Management, India now has 126,700 HNWIs, an increase of more than 50 per cent over the 2008 number. These are the people who have not lost in the period of global economic crisis, but in fact gained.

On the other hand, the Millennium Development Goals Report 2010, released recently by the UNDP states : “Newly updated estimates from the World Bank suggest that the global economic crisis will leave an additional 50 million people in extreme poverty in 2009 and some 64 million by the end of 2010 relative to a no-crisis scenario, principally in sub-Saharan Africa and Eastern and South-Eastern Asia. Moreover, the effects of the crisis are likely to persist: poverty rates will be slightly higher in 2015 and even beyond, to 2020, than they would have been had the world economy grown steadily at its pre-crisis pace”.

This is equally true in India. An estimated 33.6 million more people in India became poor or remained in poverty over 2008 and 2009 than would have been poor had the pre-crisis (2004-07) growth rates been maintained over these two years. In 2009 alone, an estimated

13.6 million more people in India became poor or remained in poverty than would have been the case had the 2008 growth rates continued, according to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA).

According to some simple calculations, it would take an average urban Indian 2,238 years, based on the monthly per capita expenditure estimates in the 2007-08, to achieve a net worth equal to that of the average HNWI. And that's assuming that this average urban Indian just accumulates all his income without consuming anything. A similar calculation shows that an average rural Indian would have to wait a fair bit longer – 3,814 years! It is this gross inequality with which we are living today in India.

Sha Zukang, UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs : states “Policies and interventions will be needed to eliminate the persistent or even increasing inequalities between the rich and the poor, between those living in rural or remote areas or in slums *versus* better-off urban populations, and those disadvantaged by geographic location, sex, age, disability or ethnicity”. It has been an accepted fact, even when the MDG targets were committed upon, by those parties that are running governments today, that it is policies that determine whether a particular target can be achieved or not. A commitment to achieve MDG is thus presumed as a commitment for re-orienting policies. On the contrary, the reality we are witnessing today shows a drastic increase in inequalities. With only five years left to reach the MDG, it is high time for serious introspection of the policies pursued by successive governments – if they are really serious about their commitment to poverty alleviation and achieving the MDG.

We in the developing countries are arguing that they should reverse the present policies, which are widening the gulf between the rich and the poor. For instance, the tax concessions given by the government to the big corporates and rich should be withdrawn. According to the Tax Foregone Statistics provided by the Indian government in the Parliament, the overall tax concessions provided

by the government in the last fiscal (2009-2010) were Rs 5,02,299 crores (\$112,876,179,775). Now if this amount of money realised by the government and invested in public welfare measures, it would have generated substantial employment and the consequent enlargement of domestic demand would have sustained the cycle of the economic growth. This may not provide instant super-profits, but would ensure that the benefits of growth would flow more equitably than they are today. This would have ensured a sharp reduction in the levels of poverty and malnutrition.

Secondly, immediate steps should be undertaken to ban futures trading in food and essential commodities. Globalisation had resulted in speculative trading in food and other essential commodities which had increased their prices manifold globally. A recent report submitted to the UN by the special rapporteur on the right to food states ; “A significant portion of the increases in price and volatility of essential food commodities can only be explained by the emergence of a speculative bubble. In particular, there is a reason to believe that a significant role was played by the entry into markets for derivatives based on food commodities of large, powerful institutional investors such as hedge funds, pension funds and investment banks, all of which are generally unconcerned with agricultural market fundamentals...Therefore, fundamental reform of the broader global financial sector is urgently required in order to avert another food price crisis”. The rising food prices on one hand and the falling living wages on the other are pushing more and more people into poverty and destitution. Many countries in the world have witnessed food riots too. So, to 'wipe out poverty and hunger from the face of the earth' a ban on futures trading in food and essential commodities and reforming the global financial sector is an urgent necessity.

Thirdly, the ruling classes in the developed countries are trying to come out of the present global economic crisis by placing enormous burdens not only on the working people of their country but also on the people of the third world countries. They are using the negotiations

of climate change and the WTO Doha round discussions for arm-twisting the developing countries to prise open their markets for their exploitation. They want to impose unequal economic agreements on the peoples of these countries particularly with reference to agricultural standards and Non - Agricultural Market Access (NAMA). Instead of accepting differential responsibilities, they are talking of differential responses. These further burdens on the developing countries would cripple them economically and curtail their powers in achieving the MDG targets.

Fourthly, the developed countries should ensure that they stand by the commitments they have made in terms of aid contributions, that is allocating at least 0.7 percent of their GNI as aid. Instead, many developed countries that have generously pumped in billions of dollars to bailout the bankrupt financial institutions which are responsible for the economic crisis in the first place, are cutting on the money spent on social welfare programmes. As a natural corollary, with the global economic crisis as an excuse, the aid promised by them to help reach the MDG is also being drastically cut. Allocations to the crucial MDG sectors – hunger, basic health and education, environment and gender equality – have gone down drastically from 2005 to 2008.

Developing countries, to protect their interests, should stand up to the pressure exerted by the developed countries. This can happen only by strengthening the bonds of friendship between the developing countries and all the people who stand for a just world. How affective these bonds of unity can be was witnessed during the climate change negotiations, where the moves of imperialist forces led by the US were stalled to an extent. This has to be further deepened and strengthened.

It is here that we feel that the role played by the Left MEPs in the European Union parliament assumes further significance. Along with leading the struggles in your respective countries against the recent

attacks on the working class, we hope you would also exert pressure on your governments to stand by their commitments on the MDG. It is only through this international solidarity that we can stand up to the attacks launched by the finance capital and reclaim our rightful place on the planet earth – a just place for all, irrespective of colour, sex, creed and region.

In the final analysis, reduction of poverty will not happen through charity or government largesse – sustained poverty reduction can only come through an appropriate policy framework and through active intervention of people in the affairs of the polity.

NEO-LIBERALISM, SECULARISM AND THE FUTURE OF THE LEFT IN INDIA

I profusely thank the Heyman Centre, its Chair, Prof. Akeel Bilgrami, for asking me to deliver the keynote address to this day-long symposium.

These discussions are taking place in the background of one of the worst electoral setbacks that the Left in India has suffered recently in our 15th general elections in May 2009. However, I must hasten to add that the influence of the Left on the evolution of modern India goes much beyond its electoral performance. Nevertheless, these results throw up many questions concerning both theory and praxis of the Left in India. These results must also be seen in their specific context and the specific electoral tactics that the Left pursued. The projection of an alternative government, at Delhi, by a conglomerate of non-Congress, non-BJP parties, we have concluded in our review, suffered from both a lack of credibility and viability in people's perception. Added to this are specific state level factors in the Left's strongholds that led to an erosion of our electoral base. Thus, these results cannot be interpreted as a reflection of the Left's inability to comprehend or come to terms with neo-liberalism. If this was the case, then 2004 (where the Left's outside support was critical for the survival of a secular government) would not have happened. This, however, is not to suggest that there are no new challenges posed by

Heyman Centre for the Humanities, Columbia University, New York, April, 2010

neo-liberalism and its specific trajectory in India. Indeed, there are such challenges that need to be addressed. We shall return to this later.

II

Having made these preliminary remarks, let me begin with the conclusion that I shall try to arrive at in this address. The Left's steadfast opposition to neo-liberalism and equally committed championing of secularism defines the future of India – India, as we know it today. The Left's future in India is, hence, inseparable with India's future.

Let me attempt to reason this substantive statement.

Left had played and continues to play a critical role in the process of realization of the idea of India. What is this idea? It is the creation and consolidation of a unique oneness in a multinational country. India's diversity – linguistic, religious, ethnic, cultural, etc – is incomparably vast than in any other country in the world. Officially it has been recorded that there are 1618 languages in India; 6400 castes - ; six major religions – four of them that originated indigenously - six anthropologically defined ethnic groups; politically administered through more than 30 states and union territories; 29 major religio-cultural festivals with the maximum number of religious holidays compared to any other country in the world.

Those who argue that it was the British that united this vast diversity ignore the fact that it was the British which engineered the partition of the sub-continent leading to over a million deaths and a communal transmigration of a colossal order. British colonialism has a history of leaving behind legacies that continue to fester through the partition of countries – Palestine, Cyprus apart from the Indian sub-continent. It is the pan-Indian people's struggle for freedom that united this diversity and integrated more than 660 feudal princely states into modern India giving shape to a pan-Indian consciousness. The Left had played an important role in this process of the realization of the idea of India.

Let me illustrate this with reference to three issues that continue to constitute the core of the idea of India. The struggles on the land question unleashed by the Communists in various parts of the country – Punnappara Vayalar in Kerala, the Tehbhagha movement in Bengal,

the Surma Valley struggle in Assam, the Warli uprising in Maharashtra etc. – the highlight of which was the armed uprising in Telengana that brought the issue of land reforms to centrestage. The consequent abolition of the zamindari system and landed estates drew the vast mass of India's peasantry into the project of building the idea of India.

It was the Left that spearheaded the massive popular struggles for the linguistic reorganization of the states in independent India. The struggle for Vishalandhra, Aikya Kerala and Samyukta Maharashtra were led, amongst others, by people who later emerged as Communist stalwarts in the country. This paved the way for the integration of various linguistic nationalities that inhabit India into the process of realizing the idea of India.

Further, the Left's steadfast commitment to secularism was based on the recognition of India's reality. The unity of India with its immense diversity can be maintained only by strengthening the bonds of commonality in this diversity and not by imposing any uniformity upon this diversity. While this is true for all attributes of India's social life, it is of critical importance in relation to religion. Following the partition of India and the horrendous communal aftermath, secularism became inseparable for the realization of the idea of India. The Indian ruling classes, however, went only half way in meeting the Left's objective of defining secularism as the separation of religion from politics. In practice, the Indian ruling classes have reduced this to define secularism as equality of all religions. This, in fact, contributes to providing sustenance to the communal forces.

The emergence of the conception of the idea of India arose from a continuous battle between three visions that emerged over what ought to be the character of independent India. The mainstream Congress vision had articulated that independent India should be a secular democratic Republic. The Left, while agreeing with this objective went further to envision that the political freedom of the country be extended to achieve the economic freedom of every individual, possible only under socialism. Antagonistic to both these was the third vision which argued that the character of independent India should be defined by the religious affiliations of its people. This vision had a twin expression ; the Muslim League championing an Islamic State and the RSS championing a *Hindu Rashtra*. The former succeeded in the unfortunate partition of the country with all its consequences that

continue to fester tensions till date. The latter having failed to achieve their objective at the time of independence continues with its efforts to transform modern India into their conception of a *Hindu Rashtra*. In a sense the ideological battles and the political conflicts in contemporary India are a continuation of the battle between these three visions. Needless to add the contours of this struggle define the direction and content of the consolidation of the idea of India.

III

Let me invoke one of the illustrious alumni of the Columbia University, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, who is widely regarded as the architect of India's Constitution. On November 25, 1949 while presenting the draft Constitution for adoption in the Constituent Assembly, he said:

“On January 26, 1950, we are going to enter into a life of contradictions. In politics we will have equality and in social and economic life we will have inequality. In politics, we will be recognizing the principle of one man-one vote and one vote-one value. In our social and economic life, we shall by reason of our social and economic structure, continue to deny the principle of one man-one value.

“How long shall we continue to live this life of contradictions? How long shall we continue to deny equality in our social and economic life?

“If we continue to deny it for long, we will do so only by putting our political democracy in peril. We must remove this contradiction at the earliest possible moment or else those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of political democracy which this Assembly has laboriously built up.”

The current neo-liberal trajectory that is being pursued by the Indian ruling classes exacerbate Dr. Ambedkar's concern. During the course of the day we have heard very enlightening presentations on the economic ruination of vast masses of the Indian people from Prabhat Patnaik, C.P. Chandrasekhar and Jayati Ghosh. I do not wish to repeat their rich analysis. But the conclusions are fairly disconcerting. Embracing neo-liberalism has resulted in decisively ending the former dirigiste regime and trajectory employed by the Indian ruling classes in the early post-independence decades. Globally, the hallmark of neo-liberalism pursued by present day imperialism is intensifying the process

of the primary accumulation of capital through expropriation more than through appropriation. As Prabhat calls it accumulation through encroachment as opposed to accumulation through expansion.

The neo-liberal trajectory has generated an acute agrarian crisis and distress through such merciless accumulation through expropriation. The net result is that there are two Indias in the making today – a shining and a suffering.

The *Forbes* magazine states that the number of billionaires in India doubled to 52 in 2009 and their combined net worth was \$ 276 billion or a quarter of the country's GDP. The 4th and the 5th richest persons in the world are Indians. On the other hand a Prime Minister appointed commission has reported that 77 per cent of Indian people or 836 million are living on less than Rs. 20 per day. Adjusted to purchasing power parity this tallies with the UN Human Development Report that estimates that 75.6 per cent of Indians live on less than \$ 2 a day. Forty seven per cent of our children are underweight due to malnutrition and 17 per cent fail to make it to the age of 40. Seventy eight per cent of our pregnant mothers are anaemic. They are giving birth to India's future. This is the other – real – India.

This neo-liberal trajectory hence ruptures the process of the realisation of the idea of India. This can only happen on the foundation of universal prosperity.

IV

The battle between the three visions that we spoke of earlier continues in India's political and social sphere. The vision of the *Hindu Rashtra* was chillingly articulated by one of the chiefs of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh way back in 1939.

“In Hindusthan exists and must needs exist the ancient Hindu Nation and nought else but the Hindu Nation. All those not belonging to the national i.e. Hindu Race, Religion, Culture and Language naturally fall out of the pale of real 'National' life., ”

“Consequently, only those movements are truly 'National' as aim at re-building, re-vitalizing and emancipating from its present stupor, the Hindu Nation. Those only are nationalist patriots, who, with the aspiration to glorify the Hindu race and nation next to their heart, are prompted into activity and strive to achieve that goal. All

others are either traitors and enemies to the National cause, or, to take a charitable view, idiots".

And , then , continues ;

"...So long, however, as they maintain their racial, religious and cultural differences, they cannot but be only foreigners".

And further:

"There are only two courses open to the foreign elements, either to merge themselves in the national race and adopt its culture, or to live at its mercy so long as the national race may allow them to do so and to quit the country at the sweet will of the national race. From this standpoint, sanctioned by the experience of shrewd old nations, the foreign races in Hindusthan must either adopt the Hindu culture and language, must learn to respect and hold in reverence Hindu religion, must entertain no idea but those of the glorification of the Hindu race and culture, i.e., of the Hindu Nation and must lose their separate existence to merge in the Hindu race, or may stay in the country, wholly subordinated to the Hindu Nation, claiming nothing, deserving no privileges, far less any preferential treatment not even citizen's rights. There is, at least should be, no other course for them to adopt. We are an old nation; let us deal, as old nations ought to and do deal, with the foreign races, who have chosen to live in our country."

And, how should such 'old nations' deal? The adulation of fascist Germany could not have been more brazen.

"To keep up the purity of the Race and its culture, Germany shocked the world by her purging the country of the semitic Races the Jews. Race pride at its highest has been manifested here. Germany has also shown how well nigh impossible it is for Races and cultures, having differences going to the root, to be assimilated into one united whole, a good lesson for us in Hindusthan to learn and profit by."

Since the late 1980s the unfolding of this vision that reached a crescendo over the demand for temple construction at Ayodhya leading to the demolition of the Babri Masjid continues to express itself in a variety of issues which seek to communalise the polity in order to facilitate the transformation of the modern secular democratic India into an inherently intolerant theocratic state. The Gujarat carnage of 2002 continues to both shame and horrify the country's consciousness.

Such communalization in its own way ruptures the realization

of the idea of India by striking at the very roots of equality for all within India's immense diversity that we spoke of earlier.

Clearly, therefore, both neo-liberalism and communalism are the very antithesis of the idea of India. The Left's firm opposition to both is an important element in the realization of this idea of India. In order to achieve such realization the Left would need to succeed in changing the correlation of political forces amongst the Indian people in its favour. This it is seeking to do by sharpening the class struggles. A week from today on April 8 lakhs of people across the country will defy law to be arrested in protest against the unrelenting rise in prices of essential commodities. While such popular struggles will intensify in the days to come, there are also certain critical issues that the Left must come to terms with in order to strengthen itself and in the process strengthen the consolidation of modern India.

V

One of such issues is the manner in which the question of caste needs to be dealt with. Prof. Javed Alam had presented a very interesting paper this afternoon which covered many issues. I do not wish to repeat them. It is, however, necessary to note certain features. Class formation in India is taking place within the caste stratification that has been handed down through the centuries. In this situation, there is a very large overlap between caste and class with the most exploited classes belonging to the most socially oppressed castes. Class rule in India thus stands on two legs – economic exploitation and social oppression. Unless the Left integrates the struggles on both these aspects, its advance can only be 'limping instead of running'. While we are actually conscious of this need, in practice, such an integration has to be strengthened by the Left.

Another critical issue relates to the development paradigm that the Left-led state governments in India must undertake. I am told that Nandigram and Singur have become common in the international lexicon. There is, off course, a large amount of misinformation and deliberate disinformation in the campaigns against the Left Front government in West Bengal. I am sure we shall discuss many questions later. For a moment consider the following: Close to a thousand acres of land was acquired in Singur for an automobile factory. Over 12,000 individuals were given compensation for this land. 12,000 people for

thousand acres of land, meaning 12 families were legally surviving on one acre of land. Is this possible? In reality, may be one or two families were cultivating while the rest were doing some odd jobs like pulling rickshaws or working as domestic help. Land and agriculture is no longer a viable option for improving their levels of livelihood. During the last two decades of the 20th century, the implementation of land reforms (unprecedented anywhere else except in Left - ruled states) led to the fragmentation of land amongst the family members of two generations. Industrialisation was considered as a way of improving livelihood standards on the grounds that it would generate employment and consequent economic activity that could provide opportunities to enhance the levels of quality of life.

As far as Nandigram is concerned, no land was ever acquired and even the incomplete plans for the consideration of the establishment of a chemical hub were abandoned once disagreement was voiced. The trouble over there is entirely of a political nature where this became an issue of political polarization by the opponents of the Left Front who were and are desperate to see that the Left Front does not win the elections for the 8th successive time in 2011.

This is not the first time that land was acquired in West Bengal under the Left Front government. But this time around, in retrospect, it can be said that the required home work was not done as meticulously as it was done in the past. One reason was that these developments occurred soon after the Left Front returned to the state government for the 7th successive time in 2006. These elections were fought, amongst others, on the issue of industrialization. Since the Left Front won a resounding victory it was presumed that the people endorsed the proposed industrialization drive. On earlier occasions, village - level committees were formed with whom the state government negotiated the terms of land acquisition while explaining the reasons and purpose for such acquisition. Only when the matters were settled did the process of acquisition begin. Such an approach would have eased a lot of misunderstanding and, importantly, would not have provided the opponents of the Left Front with the opportunities to mount an offensive using all unscrupulous means.

There is, however, a much larger question that arises. Given the constitutional limitations on state governments and the enormous pressure exercised by the Union Government to make all state governments subscribe to the neo-liberal trajectory, a question naturally arises whether pursuit of development and anti-neo-liberalism are

compatible? The Left Front governments primarily aim to provide relief to the people while mounting the opposition to neo-liberalism. The latter requires these governments to prevent all forms of primitive accumulation of capital through expropriation such as the forcible dispossession of agricultural land from the peasants or the forcible curtailment of the activities of fishermen or the unrestricted and unregulated flow of foreign direct investment into the state, etc. This may well entail the restriction in the flow of resources in a situation where the states are already squeezed for resources under neo-liberalism. This, in turn, would restrict the scope and extent of developmental activities. Therefore, the task of opposing neo-liberalism and its implications while utilizing available opportunities and formulating schemes at the state level within the limited means at the disposal of the state governments to provide succour to the basic classes against distress is a challenge that the Left is currently engaged with.

The rise of identity politics and the activities of various NGOs in taking up specific issues such as universal education, rights of the disabled, rights of the dalits, etc., or the ultra Left's ostensible articulation of the plight of the tribals, are invariably associated with the process of depoliticalisation. Identity politics can at best provide relief to that specific section of people but is never aimed at transcending the system. This is as true for the ultra Left, despite their strident calls for 'armed revolution'! The CPI(M)'s objective, however, is precisely to transcend the Capitalist system.

VI

In order to strengthen the struggle for transcending the system the Left has to build and strengthen the worker-peasant alliance, the basic class alliance, for changing the correlation of class forces amongst the people in its favour. Naturally, this has to be built around strengthening opposition to neo-liberalism i.e. anti-imperialism and against the communal forces, i.e., for strengthening secularism.

There are, however, many a compulsion of the immediate. For instance, in order to strengthen secularism it would be necessary to prevent the communal forces from controlling the Union Government. At the same time, in order to strengthen the struggle against neo-liberalism it would be necessary to prevent the Congress party to assume the reins of government. Thus a combination of anti-BJP anti-Congress political parties needs to be forged. More often

such a front emerges at the time of elections without a set of credible alternative policies. Further many such parties on earlier occasions when in government in various states may have followed the very same neo-liberal policies or flirted with communal forces making their credibility suspect. As distinct from such electoral fronts the Left seeks to strengthen an anti-BJP anti-Congress political alternative that is based on alternative secular anti-neo-liberal policies. This is an ongoing effort which has to be based on developing the popular struggles on this alternative policy direction. Many intermediate steps and measures would be required to be undertaken to advance in this direction for changing the correlation of class forces. This will have to be based on concrete analysis of a concrete conditions.

In the meanwhile, the biggest challenge that the Left is facing currently is the concerted attack being mounted by a gang up of all anti-Left forces in our strongholds especially in West Bengal. The all-in unity against the Left Front includes the ultra Left Maoists, the foreign funded NGOs, sections of the corporate media, the communal forces of both Hindu and Muslim hues under the leadership of the Congress-Trinamul alliance. As I stand here speaking to you nearly 200 of my comrades have been killed by such a gang up in West Bengal alone. We have been through such attacks in the past, paid a heavy price by losing precious lives, but emerged stronger.

More importantly, however, for the idea of India to succeed, indeed survive, as we spoke at the outset, it is imperative that both neo-liberalism and communalism are weakened and defeated. For this precise reason, all the forces that back these trajectories should unite to attack and weaken the Left. This is the struggle that is currently ongoing in India. Thus, to return to the assertion that I made at the outset, the future of India and the future of the Left in India are inseparably and integrally interconnected.

Instead of neo-liberalism where economics drives politics, India requires a system where politics determines its economics. Instead of an exclusion - based nationalism that communalism represents, India requires an inclusive nationalism. This is what the Left stands and works for. This is what that can make us realize the idea of India.

(This text is based on the Delivered Lecture)

CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE OF MARXISM

I am very honoured to be a part of the observation of the first death anniversary of Comrade E. Balanandan. I had the opportunity to work with him at the Party Centre for over two decades. I have immensely benefited from this experience. 'Swami', as all of us fondly called him, brought with him the direct experience of the working class having risen to the highest levels in the Communist Party from the proletarian ranks. His revolutionary spirit and ideological sharpness was combined with rare human qualities of affection and compassion. He epitomised the belief that a good Communist is invariably a good human being. It is only appropriate that we should be discussing the contemporary relevance of Marxism in the current times, in Com. Balanandan's memory, given his life long commitment to Marxism-Leninism.

The current global crises of capitalism and the continuing economic recession resoundingly vindicates the Marxist analysis and appraisal of Capitalism. These crises have, once again, exposed the historical limits of Capitalism and its irresolvable contradiction between the social nature of production and the individual nature of appropriation. However, Capitalism, irrespective of intensity of its crisis never collapses automatically. It needs to be overthrown. This requires the emergence of a powerful alternative – political, social and economic – in the form of socialism. The praxis of Marxism-Leninism in building this powerful alternative is the only way in which

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comprehensive human emancipation and liberation is possible. Marxism, in theory, is not only relevant but, in praxis, is the only possibility available to human civilisation to liberate itself.

This capitalist crisis, that has engulfed the entire world is not a result of 'greed' of some individuals, as some of the economists are trying to project. Nor is it an aberration that has occurred due to some unforeseen circumstances or lack of proper regulations. The present crisis, as Marx has explained, is inherent to the dynamics of the capitalist system that is based on human exploitation. No amount of tinkering with the system would save it from its ultimate demise. The present efforts carried out by governments across the world may only postpone this eventuality but can never prevent it.

A Marxist analysis of the current conjuncture of imperialism and Capitalism is, therefore, necessary not only to understand the present realities but, importantly, to change them. This is what I shall attempt in a brief manner.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and East European countries constituted a big reversal for the forces of world socialism. Consequently, the correlation of class forces internationally have shifted in favour of imperialism permitting it to launch a renewed offensive in political, economic and social changes on a world scale. Imperialism, during these two decades, has, indeed, consolidated its hegemony in all spheres, though not to its desired levels due to growing resistance developing in certain parts of the world.

Lenin had defined imperialism as the highest and last stage of Capitalism "Eve of the Socialist Revolution". Many have mechanically sought to interpret this to mean the imminency of the collapse of Capitalism and the rise of socialism. However, within a stage in the historical framework, there are and can be many phases through which imperialism or, for that matter, any social order can develop. Therefore, there are different phases of imperialism while it continues to remain the last stage of Capitalism. These phases are determined by the unfolding of the fundamental laws of capitalist development and the attendant levels of capital accumulation and, importantly, within the political conjuncture where this is happening.

For instance, in the immediate post-Second World War period, when the balance of class forces in the world favoured socialism,

imperialism moved into a different phase to meet that specific political conjuncture. Within the capitalist world, in France and Italy, the Communists emerged as, by far, the most significant political force. In several other countries, the social democrats came to power on working class support, including in Britain where Winston Churchill, a wartime hero, was defeated in the post-war elections. Apart from the Soviet role in the defeat of fascism, the growth of socialism in Eastern Europe, the imminent Chinese revolution and the rise of third world nationalism following decolonisation meant that in order to maintain its dominance, imperialism had to meet this threat. This resulted in the Keynesian demand management, the rise of the welfare state as measures to defend Capitalism from the socialist threat. State intervention to manage Capitalism and thereby meet the threat of socialism was the specific phase of immediate post-war Capitalism. This, however, allowed capitalism to go through an unprecedented boom which led to massive levels of capital accumulation eventually through the internationalisation of finance capital which set the stage for the emergence of a new – the current – phase of imperialism.

Under the present conjuncture, imperialism and world Capitalism is pursuing its quest of profit maximisation aided by colossal levels of capital accumulation leading to the emergence of international finance capital (IFC). This is one of the salient features of the post-Cold War world Capitalism. Unlike in Lenin's time, however, IFC operates not in the pursuit of specific strategic interests of specific nations but internationally. It also operates in a world not riven by intense inter-imperialist rivalry but in a world where such rivalry is muted by the very emergence of this international finance capital which seeks to operate over the entire undivided world. This does not suggest the cessation of inter-imperialist contradictions. These not merely exist but are bound to intensify in the future given the basic capitalist law of uneven development. This leads to conflicts of interests between capitalist centres given their relative future strengths.

This international finance capital is no longer separate or detached from the world of production. The financial structure is a superstructure of capitalist production, but it is not detached, and enmeshed with industrial capital in its pursuit of profit maximisation. The IFC now leads the commonality of purpose to unleash fresh attacks to vastly increase levels of capital accumulation and profit maximisation, further.

It is the new attacks and the reordering of world for profit maximisation, under dictates of IFC, that defines neo-liberalism. It operates, firstly, through policies that remove restrictions on the movement of goods and capital across borders. Trade liberalisation displaces domestic producers engendering domestic deindustrialisation. So also liberalisation of capital flows allows multinational corporations to acquire domestic productive assets vastly enlarging capital accumulation.

The second way of consolidating capital accumulation is through the imposition of deflationary policies, like restrictions on government expenses in the name of fiscal discipline which leads to the lowering of the level of aggregate demand in the world economy, a shift in the terms of trade against the peasantry in the third world and a rolling back of the state sector globally, more pronounced in the third world, which increasingly becomes privatised and opens up of huge new areas for private accumulation. Thus, the new feature of current imperialism is the prising open of new and hitherto non-existent avenues for profit maximisation.

The structural conditionalities imposed by the IMF and separately by the World Bank while disbursing loans ensured compliance to neo-liberal reforms. The WTO, similarly, especially in the current Doha round negotiations, is used for further prising open the markets of the world for imperialist profit maximisation.

All through the history of Capitalism, accumulation takes place in two ways: one is through the normal dynamics of capital expansion (appropriation) through the unfolding of its production process and the other is through coercion (expropriation) whose brutality Marx defines as primary accumulation of capital. Historically, these two processes continue to coexist. The process of primary accumulation has taken various forms, including direct colonisation. In the current phase, the hallmark of contemporary imperialism is the intensification of such brutal primary accumulation assaulting a vast majority of the people of the world's population, both in the developed as well and all other countries.

All over the capitalist world, especially in the third world, disinvestment and privatisation of the state sector is nothing else but

private accumulation through the expropriation of state assets. Public utilities like water and energy, public services like education and health have increasingly become domains of private accumulation of capital. Control over mineral resources are increasingly becoming private, agriculture is increasingly being opened up in multinational seed and marketing companies leading to the virtual destruction of traditional agriculture in the third world throwing the peasantry into acute distress. The removal of trade tariffs and Free Trade Agreements is leading to deindustrialisation in many third world countries. Common resources like forests, water, etc are increasingly being taken over as private property.

It is the unfolding of such neo-liberal offensive under globalisation that has precipitated the current global economic crisis.

Under globalisation, with a sharp decline in the purchasing power in the hands of the majority of the world's population, finance capital, in its eagerness for quick profits, chooses the route of artificially enlarging purchasing power by advancing cheap (subprime) loans. Profits are made while these loans are spent but when repayment is due comes default, ruining the loan taker, also crippling the system. To put it simply, as seen above, this is precisely what happened on a gigantic scale.

In the absence of a powerful political alternative, Capitalism will emerge from this crisis but at the expense of further intensifying exploitation and through the process of accumulation through expropriation as opposed to appropriation.

No capitalist economy can function without a stable medium of holding wealth. This role is performed by money backed by the state. In the concrete capitalist world, the money of one particular economy, typically the most powerful economy of the time, is chosen to constitute this medium. Its *de jure* stability used to be assured, though not any longer, by linking it to gold which historically has been the most favoured medium of wealth holding but its *de facto* stability is assured by ensuring that commodity prices do not rise abnormally in its terms. This requires, in the first place, that the working class in this leading economy must not be strong enough to precipitate a wage price spiral. Further, primary commodity prices must be kept in check, so that no inflation can occur on this score. This, however, requires not merely control over raw material sources in the third world but additional

control over world demand which should not be allowed to raise to levels that lead to inflation. This explains the neo-liberal prescription for deflation. In the period of hegemony of international finance capital, the maximisation of profits through such deflation encompasses the entire world, except the leading economy, i.e., USA whose currency being “as good as gold” places it under no obligation to pursue deflationary policies. Therefore, inflation control is essential for the stability of the wealth holding medium and, hence, for the stability of the capitalist system. If, in the process of achieving price stability, much higher levels of unemployment are generated due to deflation, then so be it. This is the logic of profit maximisation. It is precisely this feature that explains the sharply widening economic inequalities and the global decline in aggregate demand due to the shrinkage of purchasing power amongst the majority of people.

However, quite apart from the periodical crisis that will continuously erupt under neo-liberal globalisation, a much graver systemic crisis is impending. The USA, with its currency being the stipulated medium of wealth holding for the capitalist world as a whole, occupies this superior position not only through its economic might but through its superior military and political dominance in the world. While we shall return to this aspect shortly, it must be noted that irrespective of such might, a crisis will, necessarily, follow because in order to maintain the stability of its currency, the USA accumulates a massive current account deficit vis-a-vis other major capitalist economies. This is because the dollar is the stable medium of wealth holding. This also happens because the USA, in order to maintain its leading position, necessarily, has to accommodate the products of other major capitalist economies within its own market. However, when it seeks to reduce this deficit, this would affect the exports of other capitalist economies leading to counter intensified protectionism and disruption of the international monetary stability. As of October 16, 2009, the total deficit of the US economy reached \$ 1.42 trillion. Its current account deficit was \$ 726.6 billion in 2007 and \$ 706 billion in 2008.

However, this is not an inherently stable situation because those holding the dollar would sooner than later wish to trade them for more lucrative US assets. This will, surely, invoke passions of patriotism that will oppose such foreign ownership of its assets. However, if the holders of dollars decide then to shift to some other currency, then the plunge in the dollar's standing and consequently of the US economy would send the entire capitalist system into a profound crisis.

The indications of this are already unfolding with the dollar having lost over 11 per cent in recent months. In order to stabilise itself and the global capitalist economy, the USA will now increase the pressures on countries which hold huge amounts of its currency like China and other Asian economies to revalue their currencies upwards in order to cushion its own burgeoning current account deficits. This, in turn, if it were to happen, would lead to a slump in the latter economies. Even if the USA were to insulate itself from such a slump, it would still bring the global capitalist system to the brink of a major crisis because of sharp deflation in the emerging economies whose currencies the USA is today seeking to revalue.

Therefore, irrespective of how the current crisis is overcome, a major systemic crisis for world capitalism is in the offing. The USA would, however, seek to thwart such a crisis by transferring the burdens, ie, intensifying exploitation through its accompanying political and military might. This can be seen through the new strategic policies adopted by the imperialism, particularly after 9/11 and the expansion of the NATO with its doctrine of “first use of military force”. These are being used to exercise control over world economic resources which amongst others explain US - led military occupation of Iraq and its involvement in West Asia. This military offensive is bound to continue and intensify in order to delay the onset of the imminent crisis to world Capitalism. This is also accompanied by an intense ideological war against Communism.

Marx had once remarked that the stability of a ruling class is ensured only by the extent to which it presses the best minds of the subordinate and exploited classes in its service. As both Marx and Engels have pointed out, the ruling ideas of any epoch are the ideas of the ruling classes. The ideological war to establish the intellectual hegemony of imperialism and neo-liberalism has been on the offensive during this period. Aided by this very process of globalisation and the vastly elevated levels of technologies, there is convergence of information, communications and entertainment (ICE) into mega corporations. This monopolisation of the sphere of human intellectual activity and the control over dissemination of information through the corporate media is a salient feature of this period that seeks to continuously mount an ideological offensive against any critique or alternative to Capitalism.

The cultural hegemony that such a globalisation process seeks is expressed in the need to create a homogenisation of public taste. The more homogenous the taste the easier it is to develop technologies for the mechanical reproduction of 'cultural products' for large masses. Commercialisation of culture is a natural corollary of such globalisation.

Viewed in terms of class hegemony, the culture of globalisation seeks to divorce people from their actual realities of day to day life. Culture here acts not as an appeal to the aesthetic, but as a distraction, diversion from pressing problems of poverty and misery.

This period has also seen the rising resistance to such growing imperialist hegemonic efforts. But it must be noted that much of the struggles launched by the working class and the exploited sections have essentially been defensive in nature, i.e., defending their existing rights from greater encroachment by neo-liberalism. Resistance in the nature of mounting the assault on the rule of capital is yet to take a decisive shape. From this meeting a powerful call must go to all contingents of the international communist movement to intensify popular struggles, to mount this assault on the rule of capital.

Though imperialism has strengthened its hegemony and heightened its multifaceted offensive all across the globe, as we have discussed earlier, it is on the brink of a systemic crisis which could prove far graver and more encompassing than the current global recession.

However, irrespective of the intensity of the crisis, capitalism does not automatically collapse. It needs to be overthrown.

In memory of Com. Balanandan, we must redouble our resolve to strengthen this subjective factor. As Rosa Luxemburg said in the last century, and as Fidel Castro says today, the future of humanity is either socialism or barbarism. To save humanity from barbarism, there is no other way except to strengthen the subjective factor leading to the triumph of socialism.

WORLD CAPITALIST CRISIS : CAUSES AND IMPLICATIONS

Let me thank the organisers for inviting me to deliver the fifth Brajmohan Sarma memorial lecture. I am accepting this invitation both with a sense of honour and a sense of depression. Honour, because I shall be speaking in memory of Braja, as all of us called him, a long time comrade-in-arms. And depression, because Braja should not have left us as early as he has done. I had known Braja since his days in Delhi University on the eve of the imposition of internal emergency when I was with the Students' Federation of India (SFI) in Jawaharlal Nehru University. Later when I was the President of Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union (JNUSU), Braja around the same time was the General Secretary of the PG students' union of Guwahati University. Subsequently, for over two decades we have been in close touch participating in the evolving political debates in the country where the Left was increasingly playing an important role.

The topic chosen for this lecture is highly relevant given the fact that the world is passing through one of the worst capitalist crises, post-1930s Great Depression. The impact of the crisis has not left even a single country untouched, though its implications on each country might vary. It is only thanks to the role played by the Left that our country was saved from facing the severe implications of this crisis more acutely.

Fifth Brajmohan Sarma Memorial Lecture, Guwahati, Assam, 14 September 2009,

I

The current crisis of international financial capital that spearheaded imperialist globalisation in the last two decades is, by much estimation, far graver than any other crisis in the history of Capitalism. The effects of the crisis are still unfolding and its ramifications are being felt across the world. The World Bank has declared that the year 2009 will see the “first decline in world output on record”. According to the latest Bank estimates, the global economy will decline this year by close to 3 per cent, a significant revision from a previous estimate of 1.7 per cent, global economy could shrink for the first time since World War II and global trade is expected to fall for the first time in three decades. The growth rates of our country too were revised with the Planning Commission stating that the much hyped 9 per cent growth rate is not achievable and projected it to be around 7.3 per cent for the present plan period. This year without taking the drought into consideration, the projected growth is 6.5 per cent while in the first quarter the economy grew at 6.1 per cent.

The crisis will trap 90 million more people in poverty in 2009, according to World Bank research and between 1.4 and 2.8 million more babies may die by 2015, if the crisis persists. The ILO has declared that more than 50 million are going to join the numbers of unemployed. The real number might be even higher as the ILO relies on the data supplied by the respective governments, who in turn are not counting the vast number of migrant workers who are losing their jobs. In the US alone, though the official figures put the unemployment to be at 9.4 per cent, many independent researchers have pointed out that it actually has reached double digits, nearly 16 per cent, with all the sectors of economy shedding jobs. Similar is the situation in all the countries of Europe.

Our country too witnessed a drastic loss of jobs not only in the services sector but also in manufacturing sector. The number of jobs lost is likely to reach 3 million (30 lakhs) by the end of 2009. It will run into crores in the unorganised sector, where they are dependent on various small jobs. It is to this extent that 71 gem cutters and polishers in Surat in Gujarat had already committed suicide. The hand loom

weavers in Namakkal in Tamil Nadu are now selling their kidneys in order to survive. This is the misery which this global recession is bringing about on our country. The impact is so deep and so agonising that we are refusing to recognise this reality, and, therefore, act accordingly.

II

This crisis has once again resoundingly vindicated Karl Marx's penetrative analysis of Capitalism. Marxists do not derive satisfaction for the vindication of their world view and revolutionary analysis at the expense of the ruin and misery of millions of victims of this capitalist crisis. As Marx himself once said, "Nothing human is alien to me". Marxists work to ensure that the common working people are not subjected to such inhuman trepidations being at the mercy of the rule of capital. This shall happen only when we "change the world", not remaining satisfied with the correctness of our "interpretation of the world".

Two decades ago, the capitalist world was in a state of delirious euphoria in the build up to tearing down the Berlin Wall. This was accompanied by a vituperative ideological offensive: 'End of History', 'End of Ideology', etc. There was great delight at the collapse of this wall that symbolised, in many ways, the cold war and world socialism's power to confront imperialism in all respects. The collapse of the Berlin Wall has been eclipsed by the virtual deletion of capitalism's so far considered impregnable wall – the Wall Street. The 'big five' global investment banks – Bear Sterns, Lehman Brothers, Merrill Lynch, Morgan Stanley and Goldman Sachs – that led and lorded over the world of imperialist globalisation have either been liquidated or severely emasculated. This was followed by the declaration of bankruptcy by some of the manufacturing giants like the General Motors. Now we have news that *Reader's Digest*, the quintessential American magazine, too has filed for bankruptcy.

Such has been the gravity of the crisis that the most unabashed votary of capitalism, *The Economist* describes it as "capitalism at bay". Referring to the spate of bailout packages advanced in various western capitals, it says that the future points towards "a larger role for the state and a smaller and more constrained private sector" and hoping "profoundly that this will not happen". However, this is exactly what is happening. We shall deal a little later with what had actually resulted from these "bail-outs" and whom had they benefited.

World Capitalism has embarked on a spate of nationalisations that would have surprised the former socialist USSR. When the time to defend Capitalism from such a crisis comes, all ideological attacks against state or public property and nationalisation with the accompanied extolling of the virtues of private capital and their laser beamed God - market – appear to be mercilessly abandoned.

Britain, that heralded modern privatisation, has nationalised, today, most of its banking sector. Recollect that Margaret Thatcher once said, “It is not the business of the government to be in business”. The USA is pumping in \$ 2.5 trillion of taxpayers’ money to shore up its financial system. France’s Nicholas Sarkozy, says, “*Laissez-faire* is finished”. There is a profound paradox here. Defending Capitalism, in this present crisis, means greater state intervention. This may be a paradox for Capitalism’s ideologues, but the fact remains that the state of the ruling classes has always defended and enlarged the avenues for super private profits. We, in India, have our own experience of the state establishing the public sector to promote private capitalism. At a later stage, with this objective largely achieved, the state embarks on large-scale privatisation, again to benefit private capital. All this is done behind the illusory mask of ‘states’ ‘neutrality’!

III

This crisis is an inevitable consequence of the path of globalisation that was unfolding in recent decades. The main new element in the present phase of capitalist development is the emergence of international finance capital. It has specific features, in our opinion, which distinguish it from the period when Lenin analysed imperialism. The present process is not a nation-state based finance capital engaged in struggle with rival imperialist nation-states. In a sense, it has transcended the nation-state. This, however, is not to suggest that the relevance of the nation-state and its sovereignty has ceased, as some seek to argue.

It is, however, important to note that the present day finance capital is highly globally mobile, sucking in finance capital from individual countries dominated by finance capital originating from the advanced countries. Further, this finance capital is more pre-occupied in its search for quick speculative gains rather than its amalgamation with industrial capital leading to economic development. It, therefore, truly represents the parasite that thrives at the expense of real economic growth.

The search for quick profits requires unrestricted movement of international finance capital across the globe. The imposition of neo-liberal policies serves this purpose of removing obstacles to the free operation of internationally mobile finance capital. In addition, it seeks to impose a new form of international division of labour, this time not through direct colonial occupation but through coercing third world economies to dovetail imperialist interests. It is the consolidation of this process over the last decade that laid the basis for the current crisis.

Marx's analysis of capitalism tells us that as Capitalism develops, there is the tendency for concentration and centralisation of capital. As he said, over a period of time, there will be "fewer and fewer but larger and larger capitalists". Accumulation under Capitalism is, thus, a coercive process. So is the process of technological innovations. Without either of these, the capitalists cannot survive the rat race where the 'big fish consumes the small fish'. It is this process that has led to the internationalisation of finance capital to gigantic levels, hitherto unknown in Capitalism's history. It is this process of globalisation that imperialism utilises to seek its political objective of economically recolonising the developing countries.

Two important features of globalisation, however, require attention to understand the present crisis. First, this process has been accompanied by growing economic inequalities both within countries between the rich and poor and between the rich and the poor countries. The Human Development Report, 2007-2008 confirms this with indisputable statistics. Forty per cent of world's population living on less than \$2 a day accounts for 5 per cent of global income while the richest 20 per cent account for three quarters of world income. More than 80 per cent of the world's population lives in countries where income differentials are widening. Secondly, globalisation has given rise to the phenomenon of 'jobless growth'. This is so because the trajectory of profit-maximisation invariably replaces human labour by investing more in developing technology rather than developing human resource capacities. The growth of employment, during this period, has always been lower than the GDP growth rate globally. Both these features put together mean that the purchasing power of the vast majority of the world's population has been declining and this is glaringly reflected in the present day food crisis staring at the world.

Some 963 million people are now undernourished worldwide, according to the most recent survey of the crisis by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), and the UN body expects the situation to worsen with the recession and reach the one billion mark. The FAO fears these numbers will go on increasing for the coming years. One important feature that needs to be noted here is that this growth in hunger, as in the past, is not occurring because of shortage of food. This is happening because people are unable to afford to buy food even when it is available in plenty. This is due to the high food prices that have priced the poor out of the market.

Now, Capitalism inevitably plunges into a crisis when what is produced is not sold. Under these circumstances, the only way that Capitalism can sustain its levels of profits is by encouraging people to procure loans whose spending will maintain the levels of economic activity. However, when the time comes to repay these loans, there is the inevitable default.

This is precisely what happened in the USA in the current sub-prime (loans given at interest rates lower than the prime rates initially to lure borrowers, only to be re-set higher later or loans given to borrowers whose creditworthiness is suspect) crisis leading to large scale defaults.

Defaults should not have really come as a big surprise. The *Wall Street Journal*, reported on October 12, 2007 that the wealthiest one per cent of Americans reportedly earned 21.2 per cent of all income in 2005. This increased from 19 per cent in 2004 and exceeded the previous high of 20.8 per cent in 2000. In contrast, the bottom 50 per cent earned 12.8 per cent of all income which was less than 13.4 per cent in 2004 and 13 per cent in 2000. The consequence of such growing inequalities would lead, according to Merrill Lynch, to a fall of \$360 billion in consumer spending during 2008-09. Obviously, Merrill Lynch, now emasculated, did not take its own assessment seriously.

Capital, in search of higher profits, continuously creates new commodities through which it expands its market operations. As Marx had said, "production not only creates objects for the subjects, but also creates subjects for the objects". The present day advertising industry is testimony of this. Under the rule of international finance capital, Capitalism creates new financial commodities. One of these that has played havoc and generated the current crisis is the trade in 'derivatives'.

Derivatives are shadow financial instruments that include futures, options, forwards trading. If one buys or sells a share in the stock market, then it is actual trade. However, if one buys or sells the option to buy or not to buy a share, then it is derivative trade. The seller of the option, believe it or not, need not own that share. Likewise, the buyer need not pay the full money for the share. Such speculation in the global commodity exchange markets is playing havoc with food and oil prices.

According to the Bank of International Settlements, as of September 2008, the total value of derivative trade stood at a staggering \$ 600 plus trillions. This has grown from \$ 100 trillion in 2002. Thus, this shadow economy is 12 times larger than global GDP (\$ 50 trillion) and more than six times larger than the actual trading in shares in the world's stock exchanges (\$ 100 trillions). While these are the figures from the official commodity exchanges, it is variously estimated that the total value of financial exchanges including in derivatives, whose trade takes place even outside of the commodity exchanges, was a staggering 40 times the total global GDP. It is this speculative financial bubble, pumped to inflate to infinity, that had to burst, and, burst it did.

IV

Reams of analysis seek an explanation for this crisis (obfuscating the systemically inherent dynamics of the capitalist system), in the greed of a few, a violation of some ethical norms, a la Nobel Laureate Paul Krugman's "moral hazard" or, the lack of transparency and the weakness of regulatory mechanisms and credit rating agencies.

Karl Marx's penetrating analysis of Capitalism is reportedly being sold much more in the western capitals today than any time in recent memory (profits are to be made through these sales too!). Marx shows that despite appearances of decisions and choices being taken or made by 'free' individuals', Capitalism functions on the basis of laws that operate independently of the will or desire of individual capitalists. Take the issue of exploitation under capitalism. Exploitation takes place in the capitalist production process irrespective of the 'morality' of the capitalists as the value of the product produced by labour is always greater than the value this labour power (measured as wages) commands in the market. This surplus value generated by the labour process under capitalist production is the source of profit whose maximisation is the *raison d'etre* of Capitalism.

Profits, thus, can be generated only through exploitation. The overthrow of capitalism is, therefore, not only a moral question, it is a scientific necessity if exploitation of man by man must end, if human emancipation has to be achieved.

In *Das Kapital*, Marx concluding his chapter on the genesis of the industrial capital states: “Capital comes dripping from head to foot, from every pore, with blood and dirt”. He buttresses this with a quote, in a footnote, from a worker and trade union leader (Marx consciously drew on the writings and experiences of workers to validate his analysis) T. J. Dunning: “With adequate profit, capital is very bold. A certain 10 per cent will ensure its employment anywhere; 20 per cent will produce eagerness; 50 per cent, positive audacity; 100 per cent will make it ready to trample on all human laws; 300 per cent and there is not a crime at which it will scruple, nor a risk it will run, even to the chance of its owner being hanged.” It is this pathological drive to maximise profits at any cost, the inherent character of the capitalist system and not the individual greed of some or weakness of regulatory mechanisms that is the root cause for the present crisis.

Under globalisation, by arm twisting all independent countries to embrace financial liberalisation, the avenues for super profits were enlarged through hitherto unknown levels of speculation. Post crisis, this pressure is bound to intensify seeking greener pastures in the third world. Thus, this process of globalisation has, once again, shown itself to be simply unsustainable. Consequently, globalisation’s ideological mask—neo-liberalism – has shown its thorough bankruptcy.

If profits were re-employed into enlarging productive capacities, then through the consequent employment generation, the purchasing power of the people will grow leading to larger aggregate demand, which, in turn, would give a further impetus to industrialization and growth of the real economy. The gigantic accumulation of international finance capital, however, given the inherent laws of capitalism, supercedes this process, seeking predatory profits through speculation. It, in fact, decimates this process by enveloping it under the speculative financial bubble. This is similar to the situation when monopoly capital, emerging from free competition, decimates the latter completely.

To summarise: under globalization, with a sharp decline in the purchasing power in the hands of the majority of the world’s population, finance capital, in its eagerness for quick profits, chooses the speculative

route of artificially enlarging purchasing power by advancing cheap (sub prime) loans. Profits are made while these loans are spent but when repayment is due, comes default - ruining the loan taker, also crippling the system. To put it simply, as seen above, this is precisely what happened on a gigantic scale.

V

Capitalism's supreme diabolic irony lies in the fact that in the name of protecting those who have already been ruined, the banks and financial institutions are bailed out using taxpayer's resources! The manner in which the crisis is tackled also defines the priorities of the various states. Communists seek human liberation and emancipation. Hence, they put people before profits. The current bailout packages announced across the globe, however, do the opposite. Such bailouts help finance capital which, in the first place, created this crisis and does not prevent a recessionary slide. Even the *New York Times* was constrained to point out that the \$ 700 billion bailout package announced by the then President of the US, George Bush, "helped strengthen bank balance sheets" but did not "mandate new lending or support specific investment projects in the United States". These bailouts are designed precisely to first save and then to create new avenues for profit generation, a fact that has now been vindicated. Goldman Sachs and JP Morgan Chase are two giant financial corporates of the collapsed Wall Street that have emerged from the ruins, feasting on the monies they had received through 'state bailout'. Both the banks have benefited from billions of dollars of taxpayers money and cheap government financing to climb over banks that continue to struggle. They are capitalizing on the turmoil in financial markets and their rivals' weakness to pull in billions in trading profits. JP Morgan Chase announced a record \$ 2.7 billion profit in the second quarter of 2009. Earlier, another giant Goldman Sachs reported record gains in the same quarter. No further illustration is needed to show that this indeed is privatization of profits and the nationalisation of losses! In the process, intensifying exploitation further.

Bailout packages for the corporates, however necessary, cannot go unaccompanied by huge doses of public investments that will generate both employment and, importantly, domestic demand. It is the latter that will provide the much-required stimulus for the economy. The way of tackling the present crisis must be based on putting people before profits and not the other way around.

Under these circumstances it is interesting to note what the Government of India is doing. The Prime Minister had initially announced a Rs 20,000 crore investment programme. This translates into a pitiable \$4 billion. Much of the hyped fiscal stimulus packages announced subsequently, like the Rs. 70,000 crore infrastructure projects, come from allocations previously made in the last budget. The fine-print of the budget figures tells us that over the allocations made last year, close to Rs. 40,000 crores extra, has been spent. This is around one per cent of India's GDP. What is worse is that for the next fiscal, the capital plan expenditure is slated to decline by Rs. 4,500 crores.

The government's share of expenditure increased from 9.6 per cent of GDP to nearly 10 per cent this year. This is mainly due to the fact that the 15th General Elections were held during this period and the expenditure incurred is much larger than the stimulus package. As regards private consumer expenditures this fell from 58 per cent to around only 56 per cent in April-June this year. Even these levels were attained primarily due to the consequences of the sixth Pay Commission and extra monies put in the hands of the people. Even this is a one off expenditure. The shortage of foodgrains coupled with spiralling prices of all essential commodities will leave very little income in the hands of the people to be spent on other commodities. This is bound to affect manufacturing sector which in turn will impact upon the services sector. The services sector which accounts for nearly 60 per cent of the total GDP grew at 7.8 per cent compared to 10.2 per cent in the same period last year. Industrial sector, in the first quarter of this fiscal has performed below the six per cent growth witnessed during the first quarter of the last fiscal. The import-export situation also does not appear very encouraging. India's imports fell by 37 per cent in July outpacing a 28 per cent fall in exports compared to last year. This may well improve the trade deficit of the country but does not augur well for the economy's future. Decline in imports reflects a decline in domestic production activity. The non-oil imports declined by nearly 25 per cent which means that industry and manufacturing sectors are in a state of stagnation at best. Exports of commodities fell for the 10th straight month in July giving a clear signal that the optimism on the economic growth front does not reflect the foreign trade front.

It is, therefore, clear that while the economic optimism, expressed by the Planning Commission and the Prime Minister, may create a 'feel good factor', it is far removed from a real assessment of

our economic fundamentals. In order to overcome the huge shortfall of resources for the plan targets the Prime Minister and the Planning Commission have once again emphasised the importance of public private partnership (PPP). In a situation of global recession where private capital is mainly relying on bailout packages advanced by the governments, to expect them to come in a big way to invest in infrastructural development is unrealistic, to put it charitably. It also has the danger of allowing the private sector to recover and consolidate its profit generating capacities at the expense of the public sector and people's resources. This would only mean that India will also follow a policy that puts profits before people.

A massive public works programme will only help us in improving our woefully inadequate infrastructural facilities. India has the world's second-biggest road network of 3.3 million kms. However, the much tom-tomed national highways are only 2 per cent of the total and only 12 per cent of them (8,000 km) are dual carriage ways. Similar inadequacies are there in other crucial sectors. Last year, peak demand for electricity outstripped supply by nearly 15 per cent. According to the World Bank, 9 per cent of India's potential industrial output is lost due to power cuts. Nearly 60 per cent of Indians do not have direct electricity connections. Last year, we added only about 7,000 mw in power generation.

There is so much to be done in the field of social infrastructure. Nearly 1000 children die every day due to preventable illnesses. Only 13 per cent of the sewage is treated; 70 per cent of our people do not have access to a toilet; and, over 50 per cent do not have access to potable water. Half of enrolled children drop out from schools by the age of 14. Enrolment in higher education rose from 7 to 13 per cent only. Yet, this is sufficient to create waves of fear in the western capitals of an Indian cerebral takeover. Fifty four per cent of Indians are below the age of 25. If we can give them proper health, education and employment, then they shall build a new, better India. The current global crisis can well provide an opportunity for India. With the domestic savings rate rising to 35.5 per cent of the GDP, resources must be marshalled to put in place a massive programme of public investment. Unfortunately the government is not interested in harnessing this tremendous human resource potential and investing in social infrastructural development.

The budget papers tell us that as a result of various concessions, as much as Rs 4.18 lakh crore was forgone as tax last year. This year the government had abolished surcharge and increased exemption limit for income-tax and this has given a bonanza of Rs 10,000 crore to the rich. That means, Rs 4.28 lakh crore amount has been forgone by the government's own admission and these tax concessions will continue for another one year. This Rs 4.28 lakh crore could have been used to properly develop or build our infrastructure, generate jobs, give purchasing power to our people, which, in turn, would generate further demand for output and, therefore, create more jobs. That would have been the cycle of stimulus. The government chose not to do that. This once again proves that irrespective of its aam aadmi rhetoric, the heart of the government is with the rich, placing profits before people.

VI

Marx summarises the inherent dynamics of Capitalism and its historical direction: "The monopoly of capital becomes a fetter upon the mode of production, which has sprung up and flourished along with, and under it. Centralisation of the means of production and socialisation of labour at last reach a point where they become incompatible with their capitalist integument. This integument is burst asunder. The knell of capitalist private property sounds. The expropriators are expropriated." In the absence of a powerful socialist political alternative, however, Capitalism re-emerges from every crisis, through new expropriators, by destroying a part of the productive forces, to keep intact, or, create new profit avenues rather than using these resources for people's welfare. The true inhuman character of capitalism.

Clearly, therefore, the current phase of imperialist globalisation and its ideological construct – neo-liberalism – appears to have run its full course. Whatever be the form and content of its restructuring, capitalism is inherently an exploitative and a crisis-ridden system. This is engendered in its fundamental contradiction between its social nature of production and the individual nature of appropriation. Despite the fact that the international correlation of forces favoured imperialism at the end of the twentieth century and Capitalism continues to develop productive forces with the application of new scientific and technological advances, it remains a crisis-ridden system apart from being a system of oppression, exploitation and injustice. The only system, which is an alternative to Capitalism, is socialism.

The inevitability of Capitalism's collapse is not an automatic process. Capitalism has to be overthrown. An erroneous understanding only blunts the need to constantly sharpen and strengthen the revolutionary ideological struggle of the working class and its decisive intervention under the leadership of a party wedded to Marxism-Leninism -- the subjective factor without which no revolutionary transformation is possible. In those countries where this process is advancing, like in Latin America, we have already seen the electoral defeats of the neo-liberal forces.

In the absence of the advance of the revolutionary movement, Capitalism will re-emerge, in a different form, to consolidate its predatory search for profits. As Marx and Engels said in the *Communist Manifesto*: "the bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionising the instruments of production and thereby the relations of production and with that the whole relations of society". But such a re-emergence of Capitalism would be at a tremendous cost. Remember, the Great Depression of 1929 laid the foundations for the rise of fascism. The devastation caused by the Great Depression of the 1930s was met in different ways by different capitalist countries. One of these ways laid the basis for the rise of fascism. As Georgi Dimitrov underlined in his speech at the Communist International in 1935, "Fascism adapts its demagogy to the peculiarities of each country. And the mass of petty bourgeois and even a section of the workers, reduced to despair by want, unemployment and insecurity of their existence, fall victim to the social and chauvinist demagogy of fascism." Further, he explained how "it is in the interests of the most reactionary circles of the bourgeoisie that fascism intercepts the disappointed masses who desert the old bourgeois parties. But it impresses these masses by the vehemence of its attacks on the bourgeois governments and its irreconcilable attitude to the old bourgeois parties".

The large-scale unemployment created by the crisis was a huge army that was mobilised by fascist demagogy heralding Hitler's rise to power. Nazi fascism was also the most extreme expression of racism – Aryan supremacy. Its horrific consequences of the concentration camps and the Second World War continue to haunt us even today. The building of the fascist war machine was, probably, the biggest economic stimulus of that time. The question therefore is not one of giving an economic

stimulus. The question is what type of economic stimulus is given that does not engender authoritarian and fascist tendencies. Thus it is also necessary to learn from history.

But the fact of the matter is recession is just one of the forms that the present economic crisis has taken and even if the economy comes out of it, there is every chance that the crisis of the economy would appear in its many other myriad forms - sharp inflation, rising oil and food prices , etc. How this recession will be tackled by the governments in different countries will determine the nature of social conflicts that arise as various sections of the people scramble for their share of the shrinking cake.

All the efforts that we are witnessing today, the bailout packages, fiscal policy measures, etc, are efforts by the capitalist class to 'reform the system' and retain their hegemony at any cost and ensure that people do not turn to a socialist alternative. They are more concerned about reviving the Wall Street rather than addressing the concerns of those people who are living in 'places without any street'. Though there were statements made by France and Germany accusing the US and Britain as responsible for the crisis, they are together in their efforts to save capitalism and prevent the advance of the Left. The current capitalist crisis tellingly demonstrates the vacuity of the “eternality” of Capitalism. No amount of reform of Capitalism can make it an exploitation free system. The only way for humanity's liberation from this exploitation is the establishment of a socialist system.

The objective conditions are opening up possibilities which we can utilise in strengthening the popular movements for ending a system based on exploitation of man by man. It is imperative to utilise the objective situation and intervene to advance the movement for social emancipation. This requires, as noted above, the sharpening of class struggles to advance the popular revolutionary movement.

GLOBAL CRISIS AND INDIAN RESPONSE

I am, indeed, honoured to have been asked to deliver this Sixteenth Lal Bahadur Shastri Memorial Lecture. The confidence reposed by the Memorial Trust in asking me to deliver this lecture is inversely proportional to my own estimation of my capabilities to discharge this task. Nevertheless, I have emboldened myself to be here before all of you today.

When Lal Bahadur Shastri had left us, most unexpectedly, on this very day in 1966, I had barely entered my teens. Those were the days when many thought that nobody could ever fill the vacuum created by the absence of Jawahar Lal Nehru. After Nehru, who?, what?, etc was the refrain. Yet, the initiation of the Green Revolution, the reverberating slogan of, *Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan*, the call for missing a meal on Monday, and the emphatic victory in the war forced on us by Pakistan had captured the imagination of the country and its teen-aged youths.

Historian Ramachandra Guha gives a summary evaluation of Shastriji by saying, “When he was named prime minister in succession to Jawaharlal Nehru, most people thought he could never quite fill those oversized shoes. Shastri was a little man, and also a quiet man. Yet his understated character masked a fierce intelligence, personal integrity, a

high degree of political courage, and a vision for India's futureShastri was a Gandhian in his personal life, and a Nehruvian in his inclusive idea of India. But he was also his own man, whose actions as Prime Minister in 1964 and 1965 showed that he knew how to consolidate Nehru's policies when required, but depart from them when necessary”.

It is in this spirit of continuity with decisive changes when required by the conditions imposed by objective realities that I have chosen to share some thoughts on the current global economic crisis and how we, in India, need to respond.

The current crisis of international financial capital that spearheaded globalisation in the last two decades is, by many estimations, far graver than any other crisis in the history of Capitalism including the Great Depression of 1929. The crisis is still unfolding and its full ramifications will be realised only much later.

Many feel that we, as Communists, must feel resoundingly vindicated that Karl Marx's penetrative analysis of Capitalism has, once again, proven itself to be true. Marxists do not derive satisfaction for the vindication of their analysis at the expense of the ruin and misery of millions of victims of this capitalist crisis. We work to ensure that the common working people are not subjected to such inhuman trepidations being at the mercy of the rule of capital. This shall, however, happen only when we “change the world”, not remaining satisfied with the correctness of our “interpretation of the world”.

Capitalism, in the wake of this crisis, has embarked on a spate of nationalizations that would have surprised the former socialist USSR. When the time to defend Capitalism from such a crisis comes, all ideological attacks against the state, public property or nationalization with the accompanied extolling of the virtues of private capital and their laser beamed god - market – are mercilessly abandoned.

Britain that heralded modern privatization has socialised today most of its banking sector. (Recollect that Margaret Thatcher once said, “It is not the business of the government to be in business”. The USA

is pumping in an overall \$ 2.5 trillion of taxpayers' money to shore up its financial system. France's Nicholas Sarkozy, says, "*Laissez-faire* is finished". There is a profound paradox here. Defending Capitalism, in this present crisis, means greater state intervention. The paradox, however, is only superficial. The fact remains that the capitalist state has always defended and enlarged the avenues for private profits. These bailouts, as the future will testify, are designed precisely to first save and then to create new avenues for profit generation.

This crisis is an inevitable consequence of the path of globalization that was unfolding in recent decades.

Globalisation and its ideological underpinning – neo-liberalism – arose under conditions of gigantic levels of capital accumulation and (it is a law that as Capitalism develops, there is a centralization and concentration of capital) the emergence of globalisation of finance capital. It has specific features. The present process is not a nation-state based finance capital engaged in a struggle with rival nation-states. In a sense, it has transcended the nation-state. This, however, is not to suggest that the relevance of the nation-state and its sovereignty has ceased, as some seek to argue.

It is, however, important to note that the present day finance capital is globally instantly mobile sucking in finance capital from individual countries dominated by finance capital originating from the advanced countries. Further, this finance capital is more pre-occupied in its search for quick speculative gains rather than its amalgamation with industrial capital leading to economic development. It, therefore, truly represents the parasite that thrives at the expense of real economic growth.

The emergence of this finance capital is an important factor that explains the relatively low growth rates accompanied by high unemployment rates in the advanced countries over the last decade or so. This happens because in order to appease international speculators, there is a competitive reduction in tax rates and restrictions on the size

of the fiscal deficit. In other words, governments are forced to cut back expenditures and thereby deflate both employment and domestic demand leading to lower rates of growth.

This, in turn, leads to a situation where the advanced countries turn to the third world economies looking for greener pastures. The imposition of neo-liberal policies serves this purpose of removing obstacles to the free operation of internationally mobile finance capital. In addition, it seeks to impose a new form of international division of labour, this time not through direct colonial occupation but through coercing third world economies to dovetail to their interests. It is the consolidation of this process over the last decade that laid the basis for the current crisis.

Two important features of globalization, however, require attention to understand the present crisis. First, this process has been accompanied by growing economic inequalities both within countries between the rich and poor and between the rich and the poor countries. Secondly, globalization has given rise to the phenomenon of 'jobless growth'. This is so because the trajectory of profit-maximisation invariably replaces human labour by investing more in developing technology rather than developing human resource capacities. The growth of employment, during this period, has always been lower than the GDP growth rate globally.

Both these features put together meant that the purchasing power of the vast majority of the world's population has been declining. Now, Capitalism inevitably plunges into a crisis when what is produced is not sold. Under these circumstances, the only way that Capitalism can sustain its levels of profits is by encouraging people to procure loans whose spending will maintain the levels of economic activity. However, when the time comes to repay these loans, there is the inevitable default.

This is precisely what happened in the USA in the current sub-prime (loans given at interest rates lower than the prime rates initially to lure borrowers, only to be re-set higher later or loans given to borrowers whose credit worthiness is suspect.) crisis leading to large scale defaults.

Defaults should not have really come as a big surprise. The *Wall Street Journal* reported on October 12, 2007 that the wealthiest one per cent of Americans reportedly earned 21.2 per cent of all income in

2005. This increased from 19 per cent in 2004 and exceeded the previous high of 20.8 per cent in 2000. In contrast, the bottom 50 per cent earned 12.8 per cent of all income which was less than 13.4 per cent in 2004 and 13 per cent in 2000. The consequence of such growing inequalities would lead, according to Merrill Lynch, to a fall of \$360 billion in consumer spending during 2008-09. Obviously, Merrill Lynch, now emasculated, did not take its own assessment seriously, busy as its executives were in giving themselves handsome perks and bonuses.

Capital, in search of higher profits, continuously creates new commodities through which it expands its market operations. As Marx had said, "production not only creates objects for the subjects, but also creates subjects for the objects. The present day advertising industry is testimony of this. Under the rule of international finance capital, Capitalism creates new financial commodities. One of these that has played havoc and generated the current crisis is known as the 'derivatives'.

Derivatives are shadow financial instruments that include futures, options, forward trading, etc. If one buys or sells a share in the stock market, then it is actual trade. However, if one buys or sells the option to buy or not to buy a share, then it is derivative trade. The seller of the option, believe it or not, need not own that share. Likewise, the buyer need not pay the full money for the share.

According to the Bank of International Settlements, as of September 2008, the total value of derivative trade stood at a staggering \$ 600 plus trillions. This has grown from \$ 100 trillion in 2002. Thus, this shadow economy is 10 to 12 times larger than the global GDP (\$ 50 to 60 trillion) and more than six times larger than the actual trading in shares in the world's stock exchanges (\$ 100 trillion). While these are the figures from the official commodity exchanges, it is variously estimated that the total value of financial exchanges including in derivatives, whose trade takes place even outside of the commodity exchanges, was a staggering 40 times the total global GDP. It is this

speculative financial bubble, pumped to inflate to infinity, that had to burst, and, it did.

Reams of analysis seek an explanation for this crisis (obfuscating the systemically inherent dynamics of the capitalist system), in the greed of a few, a violation of some ethical norms, *a la* Nobel Laureate Paul Krugman's "moral hazard" or, the lack of transparency and the weakness of regulatory mechanisms and failures of credit rating agencies.

In *Das Kapital*, Marx, concluding his chapter on the genesis of the industrial capitalist states: "Capital comes dripping from head to foot, from every pore, with blood and dirt". He buttresses this with a quote, in a footnote, from a worker and trade union leader T. J. Dunning : "With adequate profit, capital is very bold. A certain 10 per cent will ensure its employment anywhere; 20 per cent will produce eagerness; 50 per cent, positive audacity; 100 per cent will make it ready to trample on all human laws; 300 per cent and there is not a crime at which it will scruple, nor a risk it will not run, even to the chance of its owner being hanged." It is this pathological drive to maximize profits at any cost, the inherent character of the capitalist system, and not the individual greed of some or weakness of regulatory mechanisms, that is the root cause for the present crisis.

If profits were re-employed into enlarging productive capacities, then through the consequent employment generation, the purchasing power of the people will grow leading to a larger aggregate demand, which, in turn, would give a further impetus to industrialization and growth of the real economy. The gigantic accumulation of international finance capital, however, given the inherent laws of Capitalism, supercedes this process, seeking predatory profits through speculation. It, in fact, decimates this process by enveloping it under the speculative financial bubble. This is similar to a situation when monopoly capital, emerging from free competition, decimates the latter completely.

To summarise: under globalization, with a sharp decline in the

purchasing power in the hands of the majority of the world's population (like the growing hiatus between 'shining' and 'suffering' Indias), finance capital, in its eagerness for quick profits, chooses the speculative route of artificially enlarging purchasing power by advancing cheap (subprime) loans. Profits are made while these loans are spent but when repayment is due comes default, ruining the loan taker, also crippling the system. To put it simply, as seen above, this is precisely what happened on a gigantic scale. Capitalism's supreme diabolic irony lies in the fact that in the name of protecting those who have already been ruined, the banks and financial institutions are bailed out using tax payer's resources! Indeed, privatization of profits and the nationalization of losses!

In the meanwhile, independent sovereign countries like India can protect only by insulating itself from such massive speculation. To a large extent, if India has been spared a full throttle devastation, it is because the Left parties prevented the current UPA government, during the last four years, from embracing greater financial liberalization. Even our worst detractors are forced to admit this, though most reluctantly!

It would, indeed, be suicidal if the government embarks, as it appears to do, on a path of relaxing the regulation on the flow of international finance capital in the name of injecting greater liquidity into our economy. This is expected to generate greater expenditures and, hence, boost aggregate demand, thus, fuelling growth. This process cannot be done through importing speculative capital. This needs to be done through greater public investments generating employment and, thus, feeding the cycle of demand - led growth.

The manner in which the crisis is tackled defines the priorities. Recollect, some ways of emerging from the 1930s depression led to the rise of fascism! One way to resist such horrifying possibilities is to put people before profits while tackling the crisis. The current bailout packages announced across the globe, however, do the opposite. Even

the *New York Times* was constrained to point out that the \$ 700 billion bailout package “helped strengthen bank balance sheets” but did not “mandate new lending or support specific investment projects in the United States”. Such bailouts help finance capital which, in the first place, created this crisis and do not prevent a recessionary slide. 240 thousand jobs were lost in October plus another 593 thousand in November, in the USA. A job loss of over 2 million is anticipated for 2009.

In sharp contrast, China has announced a two-year \$ 586 billion of public investment. This is designed to improve people’s welfare through projects like low cost housing, strengthen infrastructure and re-build areas devastated by natural disasters like earthquakes. The consequent employment generation would boost the aggregate domestic demand fuelling growth. Consider this example : the planned expansion of 10,000 kilometers of railways, as a part of this package, by the end of 2010 will employ 6 million people and would require 20 million tonnes of steel and 120 million tonnes of cement. Such public investment, China expects, will offset the negative impact of a sharp fall in exports caused by the global recession.

What is happening in India? Compared to a 13.8 per cent growth in the manufacturing sector in October 2007, it is minus 1.2 per cent in October 2008. For the first time in fifteen years, India’s overall industrial production recorded a negative growth of minus 0.4 per cent. Similarly, exports that contribute around 22 per cent of our GDP fell by 12.1 per cent. India’s much famed IT sector with annual revenues of over \$ 50 billion accounting for around 16 per cent of exports estimates a fall of over 50 per cent of its revenues. The FIIs who put in \$ 17.4 billion last year have virtually vanished leading to a crash in the stock market. The rupee has weakened by about 20 per cent against the dollar despite the RBI selling upto \$ 2 billion a day.

All this is leading to large-scale closures of export units and layoffs of workers. The consequent decline in the purchasing power amongst the people will further depress growth. This may well push

India also into a recession. Under these circumstances, however cheap credit may be made with lower interest rates etc, may be made available there will be very few takers. What is required is a massive dose of public investment to generate employment, and domestic demand, thus stimulating growth. The Prime Minister has announced a Rs. 20,000 crore investment programme. This translates into a meagre \$ 4 billion.

This gross inadequacy must be urgently corrected. A massive public works programme will only help us in improving our woefully inadequate infrastructural facilities. India has the world's second biggest road network of 3.3 million kilometers. However, the much tom-tomed national highways are only 2 per cent of the total and only 12 per cent of them (8,000 kms) are dual carriage ways. By the end of 2007, China had nearly 54,000 kms of four or more lanes roads. Similar inadequacies are there in other crucial sectors. Last year, peak demand for electricity outstripped supply by nearly 15 per cent. According to the World Bank, 9 per cent of India's potential industrial output is lost due to power cuts. Nearly 60 per cent of Indians do not have direct electricity connections. Last year, we added only about 7,000 mw compared to 1 lakh mw added by China.

There is so much to be done in the field of social infrastructure. Nearly a thousand children die every day due to preventable illness. Only 13 per cent of the sewage is treated. 70 per cent of our people do not have access to a proper toilet. Over 50 per cent do not have access to potable drinking water. Half of enrolled children dropout from schools by the age of 14. Enrollment in higher education is variously estimated to be between 7 to 13 per cent only. Yet, this is sufficient to create waves of fear in the western capitals of an Indian cerebral takeover. 54 per cent of Indians are below the age of 25. If we can give them proper health, education and employment, then they shall build a new and better India.

The current global crisis can well provide this opportunity for India. With the domestic savings rate rising to 35.5 per cent of the GDP, resources must be marshalled to put in place a massive programme of public investment. This is how we must convert this crisis into an opportunity.

Let me conclude by leaving all of you with a provocative thought. 2009 is the bicentenary of the birth of Charles Robert Darwin. 2009 is the 150th anniversary of the publication of the earthshaking Origin of Species [original title: *On the Origin of Species by means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* (1859)]. In its fifth edition, Darwin first uses the phrase 'Survival of the fittest'. Not the strongest, not the most intelligent, but the fittest. The species which adapts (naturally, not consciously, as Darwin always emphasised) survives. In human civilization such adaption, however, has to come consciously. Are we, as a nation, prepared to convert this crisis into an opportunity? Unfortunately, Shastriji is not around to say, "Yes."

Thank you, for your attention.

EDUCATION IS NOT A COMMODITY

I am, indeed, honoured to be asked to deliver this convocation address.

I am happy to note that the National Institute of Technology, Kurukshetra, had been placed at the 18th position among the top 20 engineering institutions in the country, last year, by the Dataquest–IDC–Nasscom survey. I wish the institute all success in reaching greater heights in the pursuit of excellence.

India is truly poised to make a path-breaking qualitative leap in emerging as a knowledge society in the world. However, to achieve this, not only do we require many more institutions of such calibre but we also require a radical shift in our policy towards education. After all, no knowledge society can be built if the base of the pyramid is narrow and weak.

India, today, has an unprecedented demographic advantage to translate this goal into a reality. 54 per cent of Indians today are below the age of 25. It is on the shoulders of this youth that India can emerge as an intellectual and economic powerhouse. We need to treat our human resources as an asset and not as a liability. In order to translate this demographic advantage into a human resource asset, we need to urgently invest in the youth. Simply put, this is investing in India's future.

Convocation Address National Institute of Technology, Kurukshetra

This, above all, requires of us to treat education as a necessity and, hence, as a right for every individual in our country. Education needs to be urgently stopped from degenerating into a commodity that can be bought and sold in accordance with the vagaries of the rich and the privileged.

It would be interesting to recall the origins and history of public education in modern civil society. Both in Britain and the United States of America the public education system was conceived, administered and financed by the state. Soon after American Independence in 1779, Thomas Jefferson with the farsightedness of the rising bourgeoisie moved the bill for “more general diffusion of knowledge”. Though the bill was defeated at that time the philosophy behind it was to influence the development of the US education system in later years. Jefferson argued for a three-tier education system preparing the young people for one of the two groups in society, “labouring and the learned”. The expenses for this entire system were to be borne solely by the state treasury. In the 1840s one Reverend George Washington Hosmer, who contested from Buffalo, USA, led a struggle for public education saying, “thousands among us have not dreamed of the effects of popular education; they have complained of its expensiveness, not foreseen that it will diminish vagrancy and pauperism and crime, but it will be an anti-dote to mobs; and prevent the necessity of a standing army to keep our own people in order. Every people may make their own choice, to pay teachers or recruiting sergeants, to support schools, or constables or watchmen.” The network of universal school education and publicly funded higher education that exists in all the developed countries today is the result of this accumulated experience that a healthy trained youth workforce is an asset for nation building and not a liability.

In independent India, to meet the above consideration as well as to redeem the aspirations of the people who sought an egalitarian social order, the newly formed government of Jawaharlal Nehru set up, in 1948, a university education commission under the chairmanship of Dr. S Radhakrishnan. This report speaks of reorganising higher education in the country to face the “great problem, national and social, the

acquisition of economic independence, the increase of general prosperity, the attainment of an effective democracy overriding the distinctions of caste and creed, rich and poor, and a rise in the level of culture. For a quick and effective realisation of these aims, education is a powerful weapon if it is organised efficiently and in public interest. As we claim to be a civilized people, we must regard the higher education of the rising generation as one of our principal concerns". The report further states, "many of these proposals will mean increased expenditure, but this increase, we are convinced, is an investment for the democratic future of a free people." These views were reinforced by all subsequent education commissions, the Laxmanaswamy Mudaliar secondary education commission of 1952, the DS Kothari education commission of 1964, etc.

In recent years however, with the state funding of education declining as evidenced in the annual budget allocations, the opportunity and scope for private educational institutions has grown enormously. This has spelt a spree of commercialisation of higher education reinforcing the attitude to reduce education to the status of a commodity. However, in the absence of increased state funding of higher education lakhs of students have no option but to join such institutions. In the larger interests of the nation and the people it is absolutely necessary that these institutions follow certain socially accepted norms which should be part of the overall effort of the country to balance the triangle of quantity, quality and equity in Indian education. These three aspects complement each other and are not in conflict as is mistakenly assumed.

In today's context the effort to achieve a proper balance on this score is all the more important considering that, I repeat, 54 per cent of India's population is below the age of 25. This is India's future. If this youth can be both healthy and educated, only then can India transform itself truly into a knowledge society. India has to rise above from training personnel to man BPOs and call centres. In fact those who try to assert with justifiable pride India's recent forays into the world's IT sector advances must recognise that all these are products of the post-

independence state financed higher education system in our country. The likes of our president Dr. Abdul Kalam could never have been possible without such a public education system in place.

The UPA government must seriously consider reversing the trend of constantly declining state expenditures in education. In the meanwhile the mushrooming of private educational institutions must be regulated. This is not to suggest that these institutions must function under governmental control. A regulatory mechanism can be established which can ensure that these institutions adhere to certain established norms regarding (a) the fee structure, (b) admissions policy including reservations, and (c) the course content. This is the social control that must be seriously considered. In order to implement this, as education is in the concurrent list of our Constitution, suitable central legislation must be enacted which shall empower the state governments to establish such mechanisms for social control.

Let us return to the larger issue of investing in the youth.

The World Development Report (WDR) 2007 has in fact titled its itself 'Development and the Next Generation.' It says, "the situation of young people today presents the world today with an unprecedented opportunity to accelerate growth and reduce poverty." 1.5 billion people are today estimated to be in the age group 12-24 years. 1.3 billion of these, the most ever in history, are in the developing countries.

While this demographic composition is true for most of the developing countries, India, as noted earlier, has an added advantage. The year of India's peak youth population is yet to arrive and is estimated to be around 2024. In an index developed by WDR called the demographic windows of opportunity, it has shown that for most developed countries, this demographic window has already closed. China is in one of those groups where this window will close in less than 10 years. Coincidentally, China's peak youth population was in 1978 when it embarked on its historic course of reforms.

India must use this opportunity as the WDR states, "if countries fail to invest in human capital – which is most profitable for the young—they cannot hope to reap this demographic dividend." In order to use this opportunity we need to undertake much higher levels of public investment. The WDR speaks in terms of putting a "youth lense" on government policies. It suggests three strategic directions for reform. First, the broadening of opportunities for developing human capital by expanding access to and improving the quality of education and health services. Secondly, to develop the capabilities of the youth and providing them with institutional support mechanisms and thirdly to provide an effective system of "second chances" to give the youth opportunities "to catch up from bad luck or bad choice".

Translating this into action in India means to increase the expenditure on education from the present below 3 per cent to 6 per cent of the GDP; increase expenditures on public health from the present abysmally low 0.9 per cent of the GDP to 3 per cent and above.

There is another dimension. While investing in the youth is investing in the future, not doing so is the surest recipe for the growth and spread of social tensions and anarchy. The slide to degeneration can be very steep and sharp, and may well consume the energies of an entire social order. The prevention of this can only be done by investing in the youth and channelising their energies in a positive direction. Investing in the youth is hence the best insurance against anarchy and the disruption of the social fabric.

An estimated 3 lakh children under the age of 18, representing 10 per cent of the global combatants are either fighting in wars or have been recently been demobilised. These figures date before the US military occupation of Iraq. If this age-group were to be expanded to include youth below the age of 24, these figures would be substantially larger. Add to this, the hundreds of thousands of youth, who in the absence

of any meaningful productive avenues of employment, are part of global crime syndicates. This is not merely energy wasted but negative and destructive energy.

The outgoing UN Secretary - General, Kofi Annan, has aptly said; "No one is born a good citizen; no nation is born a democracy, rather, both are processes that continue to evolve over a lifetime. Young people must be included from birth. A society that cuts off from its youth severs its lifeline."

Let us, therefore, invest in our future. Let us truly hasten India's transition into a knowledge society. India already produces more skilled manpower annually than the entire European Union put together. This is our strength. Let us not squander it.

Integrate Struggles against class exploitation and struggles against social oppression

INTEGRATE THE STRUGGLE AGAINST SOCIAL OPPRESSION AND CLASS EXPLOITATION

One of the important (amongst many things) that Dr. B.R. Ambedkar has said is the necessity of transforming the political independence achieved in 1947 into economic and social independence. This he said is imperative for the betterment of the conditions of the dalits in the country. To quote him, ; “On the 26th of January 1950, we are going to enter into a life of contradictions. In politics we will have equality and in social and economic life we will have inequality. In politics, we will be recognising the principle of one man-one vote and one vote-one value. In our social and economic life, we shall by reason of our social and economic structure, continue to deny the principle of one man-one value.

“How long shall we continue to live this life of contradictions? How long shall we continue to deny equality in our social and economic life?

“If we continue to deny it for long, we will do so only by putting our political democracy in peril. We must remove this contradiction at the earliest possible moment or else those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of political democracy which

Extracts from presentations made at Ambedkar Jayanti observations organised by the Left Front governments of West Bengal and Tripura on 14.4.2005 (Kolkata) and 20.4.2005 (Agartala) respectively

this Assembly has laboriously built up”. (From Dr. B.R. Ambedkar’s speech in the Constituent Assembly on the 25th November 1949) This is also one of the things that the Communists are repeatedly telling the people of our country. It is this basic fact that makes Ambedkar relevant even today.

On another occasion, speaking of social reform, Dr. Ambedkar had to say: “There is nothing fixed, nothing eternal, nothing sanatan; that everything is changing, that change is the law of life for individuals as well as for society...

“Stability is wanted but not at the cost of change when the change is imperative. Adjustment is wanted but not at the sacrifice of social justice...

“The path of social reform like the path to heaven at any rate in India, is strewn with many difficulties...Caste is the monster that crosses your path. You cannot have political reform, you cannot have economic reform, unless you kill this monster.”

Yet today even after more than 55 years of independence, the plight of dalits and the backward castes, for all practical purposes, has not universally improved. There may be individual cases, but on the whole, the statistical evidence suggests that in achieving the task of converting political independence into real, social and economic independence for the most oppressed sections of our society we still have a long way to go.

It is relevant to recollect a quotation from the poet, P.B. Shelley, which Ambedkar used in one of his writings to describe the plight of the dalits and the oppressed saying that they are:

“Pale for weariness of climbing heaven, and gazing on earth, wandering companionless; Among the stars that have a different birth”.

Addressing himself to the task of eradicating such a plight of the dalits, Ambedkar had spoken of constitutional safeguards such as reservations. The country had adopted the policy of reservations for the SC and ST initially for a period of 10 years which had to be extended

till date. It needs to be extended further as the improvement in their lot has not matched either expectation or requirement. While constitutional safeguards such as reservations are important, experience has shown that unless the economic status of the oppressed is drastically improved such safeguards by themselves will not radically change the situation. This is a factor that Ambedkar not only accepted but also underlined. In the absence of any meaningful change in agrarian relations, such concessions must be supported. But no illusions must be entertained that this is the only solution.

In the very nature of things, these palliatives will neither solve the problem of poverty and unemployment nor change the condition of, untouchables, and other downtrodden castes. They will certainly offer some relief to individuals from these communities, enhance their confidence in their advance, but not change their status. For the ruling classes these concessions play an important role. In the first place, in the general competition for jobs, etc, they pit one section of toilers against another. Secondly, they create an impression among some sections that the government is their real friend and they should confine the struggle within the framework of the bourgeois system. It is thus a challenge to the present socio-economic system from the most downtrodden sections is prevented.

Another phenomenon, which was taking place simultaneously, will also have to be noted. A parallel development that was taking place during the days of the freedom struggle and particularly after the independence was the process of emergence of a modern state in India. The vast multinational character of our country ensured that different sections - caste, - religious, ethnic, regionale - based began to rightfully demand equality of status and opportunity in the new independent polity. But, however, as the economic crisis deepened in the post - independence decades, far from the expectations of these different sections being met, the disparities started growing. This led and continues to lead to a scramble for a share of the cake. As the size of the cake shrinks, this scramble takes the form of a conflict between various groups. Hence, the demand for reservations from new sections and the

opposition to reservations from other sections becomes a common practice.

It is in this background of the deepening crisis in our country, that one must understand the nature of the present caste assertion. There are two aspects to this. On the one hand, as a result of whatever limited development has taken place since independence and in the background of the deepening crisis, there is a growing consciousness amongst the oppressed castes to rebel against their conditions of social oppression. This is a positive aspect. Without such a growing consciousness the struggle against oppression and exploitation cannot be carried out decisively. This is a consciousness that needs to be nurtured and strengthened with an effort to integrate this consciousness with the struggles against the present socio-economic system. It is only through such an integration of the struggle against social oppression and the struggle against modern day class exploitation that the struggle for an agrarian revolution can be strengthened and carried forward to its logical culmination.

There is, however another aspect to the present day caste assertion. This is the attempt to try and confine this growing consciousness within the parameters of the concerned caste. This is resorted to by some of the leadership of the present day movements. While appealing only to the caste consciousness and ignoring, if not evading, the basic issue of the struggle against the existing agrarian order, these leaders are once again appealing for a change in the superstructure without affecting the base. In doing so, they treat this growing consciousness amongst the dalits and the backward castes as separate compartments, as vote banks for their political fortunes, rather than addressing themselves for a genuine solution of the problem.

During the recent years, caste mobilisation has become an important factor in shaping Indian politics. For any scientific analysis, it is not only necessary to assess this growing role of caste assertion in Indian political life but also to map out the manner in which the unity of the toilers is strengthened in order to achieve the peoples' democratic revolution. Unless we tackle with clarity this important phenomenon, we will not be able to overcome the potentially disruptive role that

caste mobilisation can have on toiler's unity. It is for these reasons that this issue needs to be addressed with all seriousness.

At the outset, it is necessary to debunk a common fallacy that attempts to pit caste versus class. Vested interests often advise Communists that since they believe in class divisions in society, caste ought not to engage their attention. Such a mechanical distinction between caste and class is not only vulgar simplification but divorced from the present day Indian reality. The caste stratification of our society is something that has come down to us from centuries. Despite all the refinements and changes within castes and between castes, that have taken place over the years, the basic structure, in so far as the oppression of the dalits or the backward castes is concerned, remains. It is within this social stratification that the class formation in India is taking place. Capitalism is still developing in India and the process of the development of society divided into modern capitalist classes, is taking place constantly within the existing caste stratification. The question, therefore, is not one of class versus caste. It is the formation of classes under modern Capitalism within the inherited caste structure. To a large extent, the most exploited classes in our society constitute the most socially oppressed castes. And, to that extent, the struggle against class exploitation and the struggle against social oppression complement each other. These sections, as it were, are subject to dual oppression. It is this complementarity that not only needs to be recognised but on the basis of that recognition, it must follow that an important task before the Communist movement in our country today is the integration of the struggle against class exploitation with the struggle against social oppression. It is only through such an integration that the firm unity of the toilers can be forged and strengthened in order to advance towards peoples' democracy.

There is a vast amount of literature on the evolution and sustenance of the caste system in India. The large numbers of such works are only matched by the divergence of their conclusions. Some scholars have also linked it with a discussion of Marx's Asiatic Mode of Production. Without any disrespect or devaluation of such work, it would suffice for our discussion to base ourselves on the fact (agreed upon by most) that the caste system, in Marxist terms, is the

superstructure of an economic base which is pre-capitalist. In that sense, any attempt to overthrow this sinful heritage and obnoxious caste oppression will have to target the elimination of the vestiges of pre-capitalist economic formations. This, in our present case, is the elimination of the vestiges of feudalism and semi-feudalism.

This does not mean that such elimination, through a comprehensive agrarian revolution, however complex and difficult it may be, will automatically eliminate the caste system and the entire range of social consciousness associated with it. As Engels, in a letter to Bloch, says, Marx and he had meant that the economic factor is decisive in the final analysis. Even after a change in the economic base the superstructure and associated social consciousness may persist and would require an intense ideological struggle to eliminate it. But without the attempt to change the pre-capitalist agrarian order, mere appeals for a change of heart or behaviour cannot and will not eliminate this obnoxious social oppression. There was an opportunity to effect a sweeping agrarian revolution along with the anti-colonial freedom struggle. But this was not to be due to the compromising character of the leadership of our national movement.

The main reason for this persistence of social oppression based on caste stratification is the inadequacy of the ruling classes, during the freedom struggle, in addressing themselves to this issue. The overcoming of caste differentiation was sought through proper social behaviour between individuals and castes without going into the social roots of this phenomenon. The sinful heritage of caste oppression was something that the national anti-colonial struggle could not repudiate because the leadership of the freedom struggle was not interested in going to the root of the problem and uprooting it. Even if it had a correct understanding of the social roots of the problem, it did not have the courage to seize it by the roots. By refusing to sweep away the feudal and semi-feudal agrarian relations, which were the bedrock for the continuation and persistence of caste exploitation, the leadership of freedom struggle not only permitted but in later years perpetuated the caste exploitation.

[Within the freedom movement there were two main trends that contributed to the persistence of the caste institutions. One was

the revivalist ideology which gripped a number of leaders of the freedom movement. Coming from upper caste Hindu background, these leaders in the struggle against the British drew sustenance from India's so called past and, in the process, defended the social institutions of that past. Tilak was a classic example of such a tendency. The other tendency during the freedom struggle, which prevented the liquidation of the old order, was the vacillation of the Congress towards landlords and feudal interests. Thus, the Congress's efforts to achieve independence were divorced from the agrarian revolution. In fact instead of carrying on a sweeping overthrow of the old feudal order, the Congress compromised with the landlords sharing power with them in post-independent India. It was only the Communist Party of India which linked the struggle against British imperialism with a comprehensive agrarian revolution. Right from the Platform of Action of 1930 to the memorandum submitted to the National Integration Council by the CPI (M) in 1968, the communist movement constantly underlined that caste exploitation and social emancipation could be possible only through sweeping changes in agrarian relations. However, in the absence of a powerful agrarian movement, this task has remained unfulfilled to date.

Another current also needs to be properly analysed in order to understand the persistence of the caste stratification to date, i.e, the social reform movement. There have taken place powerful anti-caste movements in the country and they wielded significant political influence at their time. Among the giants who stand out in such movements was Jotiba Phule. Ideologically, Jotiba's movement was an uncompromising attack on the ancient and feudal superstructure. However, this uncompromising attack did not go beyond to attack the basic agrarian structure based on feudal land relations which was the basis on which this superstructure existed.

Similar has been the experience of Ambedkar. This most outstanding and tireless fighter, who on behalf of the dalits exposed the upper caste hypocrisies and lambasted the Congress and its policies, had to finally ask his followers to embrace Buddhism to escape the injustices of the Hindu society. But the grim social reality based on unequal land relations did not change because of conversion to

Buddhism. Unfortunately, smashing the present socio-economic system as the decisive step for elimination of caste exploitation, was replaced by formal declarations of equality, reservation of seats, jobs, etc. It was once again shown that despite a leader of Ambedkar's stature, and despite the strength of the movement, the objective could not be achieved because it failed to target the basic source of this exploitation, i.e. feudal and semi-feudal land relations. Similar also has been the experience of the Dravidian movement led by Periyar E.V. Ramswamy Naicker. Thus we find that the social reform movement, despite the glorious uncompromising role of its leaders, could not achieve the stated objective as it ignored or bypassed the tasks of the agrarian revolution.]

It is our task today to integrate the struggle against social oppression and against class exploitation in one, overall wider class struggle to change the existing socio-economic system and unleash an agrarian revolution. This is the challenge of our times. We should be as active in mobilising the people in the struggles against the new economic policies, against communalism, as in mobilising the oppressed in the struggles against social oppression. It is precisely because the Communists seek and strive for such an integration that various caste leaders pour venomous attacks on the Communists. For, when such an integration takes place, there is no room for sordid political bargaining and manoeuvring that is done by some leaders in the name of exploited castes.

Therefore, while supporting reservations for the dalits and the backward castes, we should unhesitatingly emphasise that this is not the final solution. While all caste leaders mouth the necessity of radical economic reforms to improve the lot of the oppressed, it is by now clear that unless the struggle for a sweeping agrarian revolution takes place, no meaningful emancipation of these sections can be achieved.

SOCIALISM IN THE ERA OF GLOBALISATION

I am, indeed, honoured to be invited to deliver this lecture in memory of Com. P. Kandiah. The task, however, is so demanding (and, rightly so) that I am not entirely confident of rising to the occasion. Much of Com. P. Kandiah's contributions to the Communist movement in Sri Lanka was in the period before I was born! When he left us in 1960, I was barely beginning to go to school!

Such separation by time, however, does not and cannot prevent an evaluation. However, the vastly different objective material conditions of these time zones, so to speak, imposes severe restrictions on an objective analysis. I, therefore, rely on the evaluation made by Com. P. Kandiah's contemporaries. Com. Peter Kueneman (with whom I had both the privilege and pleasure to discuss and interact on many occasions in the 1980s) describes Com. P. Kandiah as one of the co-founders of the Communist movement in Sri Lanka.

Com. Raja Collure informs us, in a recent article, that the obituary published in "*Forward*" on September 16, 1960 (probably written by Com. Kueneman) sums up Com. Kandiah's contributions as, "a hero of a hundred fights, doughty fighter in the cause of freedom, communal harmony and socialism, active worker in the nationalist cause and pioneer of the Communist movement".

Comrade P. Kandiah Memorial Lecture, Colombo, Srilanka, August 8, 2004

Com. P. Kandiah belongs to that generation, whose best minds had the opportunity to carry on higher studies in England, our then common colonial master. However, Com. P. Kandiah, like his contemporary Indian Communist legends such as Hiren Mukherjee, Bhupesh Gupta, Indrajit Gupta, Jyoti Basu, did not return to their countries to consolidate and advance the colonial rule. They returned to struggle not only for freedom from colonialism, but for transforming this hard-won freedom into a new social order, that is free from exploitation of man by man – socialism.

This was the generation that pioneered the Communist movement in our region. This was the generation that shunned the pleasures and privileges of the elite to plunge into a people's struggle. They had both a vision and a dream.

It is the contributions of Com. P. Kandiah and his generation that brought many of us, of later generations, to share their dreams and carry forward those visions.

In memory of that generation and as my humble homage to Com. P. Kandiah, I have embarked on an ambitious theme for this memorial lecture (fully conscious of my limitations) that in my opinion needs to be addressed by all Communists. That is: how do we advance towards socialism in the era of globalisation.

This would necessarily entail a discussion on the sustainability of capitalist globalisation; the experience and lessons to be learnt from socialism in the twentieth century; an attempted evaluation of the Chinese experience of socialist construction and the direction of the tactical line to be adopted by the Communists at the present juncture.

II

Globalisation, as the present phase of world capitalist development is known, is a development that can be understood mainly on the basis of the internal laws and the dynamics of the functioning of the capitalist economic system. Karl Marx, in his seminal work *Das Kapital*, had shown us that as Capitalism develops, it leads to the concentration and centralisation of capital in a few hands. As a result of this law, huge amounts of capital get accumulated. This, in turn,

needs to be deployed to earn profits which is the *raison d'etre* of the system.

Towards the end of the twentieth century, more specifically in the decade of the eighties, this process of centralization led to gigantic levels of accumulation of capital. The beginning of the nineties saw the internationalisation of finance capital which had grown in colossal leaps. In 1993, the global stock of principal derivatives was estimated to be over \$20 trillion. Subsequently, this globally mobile finance capital had acquired unprecedented dimensions. At the turn of the twenty first century, the turnover in the global financial transactions was estimated to be over \$400 trillion, or, nearly 60 times the annual global trade in goods and services estimated to be around \$ 7 trillion.

This huge accumulated finance capital requires a world order that places absolutely no restrictions on its global movement in search of predatory speculative profits.

Simultaneously, the huge accumulation of capital taking place with the multinational corporations, the assets of some of whom outstrip the combined GDPs of many developing countries, also created conditions which required the removal of all restrictions on the movement of this industrial capital in search of super profits. Similar pressures also developed for the removal of all trade barriers and tariff protection.

Thus, the laws of capitalist development by themselves created the objective conditions for the current phase of globalisation whose essential purpose is to break down all barriers for the movement of capital and to dovetail the economies of the developing countries to the super profit earning drive of multinational corporations. This is sought to be achieved by the global *trimoorti*, viz, IMF, the World Bank and the WTO. The objective that clearly emerges is one of seeking the economic recolonisation of the developing countries or the third world.

As this process of globalisation was underway came the collapse of the former Soviet Union and some of the socialist countries in Eastern Europe. While it is a matter of a separate discussion to examine whether the process of globalisation and the collapse of the Soviet Union were merely coincidental, or, are related in some manner, it is sufficient for us to note here that this convergence at the beginning of

the decade of 1990s set in motion a renewed aggressiveness by the remaining superpower, the USA.

The visions of a 'new world order' under the US leadership unfolded. The efforts to impose a comprehensive US hegemony on all global matters was unleashed. The natural tendency in the post-cold war bipolar international situation was the movement towards multipolarity. This is sought to be short-circuited by USA and in its place create a world of uni-polarity under its tutelage.

These efforts have been intensified further following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States. The "war against terrorism" has today replaced the Cold War imperialist slogan of "war against Communism" as the excuse and pretext to militarily intervene in sovereign independent countries to advance US hegemonic interests. The war against Iraq and its occupation by the USA is the most brazen expression of this trend.

Thus, under globalisation, what we are witnessing today is an effort towards the economic recolonisation of the third world and simultaneously a world that is sought to be dictated and ruled upon by US-led imperialism.

While these are the objectives that imperialism seeks to achieve, certain other features of globalisation need to be noted. These are important to underline the fact that for the bulk of humanity, globalisation means nothing else, but greater misery and exploitation.

First, globalisation is accompanied by the utilisation of vastly growing scientific and technological advances not for the benefit of the vast masses of humanity but for strengthening the rapacious plunder for greater profits. The nature of capitalist development is increasingly based on such advances which permit constant replacement of human beings by machines. The net result is, while moderate growth is achieved, it is done without generating employment and, in fact, reducing its future potential. This is the phenomenon of 'jobless growth'.

According to the International Labour Organisation, while 12 crore people were officially registered as unemployed at the turn of the century, there were an additional 70 crore who were underemployed.

In addition, 130 crore people live in absolute poverty earning less than \$1 a day. While 300 crore people, in addition, live on less than \$2 a day.

Secondly, this phase of globalisation is accompanied by a sharp widening of inequalities. This is true for both between the developed and the developing countries and between the rich and the poor in all countries. This is starkly illustrated by the fact that the combined asset of 358 billionaires in the world is greater than the combined annual GDP of countries constituting 45 per cent of the world's population, or, 230 crore people. The share of the poorest 20 per cent in the world's population is less than one per cent down from 1.4 per cent in 1991.

Such large-scale impoverishment of the vast majority of the world's people means the shrinkage of their capacity to be consumers of the products that this globalised economy produces. This renders the entire process of globalisation to be simply unsustainable. This is the third feature.

The enormous growth of mobility of international finance capital had created illusions that this was a balloon that could be inflated to infinity. Burst it did, shattering many illusions created by this "virtual wealth". All the stock markets in the world, including the fancied Nasdaq, suffered major collapses by the middle of 2001. This was before September 11, and hence, it would be only a deliberate effort to try and link the current global recession to the terrorist attacks. If anything, the "war against terrorism", has to some extent bolstered public investment, particularly in the armament industry given the aggressive US hegemonic drive. (Signs of recovery, led by the war against Iraq, are now visible. This, however, does not appear sustainable.)

The only way imperialism seeks to sustain this unsustainable exploitative order is by intensifying its political and military hegemony. The burdens of the economic crisis will surely be shifted to the people who are already groaning under the globalisation onslaught. In this context, it is pertinent to recollect what Marx has said in the *Das Kapital*. "With adequate profit, capital is very bold. A certain 10 per cent will ensure its employment anywhere; 20 per cent certain will produce eagerness; 50 per cent positive audacity; 100 per cent will make it ready to trample on all human laws; and 300 per cent and there is not a crime at which it will scruple, nor a risk it will not run, even to the chance of its owner being hanged."

Thus, what awaits humanity is a fresh wave of assaults and onslaughts. Unless ofcourse, the people's movement against globalisation, which has been rapidly growing in recent years, attains levels that can halt and reverse this process. But that can be possible only if an alternative to the capitalist system emerges as the objective to achieve freedom and liberty. History has repeatedly shown that no amount of reform within the capitalist system can eliminate exploitation which is inherent in the very production process of the system. An alternative socio-economic political system has to be put in place and that can only be socialism. Humanity, thus, has a choice. As Rosa Luxemburg many decades ago and Fidel Castro today put it: this choice is between socialism or barbarism.

Thus, notwithstanding the ideological offence that continues to parrot the so-called invincibility and eternity of Capitalism, (the Francis Fukuyama variety) its global economy is in a serious crisis and imperialism has embarked on a hegemonic drive to enslave the majority of the world's people.

III

However, the success of the struggle for socialism while depending mainly on the strength of the popular mass movements will also have to learn lessons from the past experiences and adapt to the changing situations. It is necessary, therefore, in order to strengthen this struggle to make a brief analysis of the experiences of 70 years of socialism in the USSR and to evaluate the current experiences of socialist China.

Socialism in the twentieth century

The creation of the Soviet Union marked the first advance in human history of the establishment of a society free from class exploitation. The rapid strides made by socialism, the transformation of a once backward economy into a mighty economic and military bulwark confronting imperialism, had confirmed the superiority of the socialist system. The building of socialism in the Soviet Union is an epic saga of human endeavour.

This remains a source of inspiration to all peoples of the world who are in the midst of a struggle for social emancipation. The decisive role played by the USSR in the defeat of fascism and the consequent emergence of the East European socialist countries had a profound impact on world developments. The victory over fascism provided the decisive impetus to the process of decolonialisation that saw the liberation of countries from colonial exploitation. The historical triumph for the Chinese revolution, the heroic Vietnamese people's struggle, the Korean people's struggle and the triumph of the Cuban revolution made a tremendous influence on world developments.

The achievements of the socialist countries -- the eradication of poverty and illiteracy, the elimination of unemployment, the vast network of social security in the fields of education, health, housing, etc. -- provided a powerful impetus to the working people all over the world in their struggles.

World capitalism met this challenge to its order, partly by adopting welfare measures and granting rights that it never conceded to the working people before. The entire conception of a welfare state and the social security network created in the post-Second World War capitalist countries was a result of the struggles of the working people in these countries inspired by the achievements of socialism. The democratic rights that are today considered as inalienable from human civilisation are also the product of the people's struggle for social transformation and not the charity of bourgeois class rule.

These revolutionary transformations brought about qualitative leaps in human civilisation and left an indelible imprint on modern civilisation. This was reflected in all fields of culture, aesthetics, science, etc. While Eisenstein revolutionised cinematography, the sputnik expanded the frontiers of modern science to outer space. The panicky American response to Yuri Gagarin's flight into space in 1959, came in the form of President Kennedy's assurance to the US Senate that within a decade they would put man on the moon. The US succeeded in doing this only in 1969 working overtime for a full decade. In the meanwhile, the USSR carried out many a space mission, including sending the dog Lyka.

Reverses to Socialism

Yet, despite such tremendous advances, that too under the most exacting of circumstances and hostile environment, why is it that the mighty USSR could not consolidate and sustain the socialist order?

There were, generally speaking, two areas where wrong understanding and consequent errors were committed. The first pertains to the nature of assessments of contemporary world realities and about the very concept of socialism. The second concerns the practical problems confronted during the period of socialist construction.

Incorrect estimations

Despite the unprecedented and path-breaking advances made by socialism in the twentieth century, it must be borne in mind that all socialist revolutions barring the few (not all) in East Europe took place in relatively backward capitalistically developed countries. While this vindicated the Leninist understanding of breaking the imperialist chain at its weakest link, it nevertheless permitted world Capitalism to retain its hold over the developed productive forces and, hence, also the potential for its future development. The socialist countries removed one-third of the world market from Capitalism. This, however, did not directly affect either the levels of advances already made by world Capitalism in developing the productive forces, or in Capitalism's capacity to further develop the productive forces on the basis of scientific and technological advances. This permitted world Capitalism to overcome the setbacks caused by socialist revolutions to develop the productive forces and further expand the capitalist market. Given the existing correlation of class forces internationally, imperialism achieved the expansion of the capitalist market through neo-colonialism.

On the other hand, given the pace and qualitatively higher advances made by socialism in a relatively short span (recall that the Soviet Union came to match the might of the fascist military machine in less than a decade -- what took Capitalism 300 years was accomplished by socialism in 30!) led to a belief that such advances were irreversible. The Leninist warning that the vanquished bourgeoisie will hit back with a force a hundred times stronger was not fully taken into account.

The inevitability of Capitalism's collapse is not an automatic process. Capitalism has to be overthrown. An erroneous estimation of its strength only blunts the need to constantly sharpen and strengthen the revolutionary ideological struggle of the working class and its decisive intervention under the leadership of a party wedded to Marxism-Leninism -- the subjective factor without which no revolutionary transformation is possible.

Thus, the overestimation of the strength of socialism and the underestimation of the strength of Capitalism did not permit an objective analysis and consequently the proper assessment of the emerging world situation.

Further, socialism was perceived as a linear progression. Once socialism was achieved, it was erroneously thought that the future course was a straight line without any obstacles till the attainment of a classless, Communist society. Experience has also confirmed that socialism is the period of transition or, as Marx said, the first stage of Communism -- the period between a class-divided exploitative capitalist order and the classless Communist order. This period of transition, therefore, by definition implies, not the elimination of class conflicts but its intensification, with world Capitalism trying to regain its lost territory. This period, therefore, was bound to be a protracted and complex one with many a twist and turn and many a zigzag. This was particularly so in those countries which were capitalistically backward at the time of the revolution. (Some theoretical aspects of the protracted nature of this transition period are discussed later when we take up the reforms in China.)

The success or failure of the forces of world socialism in this struggle, at any point of time, is determined both by the success achieved in socialist construction and the international and internal correlation of class forces and their correct estimation. Incorrect estimations leading to an underestimation of the enemy both without and within the socialist countries and the overestimation of socialism had created a situation where the problems confronting the socialist countries were ignored as well as the advances and consolidation of world capitalism.

Lenin had always reminded us that the living essence of dialectics is the concrete analysis of concrete conditions. If the analysis falters or

the true appreciation of the actual situation is faulty, then erroneous understandings and distortions surface.

It is such distortions and, importantly, deviations from the revolutionary content of Marxism-Leninism in later years of the USSR, particularly after the 20th Congress of the CPSU alongwith the unresolved problems in the process of socialist construction that led to these reverses.

Major shortcomings in socialist construction

In the process of socialist construction, there were essentially four areas where major shortcomings occurred. Before discussing these, it needs to be underlined, once again, that socialism was embarking on an unchartered path of human advance. There were no blueprints or any specific formulae. This reality also contributed in a large measure towards these shortcomings.

Class character of the state : The first of these areas is regarding the class character of the state under socialism. The dictatorship of the overwhelming majority over a minority of former exploiting classes, i.e., the dictatorship of the proletariat as opposed to the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, which is that of a minority over the overwhelming majority, is the character of the state under socialism.

However, the forms of this class rule need to keep developing as socialism advances through various phases. The form necessary, say in a period of capitalist encirclement, or civil war, need not be the form, say in a period of post-Second World War socialist consolidation in the Soviet Union. The theoretical elaboration of the different phases of the dictatorship of the proletariat and different forms of the socialist state, is made for the first time in the political report of the 18th Congress of the CPSU in 1939. Stalin deals at length on this issue in a section titled, 'Questions of theory.' However, when such transformation of forms, whose changes represent the movement towards greater and larger participation of the people in the activities of the state, are not made at the appropriate time, the growing aspirations of people under socialism get stifled and this leads to alienation and discontent. Further, the same form need not be applicable uniformly to all socialist countries. The form will be determined by the historical background and the concrete socio-economic conditions in those countries.

Lenin had clearly stated in *The State and Revolution* that as the forms of bourgeois states are varied, the period of transition from Capitalism to Communism "certainly cannot but yield a great abundance and variety of political forms". But he goes on to underline that the forms may be different but the essence will inevitably be the dictatorship of the proletariat. "The forms of bourgeois states are extremely varied, but their essence is the same: all these states, whatever their form, in the final analysis are inevitably the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. The transition from Capitalism to Communism certainly cannot but yield a great abundance and variety of political forms, but the essence will inevitably be the same: the dictatorship of the proletariat" (emphasis added).

The adoption of the Soviet form of state in the post-Second World War socialist countries of East Europe, hence, was a development that ignored the concrete socio-economic conditions and the historical background of these countries. For instance, Czechoslovakia had Communists elected to its Parliament in a multi - party system before the revolution. The prohibition of multi-party system under socialism was seen by many as a regression. This contributed, as well, to the alienation of the people and growing discontent.

Socialist democracy: The second area where there were major shortcomings was that concerning socialist democracy. Democracy under socialism needs to be deeper and richer than under capitalism. While Capitalism gives the formal democratic right, it does not provide to the vast majority of people the capacity to exercise it (under Capitalism, everyone has a right to buy anything that is available but the majority do not have the capacity to exercise this right), socialism must provide both the right and the capacity to the people to exercise that right.

However, in the process of socialist construction in many countries, two types of shortcomings occurred. First, the dictatorship of the class over a period of time was replaced by the dictatorship of the vanguard of the class, i.e., the Party. This over time was replaced by the leadership of the Party. The socialist state which represents the entire class and working people got substituted by a small section in the Party. This led to a strange situation with the decisions, say, of the Party Polit Bureau, becoming enforceable on all citizens.

This was done through a fiat instead of convincing the majority of the people who are not members of the Party through democratically decided state bodies like the Soviets. The Leninist principle of a Party decision being articulated in democratic people's forums and Party's leadership established through a democratic process with maximum people's participation was replaced, unfortunately, by diktats. This, naturally, strengthened the sense of alienation amongst the people.

Secondly, in the process of implementation of democratic centralism, inner-Party democracy, often, became a casualty while centralism became strengthened, as certain periods in the history of the USSR shows. This led to the growth of bureaucratism which is the very antithesis of democracy. Tendencies alien to socialism, such as, corruption and nepotism also surfaced. An example of this was the institutionalisation of privileges to large sections of the leadership of the CPSU and other ruling Communist parties. In this process, the vitality of this revolutionary principle is robbed, alienating the Party from the masses and the Party ranks from the leadership.

It must be noted that instead of correcting these distortions both in the area of the class character of the state under socialism and socialist democracy, the Gorbachev leadership set about a course of abandoning both the concept of the leading role of the working class and democratic centralism. In the process, it disarmed the revolutionary party, prevented it from undertaking the necessary corrections which finally led to the dismantling of socialism.

Socialist economic construction: The third area where some shortcomings took place were in the process of socialist economic construction. As productive forces rapidly developed under the social ownership of the means of production and centralised state planning, the methods of economic management that arise precisely due to this rapid economic development need to constantly change. The inability to transit to new levels by introducing such changes can lead to the stagnation of the economy. For instance, once all available land for agricultural production is utilised, then any further increases in production can happen only through increases in productivity. If such change is not affected in time, then problems arise. This is precisely what happened in the USSR in the seventies and the eighties.

Once again, instead of effecting such changes, the Gorbachev leadership set about a course of abandoning the socialist economic foundations of social ownership of means of production and planning. Under the influence of the "bourgeois god of market economy", the systematic dismantling of the socialist economic foundations took place which contributed to the dismantling of socialism itself.

Gorbachev and the liquidationist leadership of the CPSU thus emerged as the children of the illegitimate relationship between revisionism and imperialism.

Neglect of ideological consciousness: The fourth area where major shortcomings occurred was in the field of strengthening the collective ideological consciousness of the people under socialism. Socialism can be sustained and developed only by the growing collective consciousness of the people which, in turn, cannot be reared without the ideological steadfastness of the ruling Communist Party.

Due to these shortcomings, a situation arose where counter revolutionary forces, both external and internal, acted in concert to dismantle socialism.

These reverses to socialism, therefore, have occurred not because of any inadequacies in the basic postulates of Marxism-Leninism. On the contrary, they have occurred primarily due to departures from the scientific and revolutionary content of Marxism-Leninism; incorrect estimations of the relative strengths of world Capitalism and socialism; a dogmatic and mechanical interpretation of the creative science of Marxism; and also due to major shortcomings during the course of socialist construction.

IV

While facing the current challenges, the socialist countries have embarked on a reform process, specific to the concrete situation of their countries. Particularly in the present situation where the international correlation favours imperialism with its virtual monopoly over capital and technology, the socialist countries are engaged in serious efforts at developing productive forces to consolidate socialism. These have generated concern and debate amongst well-wishers of socialism

the world over. While these reforms have led to rapid economic growth in some countries, like in China, new problems have also arisen. Let us discuss some theoretical and political issues with specific reference to China.

The triumph of the socialist revolution in Russia (and subsequently, following the defeat of fascism in the Second World War, in the relatively less developed Eastern Europe; semi-feudal semi-colonial China; northern Korea; Vietnam and Cuba) did not and could never have meant the automatic transformation of the backward economies and low levels of productive forces into high levels (higher than that of Capitalism) of socialised means of production.

For the purpose of our discussion, however, it needs to be noted that every socialist revolution, based on a concrete analysis of concrete conditions, worked out its approach towards developing rapidly the productive forces. How this can be done is specific to the concrete realities faced by the specific revolutions, both domestically and internationally.

Lenin, himself, noted on the 4th anniversary of the October Revolution: "Borne along on the crest of the wave of enthusiasm, rousing first the political enthusiasm and then the military enthusiasm of the people, we expected to accomplish economic tasks just as great as the political and military tasks we had accomplished by relying directly on this enthusiasm. We expected -- or perhaps it would be truer to say that we presumed without having given it adequate consideration -- to be able to organise the state production and the state distribution of products on Communist lines in a small-peasant country directly as ordered by the proletarian state. Experience has proved that we were wrong. It appears that a number of transitional stages were necessary state Capitalism and socialism -- in order to prepare -- to prepare by many years of effort -- for the transition to Communism. Not directly relying on enthusiasm, but aided by the enthusiasm engendered by the great revolution, and on the basis of personal interest, personal incentive and business principles, we must first set to work in this small-peasant country to build solid gangways to socialism by way of state Capitalism. Otherwise we shall never get to Communism, we shall never bring scores of millions of people to Communism. That is what experience, the

objective course of the development of the revolution, has taught us." (Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 33, pp.58 (emphasis added)

Further, he proceeds to state: "Capitalism is a bane compared with socialism. Capitalism is a boon compared with medievalism, small production, and the evils of bureaucracy which spring from the dispersal of the small producers. In as much as we are as yet unable to pass directly from small production to socialism, some Capitalism is inevitable as the elemental product of small production and exchange; so that we must utilise Capitalism (particularly by directing it into the channels of state capitalism) as the intermediary link between small production and socialism, as a means, a path, and a method of increasing the productive forces." (Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 32, pp. 350)

But, does this mean the restoration of Capitalism? To this Lenin answers quite candidly during the period of the NEP (new economic policy) that: "It means that, to a certain extent, we are re-creating Capitalism. We are doing this quite openly. It is state Capitalism. But state Capitalism in a society where power belongs to capital, and state Capitalism in a proletarian state, are two different concepts. In a capitalist state, state capitalism means that it is recognised by the state and controlled by it for the benefit of the bourgeoisie, and to the detriment of the proletariat. In the proletarian state, the same thing is done for the benefit of the working class, for the purpose of withstanding the as yet strong bourgeoisie, and of fighting it. It goes without saying that we must grant concessions to the foreign bourgeoisie, to foreign capital. Without the slightest denationalisation, we shall lease mines, forests and oilfields to foreign capitalists, and receive in exchange manufactured goods, machinery etc., and thus restore our own industry." (Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 32, pp. 491)

Post reform socialist China

To a certain extent, what we find in the post-reform socialist China is, a reflection of the theoretical positions Lenin had taken regarding state Capitalism during the NEP period. The main question involved is that of increasing the productive forces in a backward

economy to a level that can sustain large-scale socialist construction. Lenin, during his time, on the basis of the concrete international and domestic situation, consistently endeavoured to rapidly bridge the gap between backward productive forces and advanced socialist production relations. The course of this Soviet history of socialist construction, however, took place under different historical circumstances. Encirclement of the Soviet Union, the civil war, the preparations for the Second World War by the fascist forces did not allow the Soviet Union a peaceful period necessary for a protracted period of transition towards the consolidation of socialist productive forces. The pace of the socialisation of the means of production had to be hastened for the very survival of socialism itself. The fact that it did succeed in socialising the means of production through 'collectivisation', bore the brunt of fascist assaults during the Second World War and decisively defeated them will go down as one of the most remarkable and liberating experiences of the twentieth century.

In China today, what is being sought is to attain the conformity between the levels of productive forces and the relations of production under socialism. The advanced socialist production relations cannot be sustainable at lower levels of productive forces. A prolonged period of low levels of productive forces would give rise to a major contradiction between the daily expanding material and cultural needs of the people under socialism and backward productive forces. The Chinese Communist Party (CPC) has concluded that if this contradiction remains unresolved, then socialism itself in China would be under threat.

Following the political turmoil that took place during the cultural revolution and after the dethroning of the 'Gang of Four', a serious introspection was begun by the CPC on political and economic issues. In 1978, clearing confusion and incorrect understanding on many political issues and practices, the CPC adopted a comprehensive ideological line that culminated in what they call 'one central task and two basic points'. 'One central task' is economic development, the 'two basic points' are adherence to the four cardinal principles (Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong; socialist road; people's democratic dictatorship; and leadership of the Communist Party) and the implementation of reforms and an open door policy.

Soon after the initiation of the reform process, in a conversation with Kim Il Sung in 1982, Deng Xiaoping says: "In a country as big and as poor as ours, if we don't try to increase production, how can we survive? How is socialism superior, when our people have so many difficulties in their lives? The 'Gang of Four' clamoured for 'poor socialism' and 'poor Communism', declaring that Communism was mainly a spiritual thing. That is sheer nonsense! We say that socialism is the first stage of Communism. When a backward country is trying to build socialism, it is natural that during the long initial period its productive forces will not be up to the level of those in developed capitalist countries and that it will not be able to eliminate poverty completely. Accordingly, in building socialism we must do all we can to develop the productive forces and gradually eliminate poverty, constantly raising the people's living standards. Otherwise, how will socialism be able to triumph over Capitalism? In the second stage, or the advanced stage of Communism, when the economy is highly developed and there is overwhelming material abundance, we shall be able to apply the principle of from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs. If we don't do everything possible to increase production, how can we expand the economy? How can we demonstrate the superiority of socialism and communism? We have been making revolution for several decades and have been building socialism for more than three. Nevertheless, by 1978 the average monthly salary for our workers was still only 45 yuan, and most of our rural areas were still mired in poverty. Can this be called the superiority of socialism? That is why I insisted that the focus of our work should be rapidly shifted to economic development. A decision to this effect was made at the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee, (1978. Ed.) and it represented an important turning point. Our practice since then has shown that this line is correct, as the whole country has taken on an entirely new look." (*Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping*, Vol. 3, pp. 21-22)

It is essentially such an understanding that led to a theoretical conceptualisation of the primary stage of socialism. This in fact conforms to what Marx and Engels themselves had stated and what is accepted by all subsequent Marxists: that socialism is the transitory stage between Capitalism and Communism and hence constitutes the first stage of a Communist society. The CPC however has gone a step further to formulate that within this transitory stage, there will be stages

depending on the levels of productive forces at the time of the revolution. This was systematically elucidated in the 13th Congress of the CPC. Basically, what it meant was that China, being a backward semi-feudal, semi-colonial country at the time of the revolution, was at a stage where the socialist transformation of its economy will have to be conducted from very low levels. The World Bank, in 1980, sent an investigation team to China which estimated that the per capita GNP in 1952 was US \$ 50, even lower than that in India and only slightly more than one-fifth of that in the Soviet Union in 1928. In a country with the largest population in the world, the effort for a transformation into a modern socialist economy is, indeed, a stupendous task. The CPC estimated that this process would take at least a hundred years from the time of the revolution to reach the stage of a modern socialist economy. It is this process which they call 'the building of socialism with Chinese characteristics'.

In order to achieve such a transformation, the CPC put forward another theoretical formulation - that of building a socialist market economy. By now, it is clear that as long as commodity production exists, there would be a need for a market to exchange these commodities. The CPI(M) at its 14th Congress noted in its *Ideological Resolution*: "It would be erroneous to conclude that under socialism the market will cease to exist. So long as commodities are produced, the market exists. The crucial question is not planning *versus* market but which dominates. Under socialism, market is one of the means for the distribution of the social product. Centralised planning, utilising the market forces and the market indicators, will be able to efficiently develop the productive forces and meet the welfare demands of the people. Therefore, ignoring market indicators leads to greater irrational use of resources which will adversely affect the plan process itself".

What is sought to be created in China is a commodity market economy under the control of the socialist state where public ownership of the means of production will remain the mainstay; by which the CPC means "firstly, that public capital predominates in total social capital; secondly, the state economy controls the economic lifeline and plays a dominant role in the national economy". Through this, they seek to prevent the economic polarisation and growing inequalities created by

private market economy and ensure the common prosperity of the working people.

As a result of these reforms, China over the last two decades has achieved tremendous successes. Material standards of living have grown by leaps and bounds. Poverty levels have come down sharply. In health, higher education, scientific research and technology development, China has moved ahead at a commendable rate. All these have been possible not because China 'broke from the Maoist past' but because it developed on the solid foundations laid by the People's Republic of China during the first three decades of centralised planning.

However, new problems are also cropping up as a result of these developments. They are mainly the growing inequalities, unemployment and corruption. The CPC, cognizant of these dangers, is taking measures to tackle these problems. But the fact remains that with the current transformation of the state owned enterprises, there is a net accretion to the unemployed every year. While the State maintains a minimum subsistence allowance and offers re-training programmes for retrenched workers, unemployment is a serious problem.

The main question that emerges is whether these growing inequalities will take the form of the formation of an incipient capitalist class? Lenin, while talking of state Capitalism and emphasising the need to rapidly expand the productive forces, also warned of the risks to the socialist State that such a period of transition will bring about. Characterising the process of building state Capitalism as a war, Lenin says: "The issue in the present war is -- who will win, who will first take advantage of the situation: the capitalist, whom we are allowing to come in by the door, and even by several doors (and by many doors we are not aware of, and which open without us, and in spite of us) or proletarian State power?" (Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 33, pp 65) He proceeds further to state: "We must face this issue squarely -- who will come out on top? Either the capitalists succeed in organising first -- in which case they will drive out the Communists and that will be the end of it. Or the proletarian state power, with the support of the peasantry, will prove capable of keeping a proper rein on those gentlemen, the capitalists, so as to direct capitalism along state channels and to create a

capitalism that will be subordinate to the state and serve the state." (Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 33, pp 66)

Similarly, Deng Xiaoping in a talk during his visit to southern China says: "The crux of the matter is whether the road is capitalist or socialist. The chief criterion for making that judgement should be whether it helps promote the growth of the productive forces in a socialist society, helps increase the overall strength of the socialist state and helps raise living standards." (*Social Sciences in China*, Vol. XX, No. 2, pp. 29)

Further, in 1985, addressing some of the apprehensions of growing inequalities Deng Xiaoping says: "As to the requirement that there must be no polarisation (read growing economic inequalities), we have given much thought to this question in the course of formulating and implementing our policies. If there is polarisation, the reform will have been a failure. Is it possible that a new bourgeoisie will emerge? A handful of bourgeois elements may appear, but they will not form a class.

"In short, our reform requires that we keep public ownership predominant and guard against polarisation. In the last four years we have been proceeding along these lines. That is, we have been keeping to socialism." (*Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping*, Vol. 3, pp. 142-143)

Clearly, the CPC is in the midst of a serious effort of building socialism with Chinese characteristics. The CPC is endeavouring to rapidly expand the productive forces and, thus, consolidate and strengthen socialism in China through these reforms. On the other hand, as noted above, this very process engenders certain tendencies which seek to weaken or even destroy socialism. As a result, ideas and values alien to socialism may also surface. Imperialist finance capital is there in China not to strengthen socialism but to earn profits and to create conditions of adversity to socialism. They would certainly seek the weakening of socialism or its dismantling in order to earn greater profits. This is the current struggle between imperialism and socialism that is taking place in the theatre of China. And, in this struggle, the efforts to strengthen and consolidate socialism will receive solidarity from us and the Communists the world over.

Future is socialism

As humanity moves into the third millennium, the situation confronting us is one where imperialism is preparing to unleash a renewed offensive against the majority of the world's population. As a result of these efforts of imperialism, all the main world social contradictions -- between imperialism and socialism; between imperialism and the third world countries; between imperialist countries themselves; and between labour and capital in the capitalist world -- are intensifying.

Of these, the contradiction between imperialism and socialism occupies the central space, as the only alternative to imperialism and Capitalism is socialism. No amount of reform of Capitalism can make it an exploitation free system. The only way of liberation from this exploitation is the establishment of a socialist system.

However, in the immediate context, with imperialism bracing itself for a new offensive, the contradiction between imperialism and the third world countries is bound to intensify rapidly and come to the forefront.

The recent years have seen growing global protest against globalisation as well as against US military interventions in pursuit of its efforts to strengthen its global hegemony. The global protests ranging from Seattle to Genoa; the international calls by trade union organisations for anti-WTO protest; the increasing participation in the World Social Forum (WSF); the struggles and joint resistance in many third world countries etc have characterised this period. Newer forms of struggles are also emerging.

This period has also seen the strengthening of the process of the regrouping of Communist forces in various parts of the world. Various regional groupings of Communist, Left and progressive forces such as the Sao Paulo Forum which brings together the Left forces in the Americas are also being strengthened. This period also saw growing

interaction amongst the Communist parties and a larger number of occasions for international Communist gatherings.

Much of this, however, is defensive in nature. Defending the rights that are being rapidly eroded. The struggle against capital's rule has to intensify and develop. This, however, is not to suggest that the advance of the Communist forces would be automatic. But the objective conditions open up possibilities which the Communists can utilise in strengthening the popular movement for ending a system based on exploitation of man by man. The responsibility of strengthening the subjective factor -- the revolutionary ideological struggle led by the working class, uniting other exploited classes and its decisive intervention under the leadership of a party wedded to Marxism-Leninism -- falls on our shoulders. It is imperative to utilise the objective situation and intervene to advance the movement for social emancipation. This advance in the immediate context will have to work for the convergence of the global anti-war protest and world - wide anti-globalisation movements into a mighty anti-imperialist people's movement.

This is the only course available to humanity to save itself from being engulfed by the slide to barbarism. To those who argue that there is no alternative to globalisation (the famous TINA factor), our answer is that the alternative to TINA is SITA (socialism is the alternative).

SOCIALISM : THE CHALLENGES TODAY

Dear Comrades and friends,

At the outset, we are extremely heartened and grateful that more than twenty important Communist parties of the world -- from the socialist, developed and developing countries -- are participating in this programme.

I consider it both an honour and privilege to initiate this discussion. I would, however, choose to provoke a discussion! On the basis of our modest efforts in India and based on our experience, I wish to place before you seven points in the nature of a healthy provocation!

1. No matter what we may think about the actual experience of socialism in the past, one thing is undeniable. It was the first time in human history that a society had come into being not spontaneously, not on the basis of the spontaneous movement of history independent of human will, but on the basis of human conception. Karl Marx had remarked in *Das Capital* that the difference between the best bee and

Intervention at the panel discussion organised by the Social Scientist and Social Science Probing in the World Social Forum, Mumbai, January 17, 2004.

the worst architect is that the architect, unlike the bee, erects a structure in the mind before erecting it in reality. Socialism is the first structure of society that was first erected in the mind before it was erected in reality. True, what came into being might not have fully corresponded to what was in the mind; nonetheless socialism, even as it existed, was the first non-spontaneously evolved mode of production in human history. Quite apart from its historical significance in establishing the rule of the hitherto exploited classes, in defeating fascism, in enabling the oppressed nations to liberate themselves from imperialism and in forcing Capitalism, however transiently, to adopt welfare state measures, this aspect of socialism, of representing the first grand effort of mankind to transform a vision into reality, must never be lost sight of. In fact, socialism defined, to a significant extent, the contours of human civilisational advance in the 20th century and left an inerasable imprint on all its aspects. Since mankind would never again rest content leaving its fate to the blind forces of history, the victory of socialism, not necessarily in the form it originally appeared in but may be in some other form, representing a vision going beyond Capitalism towards social ownership, is assured and inevitable. Through all our present travails this is a truth we must never lose sight of.

2. Nonetheless we must face the question: why did socialism collapse over large parts of the world? The usual answer to this question focuses on the defects of the system that was erected, notably the extreme centralization of power in the socialist societies, which were characterized by a dictatorship of the Party and which ultimately ended up de-politicizing the working class to a significant extent. The CPI(M) had, in its 14th Congress, identified four areas, viz, the character of the socialist state; the content of socialist democracy; the construction of the socialist economy; and inadequate development of ideological consciousness amongst the people, where distortions and deviations took place undermining the socialist State. There is of course much truth in this. But this answer itself has to be located within a historical

context, and that context was provided by imperialism. Imperialism leading to uneven development kept socialism confined only to countries in the periphery while countries in the metropolis, belying the hopeful anticipation of Marx and Engels and the expectations of Lenin and his comrades, came close to, but never succeeded in, achieving the breakthrough to a socialist revolution. As a result, socialism, wherever it had come into being, remained “encircled” throughout its entire brief history, resulting in an ossification of the centralized bureaucratic structure from which there was no escape other than through a collapse of the system itself.

3. There is an additional point to note. Not only did revolutions not happen in the advanced centres of Capitalism but the very revolutionary conjuncture itself passed. The Programme of the Comintern was based on the notion of a “general crisis of Capitalism” from which the only way out could be provided by a transition to socialism. All of us recollect the meetings of 1957 and 1960. 81 Communist parties in a declaration asserted in 1960 that the international correlation of forces shifted decisively in socialism's favour; that Capitalism is incapable of developing any further; that socialism is irreversible in the existing socialist countries, etc, etc. In retrospect, it is clear that there was both an underestimation of Capitalism and an overestimation of socialism. An incorrect estimation that had grave consequences for the advance of the socialist cause. Capitalism restructured itself in the aftermath of the Second World War, through Keynesian demand management ushering in an unprecedented boom, through political de-colonization removing the moral stigma of being an oppressor of other nations from it, and through the diffusion of a degree of development to certain pockets in the third world, such as East Asia, which appeared to belie the Sixth Congress thesis that development of the third world could occur only through socialism. These changes together with the experience of the very horrors of the Second World War contributed to the passing of

the revolutionary conjuncture of the period 1913-1950. While we have a renascent imperialism today and the moral stigma associated with oppression and stagnation is once again beginning to adhere to Capitalism, portending the beginning of yet another possible revolutionary conjuncture, the fact remains that this would not be a return to the earlier conjuncture. Lenin always teaches us that concrete analysis of concrete conditions is the living essence of dialectics. Just as he authored Leninism as Marxism in the era of imperialism, it falls on our collective shoulders to define the contours of the socialist revolution in the present conjecture. Therefore, there is no going back. We can stand on Lenin's shoulders to see the future but we can not see it through Lenin's eyes.

4. Given the fact of uneven development under imperialism it is clear that the transition to socialism would be a protracted affair. Likewise, given the reassertion of hegemony of imperialism in the epoch of the emergence of a new form of international finance capital, it is clear that the socialist movement must be engaged above all in an anti-imperialist struggle. Indeed the chief hallmark of the socialist movement today is that it constitutes the most consistent fighter against imperialism, since it alone can visualize a transcendence of Capitalism which is a necessary condition for the transcendence of imperialism. For, Marx has irrefutably proved that capitalism can never survive without its *raison-d-etre*, i.e., exploitation of man by man and nation by nation. To those who spread illusions of reforming capitalism (since Bernstein) and to those who parrot the TINA (there is no alternative to globalisation) factor, the Communist answer can only be that the alternative to TINA is SITA -- socialism is the alternative. We can therefore carry the struggle for socialism forward today only through the adoption of an uncompromising stand against imperialism. This is our historic task in an era when the vileness of imperialist predatoriness, notwithstanding all high phrases about "freedom" and "democracy", is becoming apparent to everyone in the aftermath of the war on Iraq.

5. There is an additional point to consider. The reassertion of imperialist hegemony is occurring in a situation of the ascendancy of international finance capital in a new form which has the effect of causing deflation, recession, and unemployment everywhere. In other words, the contemporary imperialist aggressiveness is the other side of the same coin which imposes enormous burdens on the working classes in the advanced capitalist countries in the form of unemployment and cuts in social wage. Imperialism of course tries to pit the workers in the advanced countries against those in the third world by arguing that the latter are snatching jobs away from the former. Nothing could be further from the truth. It is the world-wide deflation imposed by finance capital that is the cause of unemployment everywhere, not the re-distribution of employment from one section of workers by another. An anti-imperialist struggle, provided it can make this point clear and present a vision for improving the lot of mankind as a whole, embracing the working class and other exploited classes in all countries -- developed, developing and underdeveloped - - can acquire world-wide support and contribute to a change in the conjuncture.

6. Of course the precise contours of what a future socialist society would look like still need to be drawn, based on the past experience of socialism. The road map of this would naturally vary from country to country depending on the concrete realities. Each one of us has this historic responsibility to discharge in our respective countries. However, the task of advancing the anti-imperialist struggle world - wide cannot afford to wait. Neither can it wait until that intellectual task of evolving a coherent and comprehensive revolutionary theory for the socialist revolution in the present conjuncture, important though it is, is completed.

7. Finally, let us confront a reality squarely. The present phase of capitalist globalisation is simply unsustainable. This is precisely

because, by sharply accentuating economic inequalities -- between countries and between the rich and poor in individual countries -- the vast majority of world's population are increasingly placed beyond market operations as they simply lack the requisite purchasing power. Imperialist hegemonic drive, therefore, will increasingly be determined by military aggressiveness. Under these conditions, as Rosa Luxemburg said earlier and as Fidel Castro says today, the choice before humanity's future is between socialism or barbarism.

Each one of us, working in tandem with our domestic revolutionary goals, will have to work for integrating the worldwide anti-globalisation protests with the global anti-war upsurge into a mighty anti-imperialist movement. This requires, simultaneously, the intensification of the ideological combat within these movements that seek to obfuscate socialism as the only alternative available to humanity.

Come, let us, together rise to the occasion.

SECULARISM, DEMOCRACY AND POLITICAL MORALITY

I consider it an honour and a privilege to deliver this Dr. Zakir Husain Memorial Lecture. The relevance of Dr. Zakir's life and work appear more enlarged in the troubled times in which we live today.

Dr. Zakir Husain represented the mainstream vision of India's freedom movement which saw the future of independent India as being secured only on the foundations of secular democracy and economic and intellectual self-reliance. In his Pledge to the Nation on assuming office as the President of India, he encapsulates this vision. India, he says, is a "young state of an ancient people who, through the long millennia and through the cooperation of diverse ethnic elements, have striven to realise timeless, absolute values in their own peculiar way ...I, therefore, pledge myself to the totality of our past culture from wheresoever it may have come and by whomsoever it may have been contributed. I pledge myself, to the service of the totality of my country's culture, I pledge my loyalty to my country, irrespective of region or language; I pledge myself to work for its strength and progress and for the welfare of its people without distinction of caste, colour or creed. The whole of Bharat is my Home and its people are my family. The people have chosen to make me the Head of this family for a certain

Dr. Zakir Husain Memorial Lecture, Hyderabad, March 25, 2001

time. It shall be my earnest endeavour to seek to make this Home strong and beautiful, a worthy Home for a great people engaged in the fascinating tasks of building up a just and prosperous and graceful life ... The situation demands of us work, work and more work, silent and sincere work, solid and steady reconstruction of the whole material and cultural life of our people.

“This work, as I see it, has two aspects: work on one’s self and work for the society around. They are mutually fruitful aspects of work. The work on one’s self is to follow the urge towards moral development as free persons under self-imposed discipline, which alone can render that development possible. Its end-product is a free moral personality. We can neglect this end-product only at our peril.”

It is with great pain that we must realise that over this half century since independence, it is this ‘end-product’ that has not only been neglected but has seen a steady degeneration. The recent Tehelka exposures have shocked the country baring the depths to which moral degeneration has sunk. We shall return to this later.

Dr. Zakir Husain had quoted Rabindranath Tagore to buttress his vision. I would only like to recollect what Firaq Gorakhpuri had once said:

“Haasil-e-Husn-o-Ishq Bas Itna,
Admi Admi Ko Pahechane”

(The ultimate objective of beauty and love is merely that man should understand man).

Alas! In the society all around us, it is precisely this which appears missing! The most unfortunate aspect is that this is happening in the name of religion!

This vision represented by Dr. Zakir Husain was, in fact, an integral part of the ideological battle that continued through the freedom struggle and, in a way, continues even today between three distinct vision of what should constitute the character of independent India. Opposed to the mainstream vision of the freedom movement which created the Indian Republic on the foundations of secular democracy was the

myopic inward looking vision of converting independent India into a rabidly intolerant "*Hindu Rashtra*". This vision originates with the formation of the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS) in 1925. This was best articulated by M.S. Golwalkar, RSS Sarsanghchalak, in 1939; in his, by now infamous book, "*We or our Nationhood defined*".

"The conclusion is unquestionably forced upon us that ... in Hindusthan exists and must needs exist the ancient Hindu Nation and nought else but the Hindu Nation. All those not belonging to the national, ie, Hindu Race, Religion, Culture and Language, naturally fall out of the pale of real 'National' life.

"We repeat: in Hindusthan, the land of the Hindus, lives and should live the Hindu Nation – satisfying all the five essential requirements of the scientific nation concept of the modern world. Consequently only those movements are truly 'National' as aim at re-building, re-vitalising and emancipating from its present stupor, the Hindu Nation. Those only are nationalist patriots, who, with the aspiration to glorify the Hindu race and nation next to their heart, are prompted into activity and strive to achieve that goal. All others are either traitors and enemies to the National cause, or, to take a charitable view, idiots" (*Golwalkar*, 1939, pp. 43-44). He continues: "We must bear in mind that so far as 'nation' is concerned, all those, who fall outside the five-fold limits of that idea, can have no place in the national life, unless they abandon their differences, adopt the religion, culture and language of the Nation and completely merge themselves in the National Race. So long, however, as they maintain their racial, religious and cultural differences, they cannot but be only foreigners" (*Golwalkar*, 1939, p. 45).

And further: "There are only two courses open to the foreign elements, either to merge themselves in the national race and adopt its culture, or to live at its mercy so long as the national race may allow them to do so and to quit the country at the sweet will of the national race ... From this standpoint, sanctioned by the experience of shrewd old nations, the foreign races in Hindusthan must either adopt the Hindu culture and language, must learn to respect and hold in reverence Hindu religion, must entertain no idea but those of the glorification of the

Hindu race and culture, ie, of the Hindu nation and must lose their separate existence to merge in the Hindu race, or may stay in the country, wholly subordinated to the Hindu Nation, claiming nothing, deserving no privileges, far less any preferential treatment – not even citizen's rights. There is, at least should be, no other course for them to adopt. We are an old nation; let us deal, as old nations ought to and do deal, with the foreign races, who have chosen to live in our country.” (Golwalkar, 1939, pp. 47-48)

In contrast to the mainstream vision and uncompromisingly opposed to the vision of ' *Hindu Rashtra* ' was the Left vision which sought to build on the mainstream vision and transform the political content of the Republic into the economic empowerment of the Indian people. The socialist vision, therefore, while not opposing the mainstream vision was critical of its limitations and continues till today to convert the political independence of our country into the economic independence of our people.

The conflicts that we see in present-day politics is essentially an expression of this battle of ideas in contemporary conditions.

In pursuance of its narrow exclusivist intolerant communal agenda, the proponents of ' *Hindu Rashtra* ' had not only distanced themselves from the united struggle of the Indian people (belonging to all religions and nationalities), but objectively acted as agents of the British rule.

What is little known is the fact that the uncontested hero of the saffron brigade today, V.D. Savarkar, known as “Veer” Savarkar in RSS folklore, gave a mercy petition to the British on November 14, 1913 seeking his release from the cellular jail in the Andamans. This surrender made him a public ally of the British policy of divide and rule. It must be recalled that the term 'Hindutva' was coined by Savarkar.

In his petition, he assures the British: "Now no man having the good of India and humanity at heart will blindly step on the thorny paths which in the excited and hopeless situation of India in 1906-1907 beguiled us from the path of peace and progress. Therefore if the Government in their manifold beneficence and mercy, release me I for

one cannot but be the staunchest advocate of constitutional progress and loyalty to the English government which is the foremost condition of that progress." (R.C.Majumdar, `Penal Settlement in Andamans', p 211-213)

Further in a letter to British authorities, he wrote: "I hereby acknowledge that I had a fair trial and just sentence. I heartily abhor methods of violence resorted to in days gone by and I feel myself duty bound to uphold law and constitution to the best of my powers and am willing to make the reform a success insofar as I may be allowed to do so in future". (A facsimile of this letter was published in *Frontline*, April 7, 1995, p. 94)

He proudly subscribed to the two-nation theory in its fullest sense. In his presidential address to the Hindu Mahasabha in December 1939, Savarkar declared: "We Hindus are a nation by ourselves ... we Hindus are marked out as an abiding Nation by ourselves" (see *Indian Annual Register*, 1939, Vol II). Again later he reiterated, "I have no quarrel with Mr Jinnah's two-nation theory. We, Hindus, are a nation by ourselves and it is a historical fact that Hindus and Muslims are two nations" (*Indian Annual Register*, 1943, Vol II).

For the major portion of his life after making peace with the British his politics was oppositional to the Congress and the Left led movements rather than the British. As leader of the Hindu Mahasabha, he made sure that movements like the Quit India movement of 1942 passed without any participation from members of the Hindu Mahasabha or the Sanghathanists. He categorically called on the Hindus to give no support to the movement' (see Amba Prasad, *The Indian Revolt of 1942*).

"I issue this definite instruction that all Hindu Sanghathanists in general holding any post or position of vantage in the government services should stick to them and continue to perform their regular duties" (Quoted in Noorani, *Frontline*, December 1, 1995).

Overcoming the assault of such forces, the Indian people at the time of independence embraced secular democracy as the foundations of the new Indian Republic. It was for this very reason

that the tallest of Indian leaders, Mahatma Gandhi, was assassinated by these elements.

Secular democracy is the only political basis for keeping a country of such diversity and plurality united. This was accepted once as a statement of fact. Today it is coming under severe attack. In that sense, the battle of visions that took place during the freedom struggle continues even today.

Secularism is not a western concept, as alleged by the RSS, embraced by independent India. Its foundations can be traced back to the Ashokan inscriptions on his famous pillars that continue to exist all over the country. In fact, in one of them, it is precisely stated that it shall be state's responsibility to protect the choice of faith of every individual. This was in third century B.C. Tolerance as state policy was necessary in India not only because of religious diversity. It is necessary also because of the vast array of diversity that exists in terms of language, cultures, traditions etc. A definition of secularism, which is the most appropriate in the Indian context, is, thus, not confined only to the issue of separation of religion from the state and politics. While this is important in itself, secularism in the Indian context also should mean the right of equality of opportunity to all languages, cultures, traditions to co-exist and thrive without the fear of domination of any one by the other.

Looking at the issue in this manner would immediately suggest that secularism and democracy in India are inseparable. The protection of the rights of minorities of all varieties (religious, linguistic etc) is an integral part of democracy. Religious or linguistic intolerance impinges, therefore, upon not only secularism but also democracy.

Hence, any attack on secularism in India is also simultaneously an attack on democracy and democratic institutions. It is, therefore, no coincidence that rabid Hindu communalism that today, albeit temporarily, controls the reins of power, targets not only the secular foundations by spreading the hatred of religious intolerance but also attacks democratic institutions. The efforts to re-write the Indian Constitution, the strident cries for a presidential form of government – all are part of the larger jigsaw puzzle to facilitate the establishment of a '*Hindu Rashtra*'

The attempts to re-write Indian history and to doctor the educational system on communal lines must also be seen in the same light. Much of Dr. Zakir Husain's life and work is related to this field. He would have been aghast at the travesty of history that is currently being undertaken by the communal forces.

It is, indeed, unfortunate that this assault on India's secular democracy comes in the name of religion. By now, it is clear that religious fundamentalism of all variety, Taliban or saffron, has very little to do with religion or religiosity. It is purely an attempt to consolidate political power by misusing religion.

Seeking your indulgence, I think it necessary to digress and put at rest a great deal of controversy that has always existed regarding the Marxist understanding of religion. The popular perception is the normally out of context quotation that "religion is the opium of the people". In fact, deliberately, the passage in which this statement finds place is never quoted in the full. Marx had stated: "Religious distress is at the same time the expression of real distress and the protest against real distress. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of the heartless world, just as it is the spirit of the spiritless situation. It is the opium of the people." (Introduction to the critique of Hegel's philosophy of Right, 1844).

Religion is the opium in the sense that it is as potent as opium is in creating an illusory world. For a human being who is oppressed, religion provides the escape for relief, it provides a "heart in a heartless world, a spirit in a spiritless situation." For this precise reason, it is the opium that the people require, to lull themselves into submission so long as they continue to remain in conditions which appear outside of both their comprehension and control.

The Marxist understanding of religion is essentially integrated with its entire philosophic foundations. In pursuit of the simple question of what constitutes the real freedom of a human being and his consequent liberation, Marx proceeded to reject the Hegelian idea of the revolution of the mind as represented by Feuerbach, during his time, to come to a conclusion of seminal importance. That was: consciousness of a human being is determined by the social conditions

and not *vice a versa*. “It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but on the contrary their social being that determines their consciousness”(Introduction to the critique of Political Economy). The recent discoveries and conclusions of the “Genome Project” resoundingly vindicate this understanding.

Religion, therefore, for Marx and Marxists is a product of the social conditions in which man existed and continues to exist. The history of religion, in one sense, is also a reflection of the history of human evolution. Hence, religion, like any other form of consciousness is not a thing in itself but a reflection of the real world. In so far as human beings are unable to comprehend the forces of nature or of society that appear to determine their day to day existence and guide their destinies, the need for creating a extraterrestrial supernatural force remains. Religion, therefore, provides for the human being a sense of comfort, beauty and solace that he cannot find in the real life. At the same time, religion, also being the dominant form of ideology, is an expression of the class struggle that is taking place in society at a point of time.

This then is the Marxist materialist understanding and appreciation of religion. Its humanist content and at the same time its utilisation as a instrument of class rule have to be understood in its totality. A Communist works to change the conditions that continue to give rise to the hold of religion and not attack religion *per se* because it is not and can never be a thing in itself independent of the social organisation of human civilisation.

Let us return to the main theme. The use or the misuse of religion and religious sentiments for consolidating the political rule was perfected by the British in the Indian sub-continent. Following the 1857 first war of independence, where Rani Lakshmi Bai and Begum Hazrat Mahal fought shoulder to shoulder with Maulavi Ahmadullah and Rao Tula Ram rattled the British. Bahadur Shah Zafar , the Mughal monarch was the symbol of this struggle. The most important lesson that the British learned from this was that they could not continue to rule India allowing the Hindus, Muslims and feudal Princes to find common cause. As a contemporary chronicler, Thomas Lowe,

exclaimed: “the infanticide Rajput, the begoted Brahmin, the fanatic Mussalman join together in the cause; cow killer and the cow worshiper, the pig-hater and the pig eater had revolted together”! Any recurrence of such an event had to be prevented. The British therefore forged their notorious policy of ‘divide and rule’. Thus began the fomenting of venomous hatred between the Hindus and Muslims, in which process, they were admirably aided by the communal forces on both sides. This policy made such inroads into the fabric of Indian society, so flamed the unity and amity among its people that till date, we continue to pay the price.

It is, therefore, clear that the struggle to safeguard secular democracy in India, the struggle against Hindu communalism cannot be met by other forms of minority religious fundamentalisms. In fact, fundamentalisms of all varieties – Hindu, Muslim, Christian or Sikh – only feed each other. The only way to preserve and strengthen India’s secular democracy will have to be through forging strong common bonds amongst peoples cutting across religions and other diversities.

Such a common struggle is the only way in which the fascistic agenda of the RSS and its tentacles can be countered. Apart from adopting Goebbelsian propaganda techniques (Goebbels was Hitler’s propaganda minister, whose famous dictum was to tell a big enough lie, frequently enough to make it the truth). Such forces also invoke nationalism and morality as a potent weapon. In reality, however, their policies are precisely the opposite. While invoking national jingoism, at the drop of the hat, these forces have no compunction whatsoever in bartering our country’s security interests for personal profit. The depths of political immorality to which they can sink has been exposed by the Tehelka scandal.

Georgi Dimitrov, the indomitable hero of the struggle against Nazi fascism, had noted: “Fascism puts the people at the mercy of the most corrupt and venal elements but comes before them with the demand for “an honest and incorruptible government” speculating on the profound disillusionment of the masse ...fascism adapts its demagogy to the peculiarities of each country. And the mass of petty bourgeois and even a section of the workers, reduced to despair by want,

unemployment and insecurity of their existence fall victim to the social and chauvinist demagoguery of fascism". (Dimitrov, *Selected Works*, Vol. 2, 1972, p. 12). It is precisely this feature of fascism that defines the demagoguery and campaigns of the saffron brigade today.

Hence, what we find today is a situation where fascistic communalism is mounting an unprecedented attack on secular democracy and, in the process, it is redefining the meaning of nationalism and political morality. Having mustered votes in the name of 'swadeshi' they are implementing 'videshi' economic policies. Their brand of nationalism mortgages India, on the one hand, and imposes unprecedented burdens on the people, on the other. They are acting as the best agents of US imperialism, which seeks the economic recolonisation of India.

What is required is not an inward looking insulated exclusivist minority response to meet this challenge. What is required is the broad - based unity of all forces willing to defend India's secular democracy and economic sovereignty. This is the real meaning of patriotism in the present context.

It was Golwalkar who had once said that the three internal enemies of concept of "*Hindu Rashtra*" are the Muslims, Christians and the Communists. I would only like to add that it is the majority of the Indian people irrespective of being religious or atheist, who are opposed to the conversion of a secular democratic Indian Republic into the RSS version of "*Hindu Rashtra*". India's unity and integrity can only be maintained by strengthening the bonds of commonality that exist within our large diversity. Any attempt to impose a uniformity upon this diversity as communalism and fundamentalism seek today can only lead to the disintegration of the country. Let us unite to save India today so that we can change India for the better tomorrow.

CULTURE IN THE ERA OF GLOBALISATION, COMMERCIALIZATION AND COMMUNALISATION: SOME THOUGHTS

It is indeed an exceptional honour to be asked to deliver this valedictory address at a seminar in honour of Comrade EMS and in which some of the outstanding creative minds of our country have participated. At the outset, I must confess a sense of gross inadequacy on my part to do justice to both the topic under discussion and to the occasion. What I, therefore, propose to do is to share some thoughts, not in a studied and reasoned format, but more in the nature of random reflections.

I cannot but begin by endorsing the view that the topic chosen for this year's seminar is most appropriate to honour Comrade EMS. For, above all, EMS was a man of culture. Culture, as everything else for EMS, was not an arena of abstract play of ideas and emotions. It always remained an arena of intense struggle between contending class forces. Class struggle was EMS's culture. And, in a class - divided society, it is everybody's culture, whether individuals are consciously cognizant of it or not. EMS's views and contributions in the field of culture must always be placed in this context.

Before we engage in a discussion on the theme, I recollect a personal experience. Way back in 1986, I was asked to accompany

***Valedictory Address : Second EMS Memorial Seminar , March 18, 2000,
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Com. EMS to Berlin, to attend the Congress of the Socialist Unity Party (the then ruling party of the German Democratic Republic). During the free time we had, our hosts wanted to know what we would like to do. I suggested visiting Brecht's theatre in East Berlin which was (and is even now, I presume) called the 'Berliner Ensemble'. EMS readily agreed and we went to see a theatrical production of one of Brecht's short poems, 'In love of a revolutionary'. The programme, it was stated, would be for a duration of two hours. We were curious to see how the depiction of such a short poem could consume so much time! As the programme began, apart from the Brechtian practice of introducing characters through the audience, we were initiated to an exciting experiment. As the play was proceeding on the stage, in the background a film was being shown. The script of the film was not directly woven into that of the play. But, both put together created a powerful ambience which transcended beyond both a proscenium play and a film. EMS found this experiment very fascinating.

Such a process of experimenting with new forms was echoed many years ago in India by that genius of a filmmaker Ritwik Ghatak. He spoke of the future forms of art as a fusion of some of the existing forms and specifically of a form that goes beyond the celluloid fusing theatre, choreography and cinema. As we shall see later, the creative emergence of such forms would be crucial to combat the onslaught of cultural imperialism under globalisation.

Globalisation, commercialisation and communalisation are not unrelated aspects impacting culture in today's world. In the Indian context particularly, all these knot together to strengthen the grip of ruling class hegemony over our society.

When we speak of culture in the context of today's discussion, we do not speak merely in terms of this or that performing art. We speak of culture in its broad sense -- as a manifestation of the superstructure -- that includes language, arts, religion, education, laws, customs, etc.

On the issue of the ideological hegemony exercised by the ruling classes, Marx and Engels observe:

"The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch, the ruling ideas: i.e., the class which is the ruling material force of society is at the

same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, consequently also controls the means of mental production so that the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are on the whole subject to it. The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relations; dominant material relations, grasped as ideas: hence of the relations which made the one class the ruling one, therefore, the ideas of its dominance. The individuals comprising the ruling class possess among other things, consciousness and therefore think. In so far, therefore, as they rule as a class and determine the extent and compass of an historical epoch, it is self-evident that they do this in its whole range, hence among other things rule also as thinkers, as producers of ideas, and regulate the production and distribution of the ideas of their age; thus their ideas are the ruling ideas of the epoch." (*German Ideology*, Moscow 1976, p. 67; emphasis added.)

It is this hegemony of the 'ideas' of ruling classes that as Gramsci explains is not enforced merely by the State. The State is only the "outer ditch" behind which stands a powerful system of "fortresses and earth works", a network of cultural institutions and values which buttress the rule and domination of the ruling classes.

Such culture is mediated and transmitted through a complex web of social relations and the consequent social structure. The family, the community, caste, religion, its places of worship like temples, churches, mosques, gurdwaras, etc, are the institutions that constantly feed the fodder to shape values and opinions bolstering ruling class hegemony of 'ideas'. In the process, they create the 'myth' of a 'common culture'. This 'common culture' is nothing but the selective transmission of class dominated values through the various institutions referred to above. Nothing else illustrates this more graphically than the current ruling class euphoria over the visit of US President Clinton. Their servility to imperialism requires the obfuscation of imperialist pressures on India that erode our sovereignty amongst the people. Opposing the protests against imperialism by progressive sections of our people, the ruling classes invoke our so-called 'common culture' of 'Indian hospitality' to visiting guests. '*Athitibi Devo Bhava*', we are told! In the process, the ruling classes conveniently ignore lessons

from our own 'traditions' and legends. Recall that Vishnu comes in the avatar of Vamana to the audience of king Mahabali. He is accorded the warmest of welcomes and asked to seek any gift he wishes. Vamana seeks 'three feet of land'. His wish being granted, he assumes the form of Vishnu's 'Viswa roopa darsana' and places one foot on 'swarga loka' (heaven), one on 'bhoo loka' (earth) and then asks Mahabali where to place the third! With Mahabali's head alone remaining unoccupied, he places his foot there and pushes him down to 'patala lokam' (under world) thus killing him. Incidentally, legend has it that Mahabali recognising that he has been tricked asks Vishnu to let him return to his people once a year for a day. Vishnu relents and that day is celebrated as 'Onam' by the Kerala people!

It is interesting to note that the same legend has a different and opposite interpretation in north India. Mahabali is depicted as the king of 'Asuras' (demons) whose killing became necessary for the very survival of humans. Therefore, while one section of Indians in the north celebrate the death of Mahabali, in Kerala his return is celebrated! It is such diversity, within the Hindu fold itself, that the communal forces seek to negate in pursuit of imposing a uniformity so necessary for their political project of establishing a rabidly intolerant '*Hindu Rashtra*' (In all possibility, this legend reflects the struggle between the conquering Aryans and resisting Dravidians which the later lost).

Let us return to the creation of the myth of a 'common culture'. Interestingly such aspects of our tradition (Vamana and Mahabali) are never invoked. Here is a guest who abusing the hospitality accorded to him kills the king himself. A very appropriate analogy for Clinton's visit indeed! Instead of the king, it is the country that imperialism seeks to decimate. By invoking the so-called traditional culture of unquestioned hospitality, the ruling classes are selectively transmitting class-dominated values, convenient for their current objective of mortgaging India and its people to US imperialism.

Further, it would be extremely wrong to conclude, as the communalists seek to do today, that our 'common culture' is immutable. Take, for example, the case of the ruling classes in Central America. For over four centuries, they embraced Roman Catholicism. But when the clergy, in one country after another, chose to embrace liberation

theology and sided with the oppressed, the same ruling classes, overnight so to speak, shed their "centuries old culture" and embraced Protestantism! 'Common culture' is both invoked and discarded when it suits the interests of the ruling classes.

Culture, therefore, constitutes the ideological formation that advances the interests of the ruling classes. On the obverse, also arises the culture of the oppressed that opposes such culture of the ruling classes. Culture thus becomes the arena of class struggle.

Thus, every period generates a specific cultural ethos subscribing to the requirements of the ruling classes. Yet, long after that particular period and mode of production ceases, the 'cultural impact' continues. Slavery, for instance, generated the specific culture of 'racism' based on the colour of the skin of the slaves. But, as Engels had said, slavery leaves behind its 'poisonous sting' of racism for long after, in fact till date.

In the specific context of India, we must note that with the co-existence of Capitalism alongwith various forms of pre-capitalist economic and social formations, a mosaic of cultural milieu coexist. What the communalists seek to do is to homogenise this diversity into a monolith expressed by their slogan of "one country, one people, one culture". More on this later.

Under Capitalism, while culture as an ideological formation bolsters the rule of capital, the forms of culture go through a process of commodification, as everything else in society. Much has been written about this process and needs no repetition. The cultural products of Capitalism are aimed at achieving social control rather than expressions of social creativity. The exchange value of these products always superced their use value. This, of course, does not hold for those cultural products that emerge from dissent and opposition to Capitalism.

Globalisation is a qualitatively different stage in the evolution of capitalism and imperialism. This is a stage marked by immense growth of finance capital and its internationalisation. These enormous amounts of capital seek quick profits, mainly from speculation across the globe. They, thus, need facilities for free flow of capital without

any restrictions across countries. Its tendency is to negate geographical borders hence sovereignty of independent countries.

Alongside, the tremendous concentration of wealth and assets in giant multinational corporations, who control the bulk of world's production and distribution of goods, also seeks to convert the world into a single global market. Economists have well documented this process and we shall not go into those details here.

The cultural hegemony that such a globalisation process seeks is expressed in the need to create a homogenisation of public taste. The more homogenous the taste the easier it is to develop technologies for the mechanical reproduction of 'cultural products' for large masses. Commercialisation of culture is a natural corollary of such globalisation. See, for instance, the sudden popularisation of western concepts like 'Valentines' Day" amongst our urban youth accompanied by the sale of universal products of cards and gifts. In many third world countries, illiteracy may be rampant but the image of Walt Disney cartoon figures are familiar to the children!

Viewed in terms of class hegemony, the culture of globalisation seeks to divorce people from their actual realities of day to day life. Culture here acts not as an appeal to the aesthetic, but as a distraction, diversion from pressing problems of poverty and misery. Consequently, it seeks to disrupt the energy of the people and their struggle to change and improve their miserable existence. As Michael Parenti says, "A far greater part of our culture is now aptly designated as 'mass culture', 'popular culture', and even 'media culture', owned and operated mostly by giant corporations whose major concern is to accumulate wealth and make the world safe for their owners, the goal being exchange value rather than use value, social control rather than social creativity. Much of mass culture is organised to distract us from thinking too much about larger realities. The fluff and puffery of entertainment culture crowds out more urgent and nourishing things. By constantly appealing to the lowest common denominator, a sensationalist popular culture lowers the common denominator still further. Public tastes become still more attuned to cultural junk food, the big hype, the trashy, flashy, wildly violent, instantly stimulating, and desperately superficial offerings.

"Such fare often has real ideological content. Even if supposedly apolitical in its intent, entertainment culture (which is really the entertainment industry) is political in its impact, propagating images and values that are often downright sexist, racist, consumerist, authoritarian, militaristic, and imperialist." (*Monthly Review*, February 1999)

The media culture that globalisation promotes is starkly exposed by the manner in which the Indian big business media is bending over backwards to pay obiscene to Bill Clinton. The days preceding the visit are full of reports as to who, Chandrababu Naidu or Krishna, will win in taking Clinton to their state. Hyderabad has won and Bangalore lost. But, this was precisely the period when farmers were committing suicides in Andhra and Dalits were burnt alive in Karnataka. These reports appear as inconsequential news items. Reports on beggars being removed from Hyderabad for Clinton's visit hog headlines! Such is the divorce that media culture seeks to create between people and their actual conditions. Eminent media personalities N. Ram and Sashi Kumar have dealt in great detail on this issue and whatever else I may say would only amount to an incompetent repetition.

Communalism, apart from straight jacketing and distorting history, as Prof. Panickar has pointed out, apart from hijacking India's rich cultural diversity to suit its communal project of establishing a rabidly intolerant *Hindu Rashtra* as others like Prof. Ninan Koshy and Mohan Thampi pointed out, seeks to create an illusion of opposing this culture of globalisation by appealing to the need to preserve the 'glory of the ancient' and the 'traditional' forms of Indian culture.

It would be totally erroneous to assume that the culture of globalisation is anti-traditional. On the contrary, it co-opts the traditional forms into its format. Witness the various channels of music television today. Traditional Indian forms such as Bhangra, Dandi and so on are embraced by the 'pop' culture. Such has been its impact that it has completely transformed the concept of enjoying or appreciating music. So much so that my daughter today speaks of 'watching' a song, not 'listening' as our generation did. Traditional forms are coopted to create

the homogenisation of public taste that we spoke of earlier. The mechanical reproduction technology to cater to large masses is where the entertainment industry, the backbone of globalisation, 'culture' makes its super profits.

Further, if traditional forms can reap super profits, then they would, in fact, be promoted by the cultural moguls of globalisation. Witness the fact that Rupert Murdoch buys the worldwide rights for Ramanand Sagar's *Ramayana!*

In fact, the obverse is as true! If there are profits visible then the self styled champions of Indian culture and protectors of its 'traditions' will embrace western forms without batting an eyelid. Witness the nauseating welcome rolled out by Bal Thackeray's Shiv Sena to the epitome of globalisation culture, Michael Jackson! His obscene gyrations are more preferable to the communal forces than the ghazals of Pakistan's Ghulam Ali, whose performance they prevent in Bombay!

And, herein lies the convergence of interests of globalisation and communalism. Both seek the homogenisation of public tastes. The former to strengthen its cultural hegemony and to reap super profits. The latter, in addition to these, to pave the way for the establishment of a rabidly intolerant theocratic state of *Hindu Rasbtra*. Its slogan of "one country, one people, one culture" can acquire a real status and meaning only through such homogenisation negating the very fundamental foundations of India's rich cultural diversity.

Further, both globalisation and communalism seek to divert the attention of the people away from day to day problems and importantly weaken their struggle against the existing exploitative order. Both use culture as an important conduit to achieve this. Globalisation's manufacture of 'popular culture' and the way it operates, we have noted earlier. Communalism seeks to achieve this objective by repeatedly engaging people's attention on structurally generated emotive issues. Recall the entire gamut of issues raised by them to divide the people. Right from the temple issue at Ayodhya, Article 370, Common Civil Code, Pakistani cricket team's visit to India, paintings of M.F. Hussain, films of Deepa Mehta, Saraswati Vandana, religious conversions, etc, etc are all divorced from the grim day to day realities of the people. Poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, misery

that stalk the majority of our population are not issues that constitute their 'cultural construct'. Diverting the attention of the people and thus weakening their struggles against their miserable conditions of existence constitutes an important pillar of the cultural project of communalism.

Communalism's apparent manifestations of opposition to 'western' culture is, thus, only superficial. In terms of their content, the interests of globalisation and communalism converge. Thus, in practice, the struggle against one cannot be separated from the other. This is corroborated by the convergence of interests in other spheres as well. Communalism has shown itself as the most ardent supporter of imperialism today and an ally of the latter in the globalisation drive. Communalism has shown itself as the firm protector of the interests of the Indian ruling classes and its leadership, the big business. Hence, the struggle against imperialism in the present context cannot be divorced from the struggle against communalism.

Before we conclude, there is one other issue that needs to be considered. Whenever one mounts a critique of the type of culture being purveyed by these forces, one is confronted by the reaction that after all this is the type of culture that people want! Globalisation's 'popular' culture, we are told, is a reflection of people's taste!

Nearly a hundred and fifty years ago, Marx in his analysis of Capitalism made a very penetrating observation :

"Production not only provides the material to satisfy a need, but it also provides the need for the material. When consumption emerges from its original primitive crudeness and immediacy -- and its remaining in that state would be due to the fact that production was still primitively crude -- then it is itself a desire brought about by the object. The need felt for the object is induced by the perception of the object. An *objet d'art* creates a public that has artistic taste and is able to enjoy beauty -- and the same can be said of any other product. Production accordingly produces not only an object for the subject, but also a subject for the object." (Karl Marx, "Introduction" to *Economic Manuscripts of 1857-58*)

This is all too visible for us to see today! The billions of dollars spent annually on advertising are creating the 'subjects' for the 'objects' that the system churns out. Likewise in culture. The audience is first created to receive a product of mass consumption. The homogenisation of public tastes is thus created through an advertisement blitz that dullens if not erases critical faculties. It is not, therefore, as though, this 'culture' is catering to people's taste. Tastes are being created to accept uncritically the 'culture' that is being churned out.

How does one then combat such a cultural onslaught? An onslaught that drives away truly popular people's culture. At the first instance, it is necessary to bring back on to the cultural agenda people's issues, whose obfuscation and erasure is the *raison d'etre* of the culture of globalisation and communalism. This is paramount to counter the cultural hegemony that they seek.

Further, apart from using and innovating upon the existing forms, new forms of popular culture need to be evolved. These are necessary in order to combat the power of the electronic media that is slowly but surely eroding normal social interaction by confining people particularly children and youth to the TV sets. And, in this context, we return to the beginning of our discussion and our experience in Berlin.

This is not for a moment to suggest that existing forms should be discarded or to suggest that once other forms are created, the battle has been won. All new forms and innovations may soon be coopted by the cultural moguls of globalisation. The point that needs to be underlined, however, is that in terms of content, people's issues must be brought on to the agenda and in terms of form creative innovations are necessary. Only through such efforts can the struggle to combat the present cultural onslaught be strengthened.

CAPITALISM'S INABILITIES EXPOSED

The Central Committee of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) extends its warm revolutionary greetings to the Greek Communists on the 80th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of Greece. Coinciding with the 150th anniversary of the publication of the *Communist Manifesto*, it is, indeed, appropriate that these events are being observed through this international gathering discussing 'The Communist parties under the current conditions'.

At the outset, the CPI(M) recalls, with a sense of internationalist pride, the glorious role of the Greek Communists during the past 80 years. Through the zig-zags of history, the Greek Communists have played an important role in carrying forward the revolutionary tenets of Marxism-Leninism.

Dear Comrades,

I am sorely tempted to respond to many issues that were raised during earlier interventions. This, I suppose, will have to wait for later. In the twelve minutes allotted to each party in the first round, I confine myself to some issues which the CPI(M) considers important for our discussion here.

At 80th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of Greece. First Intervention, Athens, 1998

The objective of Marxists is, of course, to change the world. But this can be done only on the basis of a correct interpretation of the world. Lenin, who did this in his lifetime, had said that the reason Marxism continues to attract millions is because it is, at the same time, both revolutionary and supremely scientific. History of the International Communist movement shows us that ignoring one aspect at the expense of the other, leads to disastrous consequences through deviations of the Left sectarian or right class collaboration variety.

Keeping this in mind, we make our humble contribution.

The collapse of the USSR and the dismantling of socialism in Eastern Europe are developments which constitute a severe setback to the forces of socialism the world over. The CPI(M) firmly believes that these developments negate neither the revolutionary and creative science of Marxism-Leninism, nor the socialist ideal. In our own modest way, we have come to the conclusion that these developments have been caused due to certain deviations from the revolutionary tenets of Marxism-Leninism and distortions in the process of building socialism. This permitted the counter-revolutionary forces, both internal and external, to act in concert to dismantle socialism.

The CPI(M) had detailed its analysis for the causes leading to these developments at its 14th Congress in January, 1992.

The CPI(M) firmly believes that Marxism-Leninism is inherently materialistic, creative and intrinsically dialectical. It is hence supremely anti-dogmatic. It is a world-view that embraces the vision of liberation and expresses emancipatory ideals. It is a tool for understanding and analysing the multitude of phenomena that constitute changing historical situations. It is a guide to action that defines programmatic objectives for the people's struggle against all forms of exploitation, subject to the necessary adaptations as required by changing historical situations.

As a creative science, Marxism-Leninism identifies the tendencies and directions of development. In doing so it provides the possibilities for popular mass intervention in these developments in the pursuit of establishing an exploitation-free society. For instance, the historical inevitability of the replacement of the exploitation-based Capitalism by socialism is not automatic. The key factor that can effect such a social transformation is the correct ideological, political

and organisational leadership of the growing struggles of the working class, the peasantry and all working people. When this class consciousness is defused or blunted, the forces of counter-revolution exploit the situation to perpetuate their class rule.

It is, hence, incumbent upon all Marxist-Leninists to make a concrete analysis of the concrete conditions, both internationally and domestically, in each of our countries and on that basis to chart out the course of human liberation.

In this task, it needs to be recognised that the setback to socialism has temporarily shifted the balance of world forces in favour of imperialism. Imperialism, today, seeks to evolve a new international order -- politically, economically and militarily -- which would strengthen this hegemony and perpetuate the system of intense exploitation. Its features are there for all to see in the new onslaught of neo-liberal economic policies and the virtual highjacking of the United Nations to suit its interests.

As Communists, we consider it our bounden duty to trace the new features of Capitalism continuing the thread of analysis laid down in the *Communist Manifesto*, 150 years ago. The main new element in the present phase of capitalist development is the emergence of globalisation of finance capital. It has specific features, in our opinion, which distinguish it from the period when Lenin analysed imperialism. The present process is not a nation-state based finance capital engaged in struggle with rival imperialist nation-states. In a sense, it has transcended the nation-state. This, however, is not to suggest that the relevance of nation-state and its sovereignty has ceased, as some seek to argue. The tendency to form regional blocs each led by the leading economic power -- integrated Europe with Germany; NAFTA led by USA and APEC by Japan -- is the response of this finance capital which seeks integration and abolition of all obstacles to its movement.

It is, however, important to note that the present day finance capital is highly globally mobile sucking in finance capital from individual countries dominated by finance capital originating from the advanced countries. Further, this finance capital is more pre-occupied in its search for quick speculative gains rather than its amalgamation with industrial capital leading to economic development.

It, therefore, truly represents the parasite that thrives at the expense of real economic growth.

The emergence of this finance capital is an important factor that explains the relatively low growth rates accompanied by high unemployment rates in the advanced countries, what is popularly defined as 'jobless growth'. This happens because in order to appease international speculators, there is a competitive reduction in tax rates and restrictions on the size of the fiscal deficit. In other words, governments are forced to cut back expenditures and thereby deflate both employment and domestic demand leading to lower rates of growth.

This, in turn, leads to a situation where the advanced countries turn to the third world economies and intensify exploitation. The imposition of neo-liberal policies serves this purpose of removing obstacles to the free operation of internationally mobile finance capital. In addition, it seeks to impose a new form of international division of labour, this time not through direct colonial occupation but through coercing third world economies to dovetail to imperialist interests.

We, thus, have a situation where capitalism, far from solving the pressing problems facing humanity is only worsening the tragedy of a vast majority of the world's population. The neo-liberal economic policies advanced in the name of promoting growth actually end up promoting speculation and plunder accompanied by stagnation and retrogression in most parts of the world.

This has a direct impact on the massive increase in poverty which, according to United Nations statistics, has occurred all over the world, sharply in the third world.

We, thus, have a situation in the last decade of the twentieth century where double-digit unemployment stalks most of the advanced countries, when the former socialist countries' embrace of Capitalism has led to a colossal economic decline unknown in human history to the extent that population, itself, is declining in absolute terms. We have a situation when the so-called 'miracle' economies of South Asia have virtually collapsed leading to bankruptcy, massive unemployment and food riots. The hopes created by holding these countries as examples have crumbled shattering the illusions that the third world countries could achieve prosperity under Capitalism. We are in a situation where both Africa and Latin America have witnessed

declining per capita incomes with millions under poverty. Famines have become the order of the day in large tracts of Africa.

In other words, despite the favourable conditions that the collapse of socialism provided, Capitalism today has, once again, proved itself incapable of either solving the basic problems confronting humanity or of promising a bright future to those who follow the capitalist path.

The Communist parties are, today, functioning under such conditions. The renewed ideological offensive against socialism, however, continues unabated. But the objective reality brings forth conditions that are favourable for the advance of socialist forces. The popular discontent that emanates from this international plunder by imperialism has to be channelised behind revolutionary popular struggles. Our experience shows that wherever the Communist parties adhering to fundamental revolutionary tenets of Marxism-Leninism have intervened, they have succeeded in forging deeper and stronger links with the working people of their countries.

This, however, is not to suggest that the advance of the Communist forces would be automatic, as noted earlier. But the objective conditions open up possibilities which the Communists can utilise in strengthening the popular movement for ending a system based on exploitation of man by man. The responsibility of strengthening the subjective factor -- the revolutionary ideological struggle led by the working class, uniting other exploited classes and its decisive intervention under the leadership of a party wedded to Marxism-Leninism -- falls on our shoulders in order to utilise the objective situation and intervene to advance our movement for social emancipation.

There, however, are formidable obstacles that the current situation presents before the Communists. The potential of the growing disillusionment with Capitalism is blunted by an intense ideological offensive against socialism and Marxism in the wake of the reverses to socialism. In this situation, a whole range of reactionary and fundamentalist political tendencies seek to occupy the oppositional space to the ruling parties' neo-liberal economic policy. Growing unemployment and cuts in welfare expenditures in Europe have been accompanied by a growth of vicious racialism and in some cases revanchism. In the third world countries like India, the response to the miseries and humiliation imposed by global Capitalism has been

in the growth of fundamentalist forces. We, in India, are currently engaged in an intense political battle against such reactionary forces who seek to channel popular discontent to consolidate their sectarian and divisive political objectives. The popular discontent emanating from the intensified exploitation of global capitalism can be diverted away from revolutionary struggles against capitalism into sectarian movements that in the final analysis only strengthens the rule of Capital. We, Communists, will have to overcome such obstacles and properly channelise the popular discontent into revolutionary struggles, particularly through tactics that strengthen broadbased mobilisations.

Another major obstacle relates to an aspect of present day imperialism. The intense inter-imperialist rivalry that characterised the first part of this century does not manifest itself in the same form today. While these contradictions exist and are intensifying, as far as the exploitation of the third world is concerned, they appear to be acting with some degree of commonality. Under these conditions, the domestic bourgeoisie in the third world appears far more willing than before to make common cause with imperialism. Unable to withstand the ravages of international finance capital and being sucked into its vortex, the domestic bourgeoisie seeks to make the best bargain in the present situation.

Though the situation from country to country would be different and the impact of this globalisation of finance capital would be felt in different degrees, the commonality that overrides such variations lies in the potential to develop a strong anti-imperialist struggle, worldwide. The success of the convergence of the domestic class struggles with the internationalist anti-imperialist struggle will shape the contours of the Communist movement in the future.

The CPI(M) is confident that such exchanges between the various contingents of the international Communist movement will strengthen our common resolve to advance the cause of human emancipation and liberation.

The CPI(M) conveys its gratitude to the Communist Party of Greece for providing us this opportunity and once again conveys its warm revolutionary fraternal greetings to all representatives of the Communist parties from all parts of the world.

The Philosophy and Theology in Liberation

I feel both honoured and privileged to be invited as the chief guest on the occasion of the platinum jubilee of the R.C. Church Diocese, Ranchi at Xavier Institute of Social Service. Fully conscious of the concerns for the creation of an egalitarian society, where liberty for the people has a real and complete meaning and does not remain a mere right on paper, I venture to tread on a risky path of forging partnerships in order to achieve the noble objectives of humanism.

This may sound strange as a great deal of controversy has always existed regarding the Marxist understanding of religion. The popular perception is the normally out of context quotation that “*religion is the opium of the people*”. In fact, deliberately, the passage in which this statement finds place is never quoted in the full. Marx had stated :”*Religious distress is at the same time the expression of real distress and the protest against real distress. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of the heartless world, just as it is the spirit of the spiritless situation. It is the opium of the people.*”(Introduction to the critique of Hegel’s philosophy of Right, 1844).

*An edited version of the speech at the Xavier Institute of Social Service
On the Occasion of the Platinum Jubilee of the R.C. Church Diocese, Ranchi,
November 2002*

Religion, is the opium in the sense that it is as potent as opium is in creating an illusory world. For a human being who is oppressed, religion provides the escape for relief, it provides a *“heart in a heartless world, a spirit in a spiritless situation.”* For this precise reason, it is the opium that the people require, to lull themselves into inaction so long as they continue to remain in conditions which appear outside of both their comprehension and control.

The Marxist understanding of religion is essentially integrated with its entire philosophic foundations. In pursuit of the simple question of what constitutes the real freedom of a human being and his consequent liberation, Marx proceeded to reject the Hegelian idea of the revolution of the mind as represented by Feuerbach, during his time, to come to a conclusion of seminal importance. That was: consciousness of a human being is determined by the social conditions and not vice a versa. *“It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but on the contrary their social being that determines their consciousness”*(Introduction to the critique of Political economy).

Such an understanding at once places religion, not as a thing in itself, not as something that exists by itself independent of the driving force of society in history. In fact, precisely for this reason, Marxism does not lay blame e.g. the persecution of Copernicus or that of Ekalavya on religion itself. It regards all these things as the natural manifestation of social forces and movements expressing themselves in religious terms because religion has been the dominant form of ideology throughout all recorded history. Progressive and reactionary ideas, the vested interests of the ruling class or the demands of an exploited class equally present themselves in the form of religion in men’s mind so long as religion is a dominant form of ideology. Hence Marxism is able to take cognisance of the positive and progressive content of religious reform movements e.g Sufi, Bhakti movements but at the same time point out their limitations that they would not be able to effect the desired change in society by remaining only within the limits of the religious fold alone. Unless they are able to change the social conditions that find expression for domination in a specific religious form, that particular form and associated oppression cannot be removed. Thus, while recognising the

positive content as well as the limitations of religious reform movements, Marxism is able to place the history of religion also within the realm of the evolution of human civilisation and the corresponding human consciousness.

Thus as a philosophy of liberation, Marxism seeks to change the existing real conditions of life in order to achieve the true liberation of humanity. Such a philosophy of liberation has naturally found an echo in theology as well. This is only natural.

For instance, in the Gospel of Luke, Chapter 4:18: Lord Jesus says, he had come “to send off the crushed into liberty”. Further, in Chapter 6:20: “Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God”. In Chapter 6:21: Blessed are you who are going hungry now, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who are weeping now, for you will laugh”. And in Chapter 6:24: “But woe to you who are rich, because you have received your share of comfort. Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry”.

The miserable conditions and the wretched existence of these toiling sections and their struggles for human dignity and liberty has found reflection in the Roman Catholic Church with the emergence of the Theology of Liberation, in the late sixties and seventies of the 20th century. The Latin American Bishops conference CELAM at its second conference held at Medellin, Columbia, in 1968 gave a concrete expression to such a theology. The Peruvian priest, Gustavo Gutierrez gave the world the central text, *‘Theology of Liberation’* in 1971. Filled with righteous anger at the human and social hell in which the vast majority of people live, Liberation theology, from what I can understand, suggests an energetic protest against such situations which mean:

- on the social level: collective oppression, exclusion, and marginalization;
- on the individual level: injustice and denial of human rights;
- on the religious level: social sinfulness, “contrary to the plan of the Creator and to the honor that is due to him” (Puebla, § 28).

The Vatican Instruction of August 6, 1984, “Some Aspects of Liberation Theology” has succinctly put: “It is not possible for a single instant to forget the situations of dramatic poverty from which the challenge set to theologians springs – the challenge to work out a genuine theology of liberation”.

In the present Indian context, the struggles of the toiling sections who want to improve their livelihood and move towards genuine liberty and dignity are today disrupted and diverted into channels of communal strife and tensions. Unless these struggles are strengthened, the advance towards human liberation itself gets thwarted.

In this context, it is the duty of all of us to actively intervene in order to ensure that the perpetuation of misery is not compounded. No one with a clear conscience can remain aloof in this struggle. The words of wisdom that have filtered down through centuries tell us, “for the evil to succeed, the good only need to be silent”.

It is in this context I would like to reflect on certain issues that must force the “good not to remain silent”.

{The rest of the text has been edited as it deals with the then socio-economic situation; i.e., the conditions of the ‘wretched’. These, in conceptual terms continue to remain relevant, however the concrete situation regarding these (quantitatively though not qualitatively) has since changed.}

EMERGENCE OF COMMUNAL AND FASCIST FORCES IN INDEPENDENT INDIA

I consider it an honour to be asked to deliver this 13th AK Gopalan memorial lecture. Comrade AKG as all of us affectionately used to refer to him, was one of the tallest mass leaders of the Indian Communist movement. He was correctly described once as the '*sutradar*' of the Indian revolution.

It is indeed significant that this is being held during the 50th anniversary of India's independence. AKG played an important role in the freedom struggle. Few recollect the fact that the day India attained independence AKG spent it in jail. To recall in his own words from his memoirs, "On August 14, 1947, I was in solitary confinement in the big Cannanore jail. There were no other detenué prisoners ... The whole country was waiting for the celebration due after sunrise. How many among them had waited for years for this and fought for it and sacrificed their all in the struggle. I nurtured feelings of joy and sorrow. I was glad that the goal for which I had sacrificed all my youth and for which I was still undergoing imprisonment had been realised. But I was even now a prisoner, I had been imprisoned by Indians -- by the Congress government, not by the British. Memories of the Congress from 1927

13th A.K.G Memorial Lecture, New Delhi, April 13, 1998

passed through my mind. I felt proud of the role I had played in the Congress movement in Kerala. A man who was secretary of the Kerala Congress and its president for some time and member of the AICC for a long time was celebrating August 15 in jail".

And yet celebrate he did. The next morning, he walked the length of the jail compound carrying a national flag that he had kept with him. The flag was hoisted from the roof where all the prisoners had gathered. AKG spoke to them of the meaning of freedom. And for the rest of his life, A K Gopalan remained true to the spirit of his youth, fighting always and everywhere in the cause of the people.

It was this spirit that made AKG travel from the Congress through Congress Socialist Party to become one of the founders of the Communist Party of India and later the CPI(M). An integral part of this struggle was also a vision of modern independent India that he embodied. A vision whose foundations were that of democracy, secularism, federalism and social justice. A vision that envisaged the true emancipation of the Indian people.

Today, this very vision, which through the freedom struggle and later came to be accepted by a majority of the Indian people, is facing unprecedented challenges. The assumption of the reins of state power by the BJP and through it the control of the RSS, indeed puts the future of such a vision in jeopardy. In this context it is indeed appropriate that the theme of our lecture today is the rise of communalism and fascism in independent India.

The clash between the visions of India's future as an independent country begins not with the dawn of independence. It in fact dates back to the twenties when the formation of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh brought into existence a force that sought to convert India into a theocratic *Hindu Rashtra*. Since then, all through these decades, the struggle has been an ongoing one.

The RSS vision of a *Hindu Rashtra* was articulated in a chilling treatise by its Sarsanghchalak or supreme leader Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar titled *We or Our Nationhood Defined* written in 1938, first published in 1939 and later in 1947 after independence. There he states in unambiguous terms

"...The conclusion is unquestionably forced upon us that... in Hindusthan exists and must needs exist the ancient Hindu nation and nought else but the Hindu Nation. All those not belonging to the national i.e. Hindu Race, Religion, Culture and Language naturally fall out of the pale of real 'National' life."

"We repeat; in Hindusthan, the land of the Hindus, lives and should live the Hindu Nation satisfying all the five essential requirements of the scientific nation concept of the modern world. Consequently only those movements are truly 'National' as aim at re-building, revitalizing and emancipating from its present stupor, the Hindu Nation. Those only are nationalist patriots, who, with the aspiration to glorify the Hindu race and nation next to their heart, are prompted into activity and strive to achieve that goal. All others are either traitors and enemies to the National cause, or, to take a charitable view, idiots" (page 43 & 44). And then continues "...we must bear in mind that so far as 'nation' is concerned, all those, who fall outside the five-fold limits of that idea, can have no place in the national life, unless they abandon their differences, adopt the religion, culture and language of the nation and completely merge themselves in the National Race. So long, however, as they maintain their racial, religious and cultural differences, they cannot but be only foreigners" (page 45).

And further: "There are only two courses open to the foreign elements, either to merge themselves in the national race and adopt its culture, or to live at its mercy so long as the national race may allow them to do so and to quit the country at the sweet will of the national race... From this standpoint, sanctioned by the experience of shrewd old nations, the foreign races in Hindusthan must either adopt the Hindu culture and language, must learn to respect and hold in reverence Hindu religion, must entertain no idea but those of the glorification of the Hindu race and culture, i.e., of the Hindu nation and must lose their separate existence to merge in the Hindu race, or may stay in the country, wholly subordinated to the Hindu Nation, claiming nothing, deserving no privileges, far less any preferential treatment not even citizen's rights. There is, at least should be, no other course for them to adopt. We are an old nation; let us deal, as old nations ought to and do deal, with the foreign races, who have chosen to live in our country" (Golwalkar, 1939, pp 47-48).

Notwithstanding all the subterfuge that the leaders of the saffron brigade indulge in today to state that this book had been subsequently withdrawn there is no official testimony to it. In fact a sympathetic account of the RSS, (JA. Curran *Militant Hinduism in Indian Politics -- a Study of the RSS*) states ; "The genuine ideology of the Sangh is based upon principles formulated by its founder Dr. Hegdewar. These principles have been consolidated and amplified by the present leader in a small book called *We Or Our Nationhood Defined* written in 1938. 'We' can be described as the RSS 'bible'. It is the basic primer in the indoctrination of Sangh volunteers." (This was written in 1979).

Golwalkar's abiding influence has been in providing the saffron brigade with an ideological formation not merely in terms of ideas and principles but also in terms of establishing an organisational structure to achieve the aim of a *Hindu Rashtra*.

Golwalkar was primarily instrumental in establishing the organisational structure of what is now known as the Sangh Parivar. The strategy was clear. The RSS would in the public eye confine itself to "cultural activity" while its affiliates would branch out into the various sections spreading the message of *Hindu Rashtra*. These seemingly independent tentacles were welded together by the RSS. This organisational network is today there for all to see.

Golwalkar's important initiative, however, comes in the attempt to organise the Hindu religious leaders in mid-1964, "to discuss ways in which various Hindu sects and tendencies could sink their many differences, work together and establish contacts with Hindus residing abroad. Thus was laid the foundations of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, and an RSS pracharak, Shivram Shankar Apte, became its first general secretary. The subsequent career of the VHP, today the most formidable of the RSS affiliates, demands a separate study" (Basu, Datta, Sarkar, Sarkar, Sen, *Kbaki Shorts: Saffron Flags*, p.50).

Another organisational measure taken by him was to utilise this organisational structure of the "family" to create a political front which would be always under the leadership and control of the RSS. In 1951, he sent cadres to help Shyama Prasad Mukherjee to start the Bharatiya Jan Sangh, whose later incarnate is today's BJP. Among those who were sent were Deen Dayal Upadhyay, Atal Behari Vajpayee, L.K. Advani

and S.S. Bhandari. (This fact is mentioned in Basu, Datta, Sarkar, Sarkar and Sen, "Khaki Shirts, Saffron Flags", 1993, p.48).

All through the freedom struggle and later this sectarian and communal strand of thinking always contended with the major stream which envisaged a multi-religious, multi-linguistic, multi-cultural, pluralistic independent India. All through the freedom struggle the enemy for the RSS was not the British against whom the Indian people were then in struggle. The hate against the Muslim community was sought to be spread much deeper than against the British precisely because the Indian people could not be rallied for their *Hindu Rashtra* opposing the British. This was so because the anti-British feelings found expression in the growing strength of the united freedom movement that embraced Hindus, Muslims and others.

It is for this precise reason that the RSS never nailed down the British as its enemy during the freedom struggle.

Even sympathetic accounts of the RSS (*The Brotherhood of Saffron* by Anderson and Damle amongst others) detail the virtual absence of the RSS in the freedom movement and the consequent concessions it gained from the British. Even Nanaji Deshmukh says, "RSS as an organisation did not take part in the National Liberation Movement..." (*RSS, A Victim of Slander*, page 29). In fact, the Bombay Home Department, during the 1942 Quit India Movement, observed: "the Sangh has scrupulously kept itself within the law, and in particular, has refrained from taking part in the disturbances that broke out in August 1942..." (quoted in Anderson and Damle, 1987, pp.44). This urge to establish a *Hindu Rashtra*, drove the RSS to be a virtual ally of the British. The freedom struggle and the Congress were regarded as a diversion from their objective. The animosity grew particularly after the AICC announced that free India would be a secular, democratic republic (at the Karachi Congress, 1931). This was seen, and correctly from their point of view, as the very anti-thesis of the RSS conception of a *Hindu Rashtra*.

Mahatma Gandhi, the tallest of devout and practicing Hindus, was assassinated because he along with the majority of Indian people embraced secular democracy rejecting the RSS ideology.

Parallel to the emergence and growth of such a retrograde vision were certain developments that provided sustenance to the communal forces. Learning its lessons well from the experiences of the first war of independence in 1857, the British in a bid to consolidate its rule, implemented the infamous 'divide and rule' policy with a vengeance. The British realised that they cannot continue to rule India if they allow Hindus and Muslims to join in a common cause. They could not afford the repetition of a situation where the devout Hindu, Rani Laxmibai of Jhansi hailed the mogul emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar as her monarch! A contemporary British chronicler, Thomas Lowe, documenting the events of 1857, noted, "the infanticide Rajput, the bigohed Brahmin, the fanatic Mussalman joined together in the cause, the cow killer and the cow worshipper, the pig hater and the pig eater revolted together!"

To prevent the recurrence of any such possibility, the British fomented venomous hatred between the Hindus and the Muslims. Administrative measures such as separate electorates, etc, etc, gave a permanent structure to such a divide. In this process, the British were admirably aided by communal forces on both sides. This policy made such inroads into the fabric of Indian society, so inflamed the unity and amity among its people that till date we continue to pay the price. The wounds of partition fester even today, fifty years after independence, on both sides of the divide.

Further, while the majority of the freedom struggle opposed the retrograde vision of an independent India it needs to be noted that there was a trend within the freedom movement itself which permitted such communal feelings to survive. This was so because a revivalist ideology gripped a number of leaders of the freedom movement. Coming from upper caste Hindu background some of these leaders in the struggle against the British drew sustenance from India's past. For a long time leaders of the Hindu Mahasabha were concurrently leaders of the Congress Party. Patel was a classic example of such reliance on revivalism. Rajni Palme Dutt in *India Today* summed up this tendency most appropriately; "So from the existing foul welter and decaying and corrupt metaphysics, from the broken relics of the shattered village system, from the dead remains of court splendours of a vanished civilisation, they sought to fabricate and build up and reconstitute a

golden dream of Hindu culture -- a 'purified' Hindu culture -- which they could hold up as an ideal and a guiding light, against the overwhelming flood of British bourgeois culture and ideology, which they saw completely conquering the Indian bourgeoisie and intelligentsia. They sought to hold forward a feeble shield of a reconstructed Hindu ideology which had no longer any natural basis for its existence in actual life conditions. All social and scientific development was condemned by the more extreme devotees of this gospel as the conquerors' culture: every form of antiquated tradition, even abuse, privilege and obscurantism, was treated with respect and veneration." (page 327)

Thus, the communal and revivalist ideology that struck roots during the freedom struggle continued to remain alive in the absence of a sustained ideological struggle against it. It was only the Communist Party of India that saw in this ideological trend the seeds of potential reactionary and retrograde movement that may well hijack and disrupt the gains that the Indian people had made during the freedom struggle and after.

However, two important questions need to be addressed today. Does the assumption of state power by these sections, albeit through the support of a large number of allies who claim not to subscribe to its communal ideology, constitute the emergence of fascism in India? Further, why is it that after having been decisively rejected during the course of the freedom struggle and later that the communal ideology has managed to rear its head again in a forceful way?

Let us examine the first question. The most authoritative and to date scientific analysis of the nature and emergence of fascism was made by Georgi Dimitrov in his penetrating address to the 7th Communist International in 1935. He defined fascism as the "open terroristic dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinistic and most imperialistic elements of finance capital". The capturing of state power by fascism is not an ordinary succession of one bourgeois government by another but the substitution of one form of the ruling class state by another -- bourgeois parliamentary democracy by an open terroristic dictatorship.

This comes as a response of the ruling classes to the actual crisis that threatens its class domination. This was the case with the

German monopoly capital in the period preceding Hitlerite fascism. This threat emerges as a consequence of the crisis generated by the ruling classes' own rule both from within its own camp as well as and often simultaneously with the challenge to its class rule by the toiling sections of the working people -- the proletariat.

The situation obtaining in our country today is not similar to the period leading to the emergence of fascism in Germany. The threat of the immediate seizure of power by the proletariat is not on the agenda. Further, the crisis of the bourgeois landlord class rule has not reached a stage where the jettisoning of parliamentary democracy by the ruling classes is on the immediate agenda.

Hence, the assumption of power by the RSS - led BJP does not mean the establishment of fascism in its classical sense. It reflects the fact that the crisis of the bourgeois landlord class rule has reached the stage where one section of the ruling classes, the most reactionary section, represented by the BJP and the saffron brigade has succeeded in capturing state power.

But this in no way should lead one to underestimate the potential danger of the assumption of power by the communal elements. They represent the forces of religious fundamentalism which is a dangerous negation of all fundamental tenets of our secular, democratic, Republican Constitution. Swami Vivekananda in his famous Chicago address to the world parliament of religions (September, 11, 1893) warned ; " Sectarianism and bigotry and its horrible descendant fanaticism have long possessed this beautiful earth. They have filled the earth with violence, drenched it often with human blood, destroyed civilisation and sent whole nations to despair... Liberty of thought and action is the only condition of life for growth and well being. Where it does not exist, the man, the race, the nation, must go down."

The rabid intolerance which constitutes the backbone of the saffron brigade's ideology thus represents the advance guard of fascism. Though not fascism in the classical sense, the methods adopted by the saffron brigade to achieve its objective of a *Hindu Rashtra* are fascistic. It thus has the potential of heralding a future fascistic tyranny in India.

Adoption of fascistic methods to consolidate its rule is no novel recourse of the ruling class parties. The Congress did so in West Bengal in the seventies prior to generalising it for the country as a whole during the Emergency. While not ushering in fascism, fascistic methods are often used to browbeat opposition particularly the Communists. Over 3000 Communists were martyred and lakhs displaced during the semi-fascist terror unleashed by the Congress between 1971-77 in West Bengal.

The Saffron Brigade adopts the fascistic methods of appropriation of popular symbols, create a false consciousness of deprivation amongst the majority community and appeal to extreme jingoism as their methods to advance. Dimitrov had said, "Fascism acts in the interests of extreme imperialists but presents itself to the masses in the guise of a wronged nation and appeals to outraged 'national' sentiments". In order to present the RSS as such a champion Golwalkar's book creates a false consciousness that the Hindus had been and are deprived while at the same time generates hate against the Muslims (taking cue from Hitler's rabid anti-Semitism) to the effect that they are responsible for such a 'deprivation' of the Hindus. This was the purpose of the book.

The present day activities and propaganda of the saffron brigade are based precisely on these two points that Golwalkar provided as the ideological input. To achieve its goal of a *Hindu Rashtra* it has perfected the Goebblesian technique (Goebbles was Hitler's propaganda minister) of telling big enough lies frequently enough to make them appear as the truth.

They proceeded to destory the Babri Masjid propagating an untruth, not proven by any historical record or enquiry, that a temple stood at that very site where the Babri Masjid was erected.

Many other untruths spread by them have been dealt with and exposed elsewhere (*Saffron Brigade's Myths and Reality*, December 1992 and *The BJP Campaign: Myths & Reality* -- Thirteen myths of a thirteen day wonder, 1998; CPI(M) publications).

Such disinformation is systematically spread with an objective: to unite a heterogeneous Hindu community not on the basis of religious commonality but on the basis of hatred against the Muslim community in particular and religious minorities in general.

It must be noted that communalism has nothing to do with religion or religiosity. It is, in fact, a criminal misuse of religion, unscrupulous exploitation of religious sentiments for political purposes.

Its emulation of fascism's methodology does not stop here. Dimitrov had stated: "Fascism acts in the interests of extreme imperialists but it presents itself to the masses in the guise of the champion of an ill-treated nation and appeals to outraged national sentiments"

It is precisely this that the saffron brigade has been doing over all these years. In its entire range of policy framework, its interests coincide with that of imperialism whether it be in economic policy or military cooperation. The extreme jingoistic position that it is adopting today in the name of making the nuclear bomb is only aimed at increasing tensions in the subcontinent and South Asia which can only prove beneficial to imperialist intervention and manoeuvring. This jingoism is however sold in the name of protecting 'national security'. The consequent nuclear arms race that this dangerous policy may unleash could well lead to a situation of 'Hindu Bomb v/s the Islamic Bomb'. Such jingoism is eagerly lapped up by Islamic fundamentalists across the border. Their aggressive reaction, in turn, will further strengthen the forces of jingoism at home. Hindu communalism and Islamic fundamentalism feed and thrive on each other (more on this later). In the process imperialism and its military-industrial complex -- the merchants of death -- will prosper while the Indian people will suffer as developmental funds would be siphoned off. All this in the name of national 'sentiment' and 'security'.

Dimitrov makes two other incisive points. First, while acting in the interests of the most reactionary circles of imperialism, fascist forces "intercept the disappointed masses who deserted the old bourgeois parties.... by the vehemence of its attacks on the bourgeois government and its irreconcilable attitude to the old bourgeois parties." The entire popular anger against the Congress Party is sought to be appropriated by the communal forces. While not taking any measures in the socio-economic sphere that are any different, the saffron brigade portrays itself as a party that will deliver to the masses benefits. This diversion of the popular discontent to further its project of establishment of a *Hindu rashtra* is the methodology that they adopt. Secondly, Dimitrov states :

"fascism puts the people at the mercy of the most corrupt and venal elements but comes before them with the demand of an honest and incorruptible government. Speculating on the profound disillusionment of the masses.....fascism adapts its demagogy to the peculiarities of each country, and the mass of petty bourgeois and even a section of the workers reduced to despair by want, unemployment and insecurity of their existence fall victim to the social and chauvinist demagogy of fascism. "

Dimitrov could well be talking about the BJP's current campaign. While seeking to portray itself as a party with a difference, claiming that its *chehara, chaal, charitra* and *chintan* are distinct from that of other bourgeois parties the BJP has indulged in the crassest form of money laundering and immorality to garner majority whether it be in UP or at the Centre. The most corrupt and venal elements are today collected behind the BJP not to speak of those with criminal records.

The saffron brigade today has clearly revealed that the actual conditions of the people and the alleviation of their miseries is not its concern.

The agenda that the saffron brigade is posing before the country and the methods that it uses to achieve its objective are nothing but an expression of an Indian variant of a communal party utilising fascistic methodology. Its assumption of power at the Centre today does not constitute the emergence of fascism in the scientific sense but the vigour with which it utilises the fascistic methods reveal its potential of moving towards a fascist takeover with all the grave consequences to the Indian people and their future.

Such adulation of fascism and the naked appreciation of its methods was noted by Golwalkar in his book when he stated " to keep up the purity of the race and its culture, Germany shocked the world by her purging the country of the Semitic race -- the Jews. Race pride at its highest has been manifested here. Germany has also shown how well-nigh impossible it is for races and cultures, having differences going to the root, to be assimilated into one united whole, a good lesson for us in Hindusthan to learn and profit by." (Emphasis added)

Hitler's fascistic Germany is the ideal; instead of race it is religion and instead of the Semitic races it is the Muslims.

Hitler's methods continue to be a source of inspiration for the saffron brigade today. Hitler had set up his notorious private army (the Brown Shirts) to browbeat the opposition and terrorise the society to adopt a course of servile confirmism. On similar lines, the Bajrang Dal, soon after the assumption of power by this BJP - led government announced its decision to set up *Bal upaasanas* (paying obeisance to strength) *kendras* in all the 7531 blocks covering all districts in the country (*The Times of India*, April 8, 1998). These centres, we are told, are to train Hindu youth in martial arts in order to give a 'fitting reply' to the 'objectionable' activities of the Christian Missionaries and cultural invaders (read Muslims).

Instead of the Hitler's 'Brown Shirts', we shall have 'Saffron Shirts' as the saffron brigade's private army.

Let us now turn to the second question as to how such a vision of *Hindu Rashtra* so decisively rejected during the freedom struggle was able not only to resurface but mount an offensive against the very foundations of our republican Constitution?

This is so not because of a sudden surge of religiosity among the Indian people. The answer to this question lies in the path of development adopted by the ruling classes since independence and its consequent crisis.

Fully conscious of the risk of summarising and generalising this experience of the last half a century, let us do so due to constraints of both space and time.

In order to capture state power at the time of independence the Indian capitalist class led by the big bourgeoisie compromised with imperialism on the one hand, and feudal landlordism on the other. The consequent bourgeois-landlord ruling class alliance prevented a thorough going agrarian reform, liberating millions of our countrymen languishing in the backwardness of feudal and semi-feudal exploitation, from taking place. For, such a transformation would have meant attacking the socio-economic base of landlordism, a partner of the ruling class alliance. It is for this simple reason that the land reform legislations adorn the

statute books without being implemented except for the CPI(M) - led Front - ruled states of West Bengal and Kerala.

This limitation has had an all round impact on post-independent India especially in the economic sphere leading to the New Economic Policy of liberalisation. This is dealt elsewhere 'Why This new Economic Policy', *The Marxist*, January-June, 1992). For the purposes of our discussion here it would suffice to note that the absence of a thorough going agrarian reform meant that the vast mass of Indian people were left victims of not only economic backwardness but also of the social consciousness associated with it. A social consciousness dominated by caste and communal sentiments.

Therefore, in a situation where the path of development chosen by the ruling classes created illusions amongst the people without delivering the goods, the popular discontent kept mounting. While the Left and democratic movement sought to channelise this discontent into struggles aimed at achieving a thorough going agrarian revolution, the Right reactionary forces sought to channelise this discontent, diverting it away from the true liberation of the people, into channels that advanced its communal project of the establishment of a *Hindu Rashtra*. In this they were ably assisted by a social consciousness that was susceptible to exploitation of religious sentiments due to its backwardness. Thus the reason for the growth of support to communal forces lies in the concrete conditions of post - independence reality rather than in the realm of metaphysical appeal.

Given this, a proper understanding of how to conduct the struggle to safeguard the advances made by the Indian people and lead these towards the goal of their true emancipation becomes important. In this context it must be realised that the main battle lies as to who will channelise the popular discontent growing as a result of the policies of the ruling classes. As we have seen, this communal upsurge is not the establishment of fascism. It surely is an early warning of its arrival. However, as Dimitrov himself taught us, fascism is able to intercept the mass discontent and channelise it in its favour in the absence of a Left Communist intervention. The plain truth is that unless the Left intervenes to channelise the discontent into struggles leading to complete the incomplete agrarian revolution, the objective of safeguarding the

gains made so far by the Indian people and advancing them cannot be achieved. An uncompromising struggle against the policies of the ruling classes hence is the order of the day. Hence the question of joining hands with the Congress, strategically, to defeat the BJP means to cut the very branch we are sitting on. For, the growth of popular discontent has been mainly due to the Congress policies.

Tactically, however, the Indian people, would have to ensure that the communal forces do not consolidate their rule. For this, it is necessary to aggressively expose the inherent contradictions of the present BJP led - coalition and seek its removal from holding the reins of state power.

In this task of preventing the consolidation of their rule, the unity of all Left, secular, democratic forces needs to be strengthened urgently. The circumstances for such a possibility will fast arise as the BJP led - government continues to pursue the same ruling class policies, especially economic policies. The consequent rising mass discontent cannot be allowed to be diverted by them into communal and jingoist channels. The first few weeks of the present government, which is following the same economic policies imposing newer burdens on the people, has clearly shown that the actual conditions of the people and the alleviation of their miseries are not its concern. That more Indians than the entire population of the USA live below an abysmally low poverty line is of no concern to them. That more children in our country, than the whole populations of many countries are forced to earn a livelihood is of no concern; that more Indian than the entire population of Australia die every year due to malnutrition is of no concern to them. The saffron brigade today is only strengthening the very edifice of exploitation that is heaping miseries on our people.

As a result of such policies, the conditions of the vast majority of working Indians - a majority of whom are Hindus -- are bound to deteriorate. It is the channelisation of this growing popular discontent strengthening the Left, democratic and secular forces which will serve as the bulwark against the efforts to impose fascist slavery on all of us. A diversion of this discontent into jingoist and communal channels by the saffron brigade to achieve its political ambitions of a *Hindu Rashtra* cannot be allowed.

While mobilising the Indian people in this battle, it must be noted that a large number of our bretheren belonging to the minorities, especially the Muslim minority, unsettled by growing insecurity in the present conditions may well fall prey to minority fundamentalism. The answer to Hindu communalism can never be given through Muslim fundamentalism. In fact, both are the two sides of the same coin.

It needs to be recalled that two years after Golwalkar's book was published, the Jamaat-e-islami was founded. On August 26, 1941, under the leadership of Maulana Abul Ala Maududi, the founding conference was held in Pathankot. Maududi is to the Jamaat what Golwalkar is to the RSS. The similarity of their political project and roles is indeed remarkable. Just as Golwalkar rejected everything modern in human civilisation -- liberty, equality, fraternity, secularism, democracy and parliamentary institutions -- as 'alien concepts', so did Maududi and the philosophy of Muslim fundamentalism.

Maududi, in a speech at Pathankot in May 1947, when partition was imminent, urged Indians to organise their state and society on the basis of Hindu scriptures and laws, as they would organise Pakistan based on the laws laid down by 'Allah'. Replying to certain queries by Justice Mohammed Munir, who was appointed as the single-member Commission to inquire into riots against the Qadianis in Pakistan, Maududi said: "If a Hindu government based on Hindu law came to India and the law of Manu became the law of land as a result of which Muslims were treated (as) untouchables and were not given any share in the government -- not only that, they did not even get the citizenship rights -- I would have no objection" (quoted in Z.A. Nizami, 1975, p.11).

Hindu communalism and Muslim fundamentalism feed on each other. In the process, both spread communal poison deeper, threatening the very fabric of our country's unity and integrity. Both act against the interests of the majority of the people they claim to represent.

That they feed on each other was most terrifyingly revealed in the Coimbatore riots during the 1998 elections. The Muslim fundamentalist challenge to Hindu communalism not only led to barbaric loss of life and property but also directly contributed to the electoral victory of Hindu communalism and its consolidation.

The struggle against fascistic communalism can only be met by the united struggle of all Indians irrespective of their religious affiliations. India today is a secular democratic republic because a majority of Indians -- Hindus, Muslims and others -- rejected the communal vision and politics. It is only under such conditions can the security and interests of the minorities be protected.

It is again only under such conditions that the Indian people can mount the offensive against the ruling class policies. The unity in struggle of the working people -- the working class, the poor peasantry, agricultural labour -- is precisely what communalism seeks to disrupt by sowing seeds of discord. Thus, it acts directly to preserve and intensify the existing exploitative order.

While seeking the maximum possible cooperation from political parties to prevent the consolidation of its rule, it must be realised the fascistic communalism can never be defeated only through manoeuvring or political bargaining. Its defeat can be sustained only by isolating it through wide spread mass struggles that mobilises the popular discontent for a fundamental change. A change aimed at replacing the rule of the ruling classes. Fully conscious of the fact that the saffron brigade represents the most reactionary expression of the ruling classes, the Left must seek to utilise all contradictions amongst the ruling class parties to isolate the communal forces, without losing sight of the elementary truth that the success of the struggle depends on the depth and intensity of class struggle. There can be no short cuts. It is this that, all of us, interested in safeguarding the gains made by the Indian people so far and seeking to advance it, for the complete liberation of the Indian millions, must endeavour to do.

True homage to AKG lies in pursuing this objective. In his own life, he moved from the Congress to be a Communist. Why? Because in the latter he saw the blueprint for the emancipation of his people. This can only be achieved through relentless struggle in all spheres, ranging from ideological, philosophical down to day to day struggles for a better livelihood.

CASTE AND CLASS IN INDIAN POLITICS TODAY

I consider it an unique honour at being asked to deliver the P. Sundarayya memorial lecture this year. I am fully conscious of my limitations in undertaking such a task. For Comrade PS, as all of us fondly used to call him, continues to tower like a colossus over the Indian Communist movement and the larger political life of the country. Both in terms of his personal life and his political activity, Comrade PS's contributions truly rank him as one of the foremost figures of the international Communist movement. Personally to me, like numerous others, Comrade PS had an irreversible influence on the course of my life and activities. It is only appropriate that any observation in his memory would have to be related with something that is of immense importance to contemporary political and social life. I have, therefore, chosen to speak about caste and class in Indian politics today.

This choice is not unrelated to Comrade PS's own contributions. In fact, nothing of contemporary significance is unrelated to his contribution. But the issue that I have chosen is one that was intrinsically linked with Comrade PS's personal life as well as political activity. The fact that he changed his name from Sundar Rama Reddy to Sundarayya reflected his deep commitment to do away with caste hierarchies and the associated social oppression. His undisputed leadership of the Telengana armed struggle demonstrated

P. Sundarayya Memorial Lecture, Hyderabad, 1997

most emphatically in Indian history that intensification of the class struggle overcomes all caste divisions. For these reasons, I think that it is appropriate that we try to grapple with the current caste assertion in some quarters and its impact on Indian politics.

During the recent years, caste mobilisation has become an important factor in shaping Indian politics. Ever since the issue of Mandal Commission reservations in government jobs for the OBCs came to the national agenda in 1989, it has left an impact on the evolution of national politics. For a Marxist and a Communist, it is not only necessary to assess this growing role of caste assertion in Indian political life but also to map out the manner in which the unity of the toilers is strengthened in order to achieve the People's Democratic Revolution. Unless, as PS always used to teach us, we tackle with clarity this important phenomenon, we will not be able to overcome the potentially disruptive role that caste mobilisation can have on toilers' unity. It is for these reasons that this issue needs to be addressed with all seriousness.

At the outset, it is necessary to debunk a common fallacy that attempts to pit caste versus class. Vested interests often advise Communists that since they believe in class divisions in society, caste ought not to engage their attention. Such a mechanical distinction between caste and class is not only a vulgar simplification but divorced from the present day Indian reality. The caste stratification of our society is something that has come down to us from centuries. Despite all the refinements and changes within castes and between castes, that have taken place over the years, the basic structure, in so far as the oppression of the dalits or the backward castes is concerned remains. It is within this social stratification that the class formation in India is taking place. Capitalism is still developing in India and the process of the development of society divided into modern capitalist classes, is taking place constantly within the existing caste stratification. The question therefore, is not one of class versus caste. It is the formation of classes under modern capitalism within the inherited caste structure. To a large extent, the most exploited classes in our society, constitute the most socially oppressed castes. And, to that extent, the struggle against class exploitation and the struggle against social oppression complement each other. These sections as it were, are subject to dual oppression. It is this complementarity that not only needs to be recognised but, on the basis of that recognition, it must follow that an important task

before the Communist movement in our country today is the integration of the struggle against class exploitation with the struggle against social oppression. As we shall see later, it is only through such an integration that the firm unity of the toilers can be forged and strengthened in order to advance towards People's Democracy.

Before we take up the task of trying to understand the nature and characteristics of caste mobilisation in the present day political life, one needs to examine, albeit briefly, as to why caste divisions and social oppression continue to persist even after all the tall claims made by the ruling classes through the post-independence decades to overcome them.

There is a vast amount of literature on the evolution and sustenance of the caste system in India. The large number of such works are only matched by the divergence of its conclusions. I am not here going into the origins of the caste system or its tenacity. Some scholars have also linked it with a discussion of Marx's Asiatic Mode of Production. Without any disrespect or devaluation of such work, which I consider is of immense intellectual and political value, it would suffice for our discussion to base ourselves on the fact (agreed upon by most) that the caste system, in Marxist terms, is the superstructure of an economic base which is pre-capitalist. In that sense, any attempt to overthrow this sinful heritage and obnoxious caste oppression will have to target the elimination of the vestiges of pre-capitalist economic formations. This, in our present case, is the elimination of the vestiges of feudalism and semi-feudalism.

This does not mean, even for a moment, that such elimination, through a comprehensive agrarian revolution, however complex and difficult it may be, will automatically eliminate the caste system and the entire range of social consciousness associated with it. As Engels in a letter to Block says, Marx and he had meant that the economic factor is decisive in the final analysis. Even after the change in the economic base the superstructure and associated social consciousness may persist and would require an intense ideological struggle to eliminate it. But without the attempt to change the pre-capitalist agrarian order, mere appeals for a change of heart or behaviour cannot and will not eliminate this obnoxious social oppression. Our opportunity that was there was to affect a sweeping agrarian revolution alongwith the anti-colonial

freedom struggle. But this was not to be due to the compromising character of the leadership.

The main reason for this persistence of social oppression based on caste stratification is the inadequacy of the ruling classes, during the freedom struggle, in addressing themselves to this issue. The overcoming of caste differentiation was sought through proper social behaviour between individuals and castes without growing into the social roots of this phenomenon. The sinful heritage of caste oppression was something that the national anti-colonial struggle could not repudiate because the leadership of the freedom struggle was not interested in going to the root of the problem and uprooting it. Even if it had a correct understanding of the social roots of the problem, it did not have the courage to seize it by the roots. By refusing to sweep away the feudal and semi-feudal agrarian relations, which was the bedrock for the continuation and persistence of caste exploitation, the leadership of freedom struggle not only permitted but in later years perpetuated the caste exploitation. Thus, the struggle against caste oppression over the decades of freedom movement and post-independence India was divorced from the anti-colonial struggle earlier and from the struggle for an agrarian revolution later.

With the advent of modernisation under the British rule, particularly the railways, many, including Karl Marx, had thought that the old order would crumble paving the way for a class division of modern society. However, this did not happen as envisaged. This was so because it was not in the interest of the colonial rule to transform Indian society. Its interests lay in exploiting the Indian people and its economy on the basis of their backwardness. This required to keep the rural land relations intact, in class terms, modifying them only to advance the colonial revenue collections without disturbing the economic or social relations. The British also required that a powerful indigenous Indian capitalist class does not arise. The result was an alliance with the feudal landlords for its political survival and the superimposition of minimum modern capitalist relations on the existing feudal land relations which sustained the caste system.

Thus, we find under the British rule, a contradictory process was put in motion. The effect of modern relations as Marx had foreseen -- railways, communications, growing market, few industries, trade -- accentuated the tendency towards destroying the old structure and with

it the caste system and replacing it with modern day class divisions. On the other hand, the vital interests of the colonial power lay in seeking political and economic support from the landlords and feudal interests, thus maintaining the old land relations and thereby supporting the caste structure and institutions.

Thus, the process of change of the old society, under the British rule, was slow and painful and never destined to be completed.

Simultaneously within the freedom movement itself, there were two main trends that contributed to the persistence of the caste institutions. One was the revivalist ideology which dominated a number of leaders of the freedom movement. Coming from upper caste Hindu backgrounds, these leaders in the struggle against the British drew sustenance from India's so called past and in the process they defended the social institutions of this past. Tilak was, in fact, a classic example of such a tendency. Rajni Palme Dutt in *India Today* summed up this line of thinking most appropriately by the following:

"So from the existing foul welter and decaying and corrupt metaphysics, from the broken relics of the shattered village system, from the dead remains of court splendours of a vanished civilisation, they sought to fabricate and build up and reconstitute a golden dream of Hindu culture -- a 'purified' Hindu culture -- which they could hold up as an ideal and a guiding light. Against the overwhelming flood of British bourgeois culture and ideology, which they saw completely conquering the Indian bourgeoisie and intelligentsia, they sought to hold forward a feeble shield of a reconstructed Hindu ideology which had no longer any natural basis for its existence in actual life conditions. All social and scientific development was condemned by the more extreme devotees of this gospel as the conquerors' culture : every form of antiquated tradition, even abuse, privilege and obscurantism, was treated with respect and veneration." (page 327.

Similar is the attitude of present day communal forces. Precisely because their ideological roots are based on revivalism and obscurantism, they are opposed to a thorough agrarian revolution. Even at the level of the superstructure despite mouthing radical slogans, they only strengthen the caste hierarchies of the old Hindu order.

The other tendency which prevented the liquidation of the old order alongwith the freedom struggle was the vacillation of the Congress

towards landlords and feudal interests. At a time when huge mass peasant revolts had started growing against landlords, the Congress in the 1922 Bardoli resolution calling off the national campaign against the British stated: "The Working Committee advises Congress workers and organisations to inform the ryots that withholding of rent payments to zamindar is contrary to the Congress resolutions and injurious to the best interests of the country. The Working Committee assures the zamindars that the Congress movement is in no way interested to attack their legal rights..." Thus, the Congress's efforts to achieve independence was divorced from the agrarian revolution. In fact, as we shall see later, instead of carrying on a sweeping overthrow of the old feudal order, the Congress compromised with the landlords sharing power with them in post-independence India.

These two tendencies put together prevented any meaningful attack against the social oppression of the caste system associated with the feudal and semi-feudal order existing in the country. It was only the Communist Party of India which linked the struggle against British imperialism with a comprehensive agrarian revolution. Right from the Platform of Action in 1930 to the memorandum submitted to the National Integration Council by Comrade PS on behalf of the CPI(M) in 1968, the Communist movement constantly underlined that the end of caste exploitation and social emancipation could be possible only through sweeping changes in agrarian relations. However, in the absence of a powerful agrarian movement, this task has remained unfulfilled till date. As a result, given the compromising attitude of the bourgeois leadership, the atrocities and caste oppression continue to persist.

Another current also needs to be properly analysed in order to understand the persistence of the caste stratification till date, ie, the Social Reform Movement. There have been huge anti-caste movements that have taken place in the country and have wielded significant political influence at their time. Amongst the giants that stand out of such movements was Jyotiba Phule. Jyotiba was a great secular democrat whose passion for the 'untouchable' and sense of justice was unheard of. He, personally, had absolutely no caste bias and the movement demanding equal treatment was named as the *satyashodhak* -- a movement against untruth, injustice and hypocrisy of the Hindu social order dominated by the Brahmins.

Ideologically Jyotiba's movement was an uncompromising attack on the ancient and feudal superstructure. However, this uncompromising attack did not go beyond to attack the basic agrarian relations based on feudal land relations which was the basis on which this superstructure existed. While this movement contributed immensely to increase consciousness against caste exploitation, it could not reach the levels of the elimination of that precisely because it could not mobilise the peasantry for an agrarian revolution.

Similar has been the experience of Ambedkar. This most outstanding and tireless fighter, who on behalf of the dalits exposed the upper caste hypocrisies, lambasted the Congress and its policies had to finally asked his followers to embrace Buddhism to escape the injustices of Hindu society. But the grim social reality based on unequal land relations did not change because of conversion to Buddhism. Unfortunately, smashing the present socio-economic system as the decisive step for elimination of caste exploitation, was replaced by formal declarations of equality, reservation of seats, jobs, etc. It was once again shown that despite a leader of Ambedkar's stature, despite the strength of the movement, the objective could not be achieved because it failed to target the basic source of this exploitation, ie, feudal and semi-feudal land relations.

Similar also has been the experience of the Dravidian movement led by Periyar E.V. Ramswamy Naicker. Periyar did succeed in creating a great feeling against caste oppression and his voice boomed large against untouchability. But yet again, viewing this merely at the level of superstructure without attacking the economic base that nurtured such a monstrous iniquitous caste stratification, the movement could not reach its logical culmination.

Thus, we find that the social reform movement, despite the glorious uncompromising role of its leaders could not achieve the stated objective as it either ignored or bypassed the tasks of the agrarian revolution.

Thus, we find at the time of independence, all these currents put together had created a situation where the tasks of the democratic revolution -- chiefly the agrarian revolution -- remained unfulfilled under the bourgeois leadership of the freedom struggle that not only vacillated but compromised with landlordism.

This process gets manifested in a concrete expression in post-independence India. The Indian bourgeoisie, in its eagerness to capture state power, on the one hand compromised with imperialism and on the other, compromised with landlordism and semi-feudal forces. It shared power with the later in the ruling class alliance. Thus instead of sweeping away the feudal and semi-feudal land relations alongwith the anti-colonial-anti-imperialist struggle, the ruling classes perpetuated these relations, seeking only to modify them for their interests by attempting to superimpose capitalism. Thus, instead of a sweeping overthrow of the old order from below what happened over these years of independence was the limited superimposition of capitalist relations in agriculture, that too in limited pockets without overthrowing the social relations. This only perpetuated the social consciousness associated with the semi-feudal relations -- caste and communalism.

Further, the system of parliamentary democracy that was adopted was based on an electoral system which tended to reinforce the caste consciousness. Instead of guaranteeing equality, irrespective of caste, the electoral system, itself, nurtured the perpetuation of caste consciousness in terms of choice of candidates and the appeal to the electorate. The ruling classes have consistently refused to accept the CPI(M)'s suggestion to introduce proportional representation. Apart from its other advantages, as people would have to vote for parties and not individuals, this would have minimised the appeals based on caste, religion, community etc.

While both these factors tended to reinforce the perpetuation of caste oppression, the Congress leadership continued to mouth concern over caste oppression and continued to appeal to people to change their way of life and outlook rather than attack the economic basis on which this oppression thrived. The inability to proceed with even the limited land reform legislations because of the alliance with the landlords prevented in the past and prevents today the Indian bourgeoisie to complete the tasks of the democratic revolution.

This is reinforced by the attitude of the Congress leaders, even those coming from the dalits. A case in point is the experiences and opinions of Jagjivan Ram in his book *Caste Challenge in India*. Unlike many other dalit leaders who stood aloof from the national movement, Jagjivan Ram has a proud distinction of active participation in the freedom struggle, including imprisonment. With justified passion, he

recounts the plight of the dalits and the oppressed castes. Intellectually, he accepts the fact that the struggle against caste oppression can only be successful as an integral part of the struggle of the exploited classes of India. Despite emphasising this consistently in his book, the final solution he offers is characteristic of a bourgeois leader. He abhors class struggle for the emancipation of the poor and urges the people to adopt the Gandhian way, ie, the elimination of such oppression with the exercise of the force of morality. Thus, once again, we find that while understanding the problem correctly, while describing the situation graphically, the modern day leaders of post-independence India also fought shy of mobilising the people for a sweeping agrarian revolution as the basic solution of the problem.

The net result has been not the building up of a movement for the eradication of social oppression that the caste system represents but for palliatives offered to redress to some degree the suffering of these sections through the extension of the British concept of concessions such as reservations in educational institutions and jobs. These are projected as an end in itself. This, despite the plethora of statistical information that this has not substantially altered the conditions of a vast majority of the oppressed. In the absence of any meaningful change in agrarian relations, such concessions must be supported. But no illusions must be entertained that this is the only solution.

In the very nature of things these palliatives will neither solve the problem of poverty and unemployment, nor change the condition of 'untouchables' and other downtrodden castes. They will certainly offer some relief, to individuals from these communities, enhance their confidence in their advance, but not change their status. For the ruling classes these concessions play an important role. In the first place in the general competition for jobs, etc, they pit one section of toilers against another. Secondly they create an impression among some sections that the government is their real friend and they should confine the struggle within the framework of the bourgeois system. Thus a basis of challenge to the present socio-economic system from the most downtrodden sections is prevented.

Another phenomenon will also have to be noted which was taking place simultaneously. A parallel development that was taking place during the days of the freedom struggle and particularly after the independence was the process of emergence of a modern state in India.

The vast multinational character of our country, ensured that different sections -- casteist, religious, ethnic, regional -- began rightfully demanding equality of status and opportunity in the new independent polity. But, however, as the economic crisis deepened in the post-independence decades, far from the expectations of these different sections being met the disparities started growing. This led and continues to lead today to the scramble amongst these different sections for a share of the cake. As the size of the cake shrinks this scramble takes the form of conflict between various groups. Hence, the demand for reservations from new sections and the opposition to reservations from other sections becomes a common practice.

It is, in this background of the deepening crisis in our country, that one must understand the nature of the present caste assertion. There are two aspects to this. On the one hand, as a result of whatever limited development that has taken place since independence and in the background of the deepening crisis, there is a growing consciousness amongst the oppressed castes to rebel against their conditions of social oppression. This is a positive aspect. Without such a growing consciousness the struggle against oppression and exploitation cannot be carried out decisively. This is a consciousness that needs to be nurtured and strengthened by the Communists with the effort to integrate this consciousness with the struggles against the present socio-economic system. It is only through such an integration of the struggle against social oppression and the struggle against modern day class exploitation can the struggle for an agrarian revolution be strengthened and carried forward to its logical culmination.

There is, however, another aspect to the present day caste assertion. This is the attempt to try and confine this growing consciousness within the parameters of the concerned caste. This is resorted to by the leadership of the present day movements whose outlook is no different from the ones we discussed above. While appealing only to the caste consciousness and ignoring, if not evading, the basic issue of the struggle against the existing agrarian order, these leaders once again are appealing for a change in the superstructure without affecting the base. In doing so, they treat this growing consciousness amongst the dalits and the backward castes as separate compartments, as vote banks, for their political fortunes rather than addressing themselves for a genuine solution of the problem.

The appeal of such caste leaders to their following is not to strengthen the common struggle to change the present socio-economic system. The appeal is to elect their brethren to power thus spreading the illusion that coming to power within the same system that protects the existing socio-economic order is a solution to their problems. This may serve the lust for power of the leaders but the living conditions of the masses remain as backward as ever. This has been the experience of the governments that have come to power in Bihar and UP. Neither of them even initiated the implementation of existing land reform legislations that the West Bengal Left Front government has done. By exploiting the growing consciousness amongst the socially oppressed, the leadership is thus perpetuating the very edifice of exploitation of the existing socio-economic system. Instead of sweeping agrarian changes they seek to preserve the existing order that perpetuates the caste system and its oppression.

The net result of this is that this dual nature of the present caste assertion presents itself in a manner as though there is a duality of social consciousness amongst the oppressed. The Communist movement itself has experienced instances of how the oppressed sections are willing to brave the worst police oppression in their economic struggles under the red flag, but when it comes to electoral preferences and voting, they appear to be guided by their social kinship and caste affinity. It is this apparent duality of social consciousness that the vested interests of the caste leadership seek to preserve. They do so for electoral benefit.

But in the process, they seek to divorce the struggle against social oppression from the struggle against modern day class exploitation. Thus, instead of strengthening the unity of the toilers against the present socio-economic system, they tend to separate the two struggles thereby weakening this unity.

It is the task of the Communists today in the present situation to integrate these struggles against social oppression with class exploitation in one overall wider class struggle to change the existing socio-economic system and unleash the agrarian revolution. This is a challenge of our times. The red flag should be as active in mobilising the people in the struggles against the new economic policies, against communalism, as in mobilising the oppressed in the struggles against social oppression.

It is precisely because the Communists seek and strive for such an integration that various caste leaders pour venomous attacks against us. For, when such an integration takes place, there is no room for sordid political bargaining and manoeuvring, that is done by the leaders in the name of the exploited castes (eg: in UP today). Hence, Shri Kanshi Ram's preposterous attacks against the Communists particularly the CPI(M).

Therefore, while supporting reservations for the dalits and the backward castes, the Communist movement unhesitatingly always emphasises that this is not the final solution. Enough statistics can be adduced to show that despite reservations, the plight of these sections have not substantially improved.

While all caste leaders mouth the necessity of radical economic reforms to improve the lot of the oppressed, it is by now clear that unless the struggle for a sweeping agrarian revolution takes place, no meaningful emancipation of these sections who continue to pay for the sins of the past, can be achieved.

Thus, paying homage to Comrade PS today means to carry forward the struggle that he initiated and undertook in his time in modern day conditions. He did so through practice in the Telengana armed struggle when the dalit agricultural labour fought alongside the caste peasant. The source of inspiration that this continues to be today must motivate all of us to unleash a powerful agrarian movement for the sweeping away of the semi-feudal land relations. This is the only manner in which social oppression and economic exploitation can be overcome leading to the liberation of the millions of the oppressed and exploited brothers and sisters of ours.

THE CONTRADICTIONS BETWEEN BOURGEOIS AND LANDLORD PARTIES

The birth centenary of Mao Zedong is the appropriate occasion to recollect the gigantic impact of the Chinese revolution on world history. Ranking as one of the three earth shaking events of the twentieth century, next only to the epoch making October Revolution and the defeat of fascism and the consequent decolonisation, the Chinese revolution has had a profound impact on the revolutionary struggles in the third world. Standing like a colossus over this collective effort was the personality and work of Mao Zedong. His mistakes, in later years, were also colossal, threatening at times to destroy the very contours of a new civilisation that he had shaped.

It will be difficult to separate or identify any one aspect of the vast corpus of his work. However, before we set out to deal with some aspects that are of relevance to us in India as well, it is necessary to make a few observations. The need for this arises from the mischievous propaganda the press has been making, particularly in West Bengal, concerning the CPI(M)'s decision to observe this centenary. It needs to be underlined that this does not constitute either a reappraisal or a reassessment of Mao Zedong's contributions. It is, in fact, a reaffirmation of the CPI(M)'s assessment that it continues to hold.

Text of the speech delivered at a meeting commemorating the birth centenary of Mao Zedong, Calcutta, December 26, 1993

The CPI(M) had had the occasion to be subjected at times to vicious attacks by the Communist Party of China. There were times when the Beijing Radio used to characterise the CPI(M) as "the running dogs of imperialism". Even at the height of the worst acrimony, the CPI(M) continued to hold both China as a socialist country and Mao as a Marxist - Leninist.

This assessment held through even at a time when the advice given by the Chinese Communist Party and Mao Zedong himself to us in India on the tactics to advance our revolution was rejected by us. In fact, in 1957, the CPC and Comrade Mao had advised the Indian Communists to cooperate with Nehru and the Congress, since he was a "middle roader". This advice came close after Krushchev's similar advice. The Communists in India, particularly that section which later formed the CPI(M), had rejected this advice. Yet our assessment of Mao remains the same. It is necessary to recollect that there were occasions when Mao had disagreed with the Communist International and Stalin on the assessment of the Chinese situation. Mao had held Stalin in great respect and admiration and always displayed a sense of pride when referring to him. Yet, he disagreed with him and carried forward the Chinese revolution. Likewise, we of the CPI(M), have disagreed with Mao, continue to disagree with many of his formulations, but we shall carry forward the Indian revolution.

While acceptance of advice should not lead to servile confirmism, rejection of advice like the one mentioned or many other disagreements or disputes do not mean the negation of anybody's contributions. It was infact Stalin who once said, "The revolution is incapable of either burying or forgetting its dead".

Mao's contributions and mistakes are both an inspiration and a warning for communists the world over. We learn from both of them. The CPI(M) has refused and will continue to refuse to be a servile conformist of any particular line. On the contrary the path of the Indian revolution is something that has to be worked out by us in India. Those who had forsaken their own thought and adopted Mao's thought instead, negated not only the fundamental principles of Marxism-Leninism but that of Mao's teachings themselves.

The CPC in their own assessment has evaluated both the positive and negative aspects in Mao's life. We need not repeat that here. It will suffice to recollect the famous Russian proverb which Lenin had used when paying homage to Rosa Luxemburg. All of you will recollect the passion with which Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg had argued with each other on a number of issues. But the Leninist evaluation of a personality was reflected when after Rosa Luxemburg was murdered, while paying homage he described her by a Russian proverb which goes as follows : "There are times when a hen can fly higher than an eagle but a hen can never reach the heights of an eagle." This encapsulates our assessment of Mao Zedong.

Mao Zedong's thought, as the CPC characterises, had contained three distinctive aspects : a) seeking truth from facts; b) mass line; and c) independence. Of the vast complex developments that take place at any given historical moment the task of the Communist is to filter the truth from the large amount of facts that are available and on that basis proceed to analyse and intervene to effect the revolutionary change. Secondly, while the entire purpose of theory is to convert it into one of practice capable of intervening in a particular situation to carry forward the revolutionary process, theory is meaningless unless it is able to reach the masses and inspire them into revolutionary activity. It is this emphasis on the mass line, which Mao, drawing upon the rich historical legacy of Chinese history and culture, undertook the stupendous task of raising the biggest revolutionary army in the world, composed of backward peasantry under the leadership of the working class. His contributions to the building of a revolutionary party continue to hold relevance. His behests to Communist character and work are best summed up by his statement, that a Communist must mingle with the masses like a fish takes to water. While dealing with inner-party debates he used to urge comrades to cure the disease in order to save the patient. Alas, in his later days, especially during the cultural revolution, he himself negated this. But the CPC has been able to overcome such severe blows only by adhering to such inviolable wisdom.

Thirdly, by independence he meant the independent assessment and evaluation of any particular situation not bound by dogma but to analyse the developments utilising the creative tools of Marxism. The specificities and particularities of conditions in China in the forties or

India in the nineties are naturally different and would call for a different tactical line to advance the revolutionary struggle. Those who forsake this independence, forsake the responsibility to carry forward the revolution. Those in India, who had forsaken such independence, and blindly embraced revisionism or adventurism are realising only to their peril, the significance of this.

All these three aspects coalesce into one supreme objective, that of carrying forward the revolution. Mao and the Chinese Communists had set out to liberate the Chinese people. To achieve this he had consistently urged the Chinese Communists not to study by rote the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin but to understand the methodology of how they approach the problems and to utilise that methodology in the Chinese specific conditions. In doing so he upheld the fundamental Marxist understanding. Marx, in his lifetime had developed the science of understanding the laws of modern society and to anticipate how contending classes would adapt to changing situations. Marxism is not astrology. It is a science which unravels the laws of motion of modern society. Once these laws are known, the contending classes both revolutionaries and counterrevolutionaries respond to intervene and utilise the situation for the benefit of their classes. It is by understanding this universal truth from the facts available in the Chinese situation that Mao had adapted Marxism-Leninism theoretically, tactically and organisationally to the Chinese conditions. It would be impossible to evaluate the entire contribution made by him -- the evolution of the concept of new democracy, the tactics of united front, the tactics of revolutionary guerrilla warfare, the tactics of building a revolutionary party and the stupendous task of transforming the vast mass of backward peasantry as a revolutionary army and the ally of the working class. I would only propose to take up three specific issues which are of particular relevance to us in India.

Before dealing with these, it is necessary to recollect that Mao had always emphasised that the task of a revolutionary and a communist is to answer practical questions. And Mao Zedong thought was the answer that came up in the course of the Chinese revolution.

The first of these issues concerns the revolutionary tactical line. The tactics that Mao had adopted over a period of two decades in

dealing with the Kuomintang and Chiang Kei Shk clearly teaches us the evolution of the concept of revolutionary tactical line. In the initial period, cooperating with the Kuomintang for national unification, in the later period when the Kuomintang massacred thousands of Communists, the intense struggle against it and in the following period cooperation once again in the face of Japanese aggression, are a rich experience which we shall have to learn from. In fact the very night following the Japanese occupation of Manchuria, Mao had changed the tactical line and called for a united front with the Kuomintang against the Japanese aggressors. Till the day before, Communists and the Kuomintang white guards were locked in a grim life and death battle. What prompted Mao to affect such a change? The moment the Japanese aggression took place the main contradiction was between the Chinese people as a whole and Japanese imperialism. This understanding naturally led to a tactical line of people as a whole opposing Japanese imperialism and in this process the Chinese Communists by taking the lead had emerged not only as champions of revolutionary change but also of patriotism and Chinese nationalism. By combining such tactics in the concept of "unity, struggle, unity" with the class enemies depending on the concrete situation at any point of time, Mao Zedong advanced the revolutionary struggle.

What is the essence of this experience? That the revolutionary tactical line consists always of two inseparable aspects -- one is the sharpening of the class struggle while the other is the weakening of the class enemy. Tactics for advancing the revolutionary cause will have to be aimed at both these aspects. Our experience in India shows that those who emphasised only on sharpening the class struggle and ignored the task of weakening the class enemy have only reached a dead end. The history of the Naxalite movement is ample evidence of it. On the other hand, those that emphasised only the aspect of utilising conflicts within the ruling classes leading to class collaboration and ignoring the sharpening of the class struggle landed themselves as a mere appendage of the ruling classes. The CPI's pre- Emergency line is evidence of this.

Paying homage to Mao Zedong today means to advance the revolutionary tactical line by combining both these aspects and sharpening of the class struggle -- like what is happening in Bihar today on the question of land -- utilising the conflicts among the bourgeois-

landlord parties for advancing the revolutionary movement -- constitute the tactical line which is being pursued by the CPI(M). Needless to add, the capacity to utilise the conflicts amongst the ruling class parties for revolutionary advance rests mainly on the strength of the class struggle. Any deviation from combining both these on the basis of concrete and independent evaluation of the Indian situation will only lead to a erroneous tactical line.

It is in pursuit of evolving such a tactical line that Mao Zedong enriched the Marxist-Leninist concept of theory leading to revolutionary practice which in turn enriches revolutionary theory. His concrete analysis of the classes in Chinese society and the united front tactics of forging the broadest unity to bolster the revolutionary struggle is an experience that is of utmost relevance to us.

The second aspect is the manner in which Mao adapted Marxism-Leninism to Chinese conditions. Drawing upon the historical legacy of China he would say that the Chinese Communists were the inheritors of the people's struggles from Confucius to Sun Yat Sen. And drawing upon its rich culture and folk tales, Mao developed a figurative speech that has today become part of the Communist vocabulary. In Chinese conditions this was necessary to rouse and enlist backward, illiterate peasantry as the revolutionary ally of the working class.

For us in India this rich experience has many lessons to be learnt. The centuries of people's struggles in India dovetail to the logical culmination of a revolutionary struggle for the creation of a non - exploitative society. The battle that has been raging in India over the centuries at the philosophical level between materialism and idealism has to be carried forward. The fact that idealism had triumphed at various points of time in India, has resulted to a large measure in retaining the exploitative pre-capitalist structures while preventing the advance and modernisation of Indian society. These are issues that need to be further investigated by communists in order to carry forward the revolutionary struggle.

It is in the context of such adaptation of Marxism-Leninism that Mao had constantly warned the Chinese Communists that the task of building the revolutionary party is not merely an organisational one.

It is a political ideological task. The constant need to reform non-proletarian values by proletarian ones, particularly in the context of the backwardness of feudal semi-colonial conditions in China are of very much relevance to us. For us in India today, when our consciousness is constantly bombarded by the backwardness associated with feudal decadence and capitalist degeneration such a struggle is of utmost importance. Today, when the entire historical legacy of the people's struggle in India is sought to be misappropriated by communal fascistic forces for their political project, drawing upon this legacy for the advance of the revolutionary struggle is a concrete task that we have to fulfill. The experience of the Chinese revolution and Mao's contributions in that respect would be of much relevance.

Likewise, on the question of caste. The process of class formation in India is taking place within the parameters of caste stratification that has already been in existence for generations, despite many variations. The question, therefore, is not one of "class versus caste" -- a concept that seems to be gaining currency particularly after the recent assembly elections. Class exploitation and caste oppression overlap in many areas. They need to be integrated into the revolutionary struggle that will advance the revolutionary struggle in India. What does the experience of the recent elections show us? There was a demonstrative expression by the oppressed castes, particularly dalits. Over the decades following independence an enlightened section from these castes is championing the protest against the oppression heaped on them over centuries. This is a positive democratic expression. On the other hand, the bourgeois parties seek to confine this protest only within the parameters of caste stratification and prevent its integration with the developing class struggle. They thus promote casteism to divide those very classes which can lead this revolutionary struggle. The task before us hence is to integrate class struggle with caste oppression and overcome the machinations of ruling class parties that seek to perpetuate the separation for their political gains.

These are some of the "practical questions" that, in the course of the Indian revolution will have to be answered by the Indian Communists and the correct line evolved to further the revolutionary cause.

The third aspect of Mao's contribution refers to his enrichment of the understanding of contradictions. His works on these issues contain many formulations that the CPI(M) had occasion to disagree within the past and continues to consider some formulations like the transformation of an antagonistic contradiction into a non antagonistic one and *vice versa* as incorrect. However, it must be noted that Mao had made a contribution in enriching the understanding of contradictions when he said that the external factor that influences any contradiction always manifests itself through the internal one. This formulation is of specific importance in understanding the recent collapse of socialism in Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Many of our comrades had often posed the question whether the collapse was due mainly to imperialism and its efforts to destroy socialism or due mainly to of internal factors. In the context of Mao's teachings such a question is itself a wrong one. Since 1917 imperialism had tried its best to destroy socialism. Capitalism never did and can never reconcile to socialism. But what armed interventions could not achieve in the thirties, what the fascist war unleashed by Hitler could not achieve in the Second World War, was achieved without a shot being fired. Why was this so? The internal conditions in these countries had so developed that allowed imperialism to achieve its objective. Therefore, while imperialism was always bent upon destroying socialism it could do so because the internal situation promoted such counter revolutionary developments. Hence, to search for a factor separate from the total would not reveal the actual reasons why such a collapse has taken place. The CPI(M) had made its own evaluation of this in its 14th Party Congress -- this is a subject matter of a separate discussion. But the point to underline here is that at any point of time, a proper understanding of contradictions not only to understand the direction in which the society and the world are moving but also in order to intervene in the situation to advance the revolutionary movement is the fundamental task before the Communists. And it is here that Mao Zedong's work and teachings are of relevance to us.

This is all the more relevant in trying to understand the present day developments in China. According to the CPC, the main contradiction that is there in Chinese society today is between the growing aspirations of the Chinese people and the backwardness of its economy. It is in order to resolve this contradiction that the Chinese

party has embarked on what it calls the reform of opening up China to the outside world while adhering to the four cardinal principles. In the process, not only is imperialist capital going into China with its technology but China has made its market accessible to foreign capital while seeking accessibility to foreign markets. The result of this policy is now well known with China achieving double digit growth figures for almost a decade.

What are the Chinese Communists doing? They are seeking to utilise foreign monopoly capital and technology for strengthening socialism in China. But imperialist capital and technology is not going to strengthen socialism in China but would seek to undermine it. This, in itself, will set in motion a new set of contradictions which the Chinese party is acutely aware of. Contradictions that will arise as a result of unequal growth of incomes between various sections leading to social inequalities. Contradictions that will grow as a result of imperialist consumerist ideology combating that of socialism and Marxism-Leninism. How these contradictions would be resolved holds the key for socialist China's future. The Chinese Communists and the CPC, acutely aware of this, have strengthened the ideological work among the people and bolstering socialist consciousness.

If one were to ask what would be the final outcome, it would be impossible to say at the moment. As said earlier, Marxism is not astrology. What can be said at the moment is that a struggle will develop between those who wish to preserve and strengthen socialism in China and those who wish to undermine it -- between revolutionaries and counter-revolutionaries. As Communists we in the CPI(M) are clear, in such struggles we stand by those who wish to strengthen socialism and oppose those who wish to advance counter-revolution. Incidents like the Tiananmen Square may well repeat themselves, though in a different form. But in content all Communists are duty bound to express solidarity with those wishing to preserve socialism and oppose the counter revolutionaries.

One may well ask the question as to why such reforms were necessary at all to begin with? Precisely because, due to various objective conditions that are associated also with the abrupt withdrawal of Soviet assistance and technology following ideological differences in the fifties,

China under Mao's leadership had embarked on various experiments like the Great Leap Forward, the Cultural Revolution, etc, which had disastrous consequences for the building of socialism. As noted earlier, the main contradiction in Chinese society from the CPC's point of view being between the growing aspirations of the people and the backward economic conditions -- unless this is resolved socialism in China cannot be preserved or strengthened. This contradiction has to be resolved and the Chinese party in their collective wisdom has chosen the present course.

It needs to be added, that we in the CPI(M) had always maintained that the Indian Communists understand Indian conditions better than to accept the advice given at one time both by the CPSU and the CPC. For two decades, we remained in what others called 'splendid isolation'. But our links with the Indian masses grew. We apply the same understanding with regard to fraternal parties. The Chinese Communists, on the basis of their understanding have chosen this path and it is not for us in India, who are still a long way from accomplishing the Indian revolution to advise the Chinese Communists on how they should strengthen socialism. The CPI(M) cannot subscribe to such arrogance.

For nearly two decades since its formation, the CPI(M) had to undergo trials and tribulations of being opposed by two Communist giants in the world. It must be noted and appreciated that when relations between the CPI(M) and the CPC were re - established in 1983, they were done on the basis of a very honest self-criticism that the CPC had undertaken on its own role regarding the Indian Communist movement. True to the spirit of Communist principles, such a honest self-criticism, rare as it is in recent Communist history also teaches us that the inviolable principle of criticism and self-criticism is the only one that steels the Communist movement.

Finally, while dealing with contradictions it is necessary to note that in today's international context, all the four fundamental contradictions of our present epoch are intensifying. While the struggles of the working people are growing in the advanced capitalist world, the pro-capitalist parties losing popular support in the elections like in Italy, Germany, Portugal, Spain and the process of restoration of Capitalism

in the former socialist countries running into rough weather, as demonstrated by the Russian election results -- all indicate that Capitalism, far from being a crisis free system is incapable of solving humanity's pressing problems. All cries of "socialism is dead" and "Capitalism is eternal" that ran a frenzied course a couple of years ago have demonstrated their immaturity.

Likewise, the contradiction between imperialism and the third world countries is intensifying by leaps and bounds with the Dunkel Draft being signed and the IMF/World Bank conditionalities trying to re - establish a vicious recolonisation of the third world countries.

Inter-imperialist contradictions continue to accentuate. It is here that China is also trying to utilise this contradiction for its own advance. Like it was demonstrated by Stalin during the Second World War, the potency of utilising this for the advance of the revolutionary cause and strengthening of socialism should not be underestimated.

The US's criminal blockade of Cuba, its pressures on North Korea and the entire attempt that would be made to undermine socialism in China -- all reflect the bitter struggle between imperialism and socialism on a world plane. What will happen in China will also be determined on how these contradictions will be resolved.

Many of us were disappointed, and, in fact, the CPI(M) went on record disapproving that China did not exercise its veto in the UN Security Council on the issue of the Gulf war. In such an international situation with all the contradictions accentuating it would appear that China is not discharging its responsibility to further the socialist cause. But then the CPC says that to consolidate socialism in China, in itself, is the biggest contribution it can make for the international Communist movement and as the Chinese party states, until the internal strength of China is consolidated its intervention in the world revolutionary process cannot be effective. However, the fact that the Chinese president and the General Secretary of the CPC visited Cuba immediately after his meeting with the US President, does send certain indicators. We can only hope that such Communist solidarity will strengthen in the future.

In conclusion, however, what needs to be noted in the current situation is that the struggle for consolidating and strengthening socialism in China and the imperialist attempts to undermine the same would

accentuate in the days to come. As Communists, we express our partisanship and solidarity with those forces who wish to strengthen socialism in China.

Paying homage to Mao Zedong today means to translate into practice the positive aspects of his life and work in the specific context of our situation in India and the world and to advance the revolutionary cause. It also means to understand the mistakes and to learn from them in order to strengthen the revolutionary movement.

And, finally, how can a revolutionary giant like Mao Zedong make such colossal mistakes? It only demonstrates the eternal validity of the Marxist understanding that at every point of time in one's life, at every twist and turn of developments, a concrete analysis of concrete conditions is the living essence of Marxism. More importantly, the task is to carry out this understanding in practice. The constant struggle is to implement and practice, rigorously. And thus, enrich theory through revolutionary struggle. There is nothing static or permanent in being a practising Communist. Being a communist means a dynamic process where, at every point of time, an objective analysis of the situation and the consequent correct tactical line has to be drawn. Mistakes committed in not doing this is the warning that Mao's life teaches all of us. It is such mistakes that we should guard against and carry forward the revolutionary tasks in our country.

MENACE OF GROWING BONAPARTISM

I feel honoured at being invited by the Calcutta School of Philosophical Research to deliver the first Rahul Sankrityayan Memorial Lecture. However, I must confess a sense of inadequacy in doing justice to this task. Rahul Sankrityayan was an intellectual giant who while being Communist revolutionary and a freedom fighter was at the same time an accomplished scholar. He was, at the same time, a historian, linguist, Sanskrit scholar, Buddhologist, Tibetologist, ethnographer, epigraphist, lexicographer, author, translator and above all a traveller. While, evaluating his personality and work, one cannot but help recall F. Engels' comments on the personalities of the Renaissance; "The heroes of that time were not yet in thrall to the division of labour, the restriction of which, with its production of one sidedness, we so often notice in their successors. But what was especially characteristic of them was that they almost all lived and pursued their activities in the midst of the contemporary movements, in practical struggle; they had to take sides and join in the fight, one by speaking and writing, another with the sword, many with both". (Introduction, *Dialectics of Nature*)

Conscious of my personal limitations, I attempt to approach the theme for today's lecture, 'Menace of growing Bonapartism globally and in the Indian sub-continent', announced by the organisers, in the true spirit of this "completeness" as opposed to the "one sidedness".

First Rahul Sankrityayan Memorial Lecture , Kolkata, 1992

I

Bonapartism has its specific historical contours and characteristics, and at the same time, a universal significance. It is hence a subject matter of both historical inquiry and contemporary politics. At the outset, a caution is necessary. It would be not merely incorrect but unscientific to look for historical parallels and similarities with Bonapartism in France of the 18th and 19th centuries. These specific historical circumstances can no longer be replicated. The periods of 'tragedy' and 'force' are over. precisely because the social transformations since have altered irreversibly the actors on the stage of class struggle the motive force of history. Bonapartism, therefore, in its classical form (or more precisely, the French form) is today a matter of the past, that cannot be replicated.

This, however, does not mean, that, in essence, Bonapartism has lost its relevance. As long as the ruling class seeks to consolidate its rule through perfidy, conspiracy and naked oppression, as long as it seeks to roll back the inevitable march of class struggle, as long as class divisions in society persist, Bonapartist methods, more importantly, objectives, will retain relevance. The issue therefore is not to look for similarities of the present day class struggles with those of 18th and 19th century France but, to look for similarities in the methods employed by the ruling class to perpetuate the class exploitation.

This crucial difference in form and essence, however, needs to be established. What does Bonapartism mean or constitute? Amongst the multitude of descriptive aspects it means, (a) the negation of the democratic gains of the popular revolution; (b) the replacement of a feudal monarchy by a bourgeois empire under a one-man dictatorship; (c) the consolidation and protection of bourgeois rights and gains and (d) deriving popular legitimacy from military aggression and successes.

To this angst audience it is unnecessary to recollect the historical circumstances of the period beginning from the French Revolution to

the Paris commune. Suffice it to note that this was the period of the transition from feudalism to capitalism, when the bourgeoisie utilises the popular revolutionary zeal to consolidate its rule and crushes it when this very revolutionary zeal threatens its hegemony. Bonapartism, hence, is the manifestation of these class dynamics.

A necessary digression is a reference to Bismark. When Revolutions were sweeping Europe - signifying the transition from feudalism to Capitalism - the bourgeoisie evolved different methods in different circumstances but to the same effect and conclusion: the consolidation of its rule. As Lenin noted, Bismark, gave models, not of Bonapartism but of "combination". The point to note is that the various forms and caricatures of state power were all directed at the consolidation of the rising bourgeois class rule.

The point for us to note here, for purposes of linkage to the contemporary world situation, is that under what circumstances do such Bonapartist methods arise. This is necessary to establish the fact that such measures have been and will be resorted to by the bourgeoisie to consolidate its rule.

Marx had contemporaneously analysed and evaluated the Bonapartism of the 1848-52 variety, in an unparaled colourful and satirical manner. His, '18th Brummaire of Louis Bonaparte' is a work that Engels described as that of "a genius". Apart from everything else, Marx had made two observations that continue to guide the proletarian movement till date. The first was his observation that all revolutions so far had only tried to perfect the state machinery, the point is to smash it and create a new proletarian state. A conclusion that so woefully and tragically manifested in the Paris Commune and the inability of the French proletariat to do so. The second was on the role of the peasantry. Noting the reactionary role of the propertied class, he emphasised that its revolutionary potential can only be realised in alliance with the proletariat. Remarking that the *coup de etat* Bonaparte was that of the peasantry, he noted in a passionate and colourful passage

that Bonaparte's election was the "day of the Peasant insurrection"; "clumsily cunning, knavishly naive, doltishly sublime, a calculated superstition, a pathetic burlesque, a cleverly stupid anachronism, a world historic piece of buffoonery and an undecipherable hieroglyphic for the understanding of the civilised - this symbol bares the unmistakable physiognomy of the class that represents barbarism within civilisation". The peasantry had voted en masse for Bonaparte. (*Class Struggles in France, Selected Works* Vol I , pp236, 237) Marx however hastened to add that this was not true of that section of the peasantry that was struggling to break from the old order.

Notwithstanding this brief digression into the French conditions, the question that arises is: are Bonapartist methods inevitable, if so, under what circumstances?

Lenin answers this eloquently: "Bonapartist methods are historically inevitable when there is no solid, durable and tested integral social basis (for ruling class) and when there is a need to manoeuvre among heterogeneous elements. If the democratic classes are powerless, or have been greatly weakened for temporary reasons, such methods may be attended by Success over a number of years" (*Collected Works* Vol 18 Pp 4 & 5).

In other words what does this mean? In a period of transition, when the ascending class has not been able to establish its hegemony it resorts to perfidy and everything else to achieve it. In the process it uses popular support as cannon fodder for its ends.

What then is the symptom of Bonapartism? "The manoeuvring of state power which leans on the military clique (on the worst elements of the army) between two hostile classes and forces which more or less balance out each other." (Lenin, *Collected Works*; Vol 24 P 224)

That is, when the correlation of class forces is more or less even, the bourgeoisie manoeuvres to consolidate its rule by co-opting feudal remnants and mercilessly attacking the proletariat.

In essence Bonapartism always raises its head as a form of government that buttresses the class rule. Lenin notes in *Kelensky's Russia*, "Bonapartism in Russia is no accident but a natural product of

the evolution of the class struggle in a petty bourgeois country with a considerably developed bourgeoisie and a revolutionary proletariat. It would be a very big mistake to think that a democratic situation rules out Bonapartism. On the contrary, it is exactly in a situation like this (history of France has proved it twice) that Bonapartism emerges given a certain relationship between classes and their struggles.

"However to recognise the inevitability of Bonapartism does not at all mean forgetting the inevitability of its downfall". (Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol 25, p. 225)

Bonapartism hence is a specific form of class rule, whose essence is the consolidation of the bourgeois rule. It is historically a product of the rising bourgeoisie in its struggle against feudalism. It is a form that represents not the progressive character of the rising bourgeoisie but its reactionary counter-revolutionary nature. As Lenin said, "French history shows us that Bonapartist counter-revolution developed at the end of the 18th century (and then for a second time from 1848 to 1852) on the basis of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie and in turn paved the way for the restoration of a legitimate monarchy. Bonapartism is a form of government, that grows out of the counter-revolutionary nature of the bourgeoisie in the conditions of democratic changes and a democratic revolution (*Collected Works* Vol 25, Ppp258-259)

It is also necessary to note as to why Bonapartism arose in the manner it did in France. One can do no better than quote Engels' preface to the German edition of Marx's *Eighteenth Brumaire*, "France is the country where, more than anywhere else, the historical class struggles were fought out to a decisive conclusion every time, and where, consequently, the changing political forms within which they move and in which their results are summarised have been stamped in the sharpest outlines. The centre of feudalism in the middle ages, the model of a unified monarchy based on social estates since the Renaissance, France demolished feudalism in the Great Revolution and established the rule of the bourgeoisie in a classical purity unequalled by any other European land. And, the struggle of the aspiring proletariat against the ruling bourgeoisie appeared here in an acute form unknown elsewhere".

Bonapartism hence was the sharpest impression of the particular form of state that arose in response to this class struggle. The bourgeoisie adopted it to advance and consolidate its interests and when these came into conflict with form, jettisoned this very form with hesitation. The menace of Bonapartism, hence, can be evaluated only on the basis of the specific contours of contemporary class struggle and the consequent response of the ruling bourgeoisie.

To summarise so far: Bonapartism is the manoeuvring of state power by the bourgeoisie to consolidate its rule. Its form may and will definitely vary, from time to time and country to country, but in essence it represents the reactionary counter-revolutionary nature of the ruling bourgeoisie which will stop at nothing, including the jettisoning of the very state structures they themselves have created, if these stand in the way of the consolidation of its class in the face of the rising revolutionary side.

In modern times, Bonapartism, therefore, manifests itself, not in the classical form, but in the attempts by the ruling bourgeoisie to jettison the democratic content of the bourgeois state in a situation of democratic changes and democratic revolution.

In order to examine these possibilities we shall have to turn to the present day world situation.

{The rest of the text has been edited as it deals with the then socio-economic situation. These, in conceptual terms continue to remain relevant, however the concrete situation on these (quantitatively though not qualitatively) has since changed.}

India's 12th Five Year Plan – Jettisoning of the Planning Process

It is, indeed, an honour to be asked to deliver this Silver Jubilee V.P. Chintan Memorial Lecture.

Comrade VPC, as he was popularly known, joining the Communist Party in 1939, played a leading role in organising and developing the Party in the erstwhile Madras presidency and later, after the linguistic reorganisation of the states, in Tamilnadu. The details of his work have been documented and continue to serve as a source of inspiration to the present generation of communists today. His courage and the indomitable conviction with which he organised the working class during the sixties and seventies attained near legendary status. The way he faced the murderous assault on him by anti-social elements in 1973 and the manner in which he escaped from the jaws of death were instances of stellar courage and strength of conviction that inspired many of my generation to join and dedicate ourselves to the advance of the communist movement in India.

V. P. Chintan Silver Jubilee Memorial Lecture 2012

Having been assigned to work in the international department at the Party Centre from 1987 I had the duty to coordinate and brief the delegations that were sent in response to invitations from fraternal communist parties abroad. Com. VPC was asked to attend the May Day celebrations and subsequently participate in an international trade union conference in Moscow. The CPI(M)'s request to the then CPSU was to facilitate our comrades visiting the Soviet Union to visit both Leningrad and Stalingrad. Accordingly VPC visited Stalingrad and despite medical advice climbed up the steep Martyrs memorial monument which contributed to the massive heart attack that consumed his life. In a way I have always suffered from a sense of guilt, feeling that I somehow facilitated his visit to the Soviet Union.

Amongst the wide range of activities that he led was the relentless struggle to improve the livelihood status and expand the rights of the working class and all sections of the working people. As a consequence, he spent, in all, over a decade in jails and some working in the underground. The issue of strengthening struggles for a better livelihood of the working people, as an integral part of the struggle for establishing socialism in India was integral to VPC's work and continues to be central to the CPI(M)'s agenda today. In this context it is only appropriate that this silver jubilee memorial lecture should be devoted in VPC's memory to the current developments concerning the planning process in India, particularly the currently being considered 12th Five Year Plan. The planning process was conceived as being central to improve the living standards of the vast millions of our working people.

II

India's 12th Five Year Plan has been approved by the Union Cabinet of Ministers only recently. It is yet to be placed and discussed in the National Development Council (NDC), which is the authority to finalise the adoption of the Plan. The NDC includes the Chief

Ministers of all Indian states and, true to India's federal structure, this is the statutory authority to finalise the Plan. Since the date for this NDC meeting has not been finalized yet, the document approved by the Union Cabinet is not available in public domain. Therefore, we largely have to discuss the 12th Plan on the basis of the approach paper issued by the Planning Commission of India in October 2011. Actually, the Plan should have begun rolling out this fiscal year, which began on April 1, 2012. We appear to be heading for a Plan holiday in 2011-12.

The fact that the document has not been finalized yet reflects the change in the definition of the planning from being an instrument of interventionist development agenda that places social benefit above private gains. Under the process of neo-liberal reforms, planning has emphasised the dismantling of controls by State; diluting the regulations and facilitating private investments. There can be nothing against facilitating private investments but a planning process presumes dovetailing all such private investments towards achieving the larger socio-economic goals. Any attempt to ignore the latter will only amount to a negation of the concept of planning.

It is necessary, in this context, to recollect that the Planning Commission was set up in March, 1950 by a Resolution of the Government of India which defined the scope of its work in the following terms:

“The Constitution of India has guaranteed certain Fundamental Rights to the citizens of India and enunciated certain Directive Principles of State Policy, in particular, that the State shall strive to promote the welfare of the people by securing and protecting as effectively as it may a social order in which justice, social, economic and political, shall inform all the institutions of the national life, and shall direct its policy towards securing, among other things:

- a. that the citizens, men and women equally, have the right to an adequate means of livelihood;
- b. that the ownership and control of the material resources of the community are so distributed as best to sub-serve the common good; and
- c. that the operation of the economic system does not result in the concentration of wealth and means of production to the common detriment.”

The draft outline of the 1st Five Year Plan was addressed to the country for general discussion and comment in the following words:

“Planning in a democratic State is a social process in which, in some part, every citizen should have the opportunity to participate.... The Draft is intended to be a document for the widest possible public discussion. ... and also to obtain the views of Members of Parliament....”

However, the country needs to be prepared for the opposite of what is stated above. Shamefully, the Indian Parliament has so far not discussed the 12th Five Year Plan, despite the Left parties’ consistent demand to do so. The new emphasis of the planning process now seems to be a pathological preoccupation with public-private-partnership (PPP). This has been evolving for some years now. At the beginning of the 11th Plan, the then Finance Minister wrote in 2007 that the investments required in the infrastructure sector of the plan *“would be achieved through a combination of public investment, PPPs and exclusive private investments”*. In order to attract such private investments, he said that *“It is essential to create fiscal space by restricting public expenditure. Furthermore, we have to levy and collect appropriate and reasonable user charges not only to attract private investments but also to ensure proper operation and maintenance of the assets that are created”*. With one stroke the original resolution’s resolve to use the country’s resources *“to sub serve the common good”* is abandoned.

By now it is clear that all such PPP projects have resulted in the jacking up of user charges which effectively prevents the poor from using these facilities. Delhi's airport is most expensive for travelers in the world today. Toll tax collection awarded to private players 'in perpetuity' has ruled out the *aam admi* from the highways. Humongous amounts are being transferred to private players in education and health by the government for paying the fees and charges for the mandatory admissions from economically weaker sections. With such amounts that are literally subsidies to the private sector, the public investments could have created larger facilities for the *aam admi*.

III

The 12th Five Year Plan approach paper focuses on the sustenance and acceleration of a high growth strategy which is, at the same time, inclusive. As far as the high growth trajectory is concerned, the government has itself downscaled the projection of average annual growth during the 12th Plan to 8.2 per cent from the initial 9 per cent envisaged in the approach paper. The IMF recently estimated that the Indian economy would grow at 4.9 per cent in 2012, scaling down its earlier projection of 6.2 per cent. As far as inclusive growth is concerned, the emphasis is in relation to reduction in poverty and increase in employment as well as providing universal education and health care. However, inclusion in the true sense can only be attained when interventionist efforts are made to ensure that the bottom percentiles receive a greater share of growth.

There is considerable controversy on the ridiculously low definitions of what constitutes poverty in India. In the 2011 Status Report on the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) issued by the Indian government, the target of halving the proportion of people who suffer from hunger has been estimated to be "slow or almost off track". According to the official statistics, a calorific intake of 2200 calories in rural India and 2100 in urban India defines people

who are not poor, notwithstanding the Planning Commission's own yardstick of 2400 calories. 69 per cent in rural India and 64.5 per cent in urban areas could not consume this calorie requirement in 2004-05. In 2009-10, these percentages increased to 76 and 68 respectively.

In terms of employment, according to official statistics (NSSO large survey) between 2004-05 and 2009-10, covering people above 15 years of age, all employment, including self-employment, increased at an annual compound rate of 0.82 per cent. This is against 2.7 per cent in the previous such survey for the preceding five years. Disturbingly, employment in manufacturing sector declined while the economy was growing at around a rate of 8 per cent per annum.

The World Bank Report on Global Hunger 2012 ranks India at number 65 out of 79 countries. Worse, it observes, "According to latest data on child under nutrition, from 2005-10, India ranked second to last on child underweight out of 129 countries. Only Timor-Leste (try to locate this country on the map) had a higher rate of underweight children." Another fact brought out by the *2012 Hunger Report* is that 39.2 percent of the employed people in India are living below \$1 Purchasing Power Parity per day.

With regard to all other poverty related MDGs, the official status report of the Indian government says that we are "slow or off track" in terms of attaining the targets on reducing child mortality, meeting maternal health and halting – leave aside reversing – the incidents of major diseases like malaria, TB etc., India has contributed approximately 24 per cent of the new global cases of TB in 2009 as per the WHO. The MDG target of reducing the proportion of households having no access to improved sanitation is also way away from the target. In fact, the Indian Prime Minister had recently bemoaned the high levels of malnutrition among Indians, particularly

children, as a “national shame”. Yet nothing substantial and meaningful is envisaged in 12th Five Year Plan.

On the question of universal health care, the 12th Plan proposes to move from a mixture of public sector service provision plus insurance, to “a system of health care delivered by a managed network.” Such a universal provision of health care envisages two components – “preventive interventions” which the government would be both funding and universally providing and “clinical services” at different levels defined in an Essential Health Package which the government would finance but not necessarily directly provide.

Thus, the government, under the 12th Plan, proposes to confine itself to providing a small package of services while virtually all clinical services would be opened up for the corporate private sector. The government would, thus, play the role of a provider of health care which is financed by public monies to fatten the corporate sector by handing over profit making clinical services. This is a Plan aimed at progressively winding up the universalisation of public health. The proposals are to increase public expenditure on health from 1.02 per cent to 1.58 per cent of GDP. This is far lower than a minimum of 5 per cent, that is recommended by the WHO. In a list of 200 countries ranked by the World Bank in 2010, concerning performance in public health care spending, India is placed at number 187. The Chair of the Planning Commission’s Expert Group on Universal Public Health care himself admitted that the rising health costs were annually pushing 30 to 40 million Indians below the poverty line. No inclusive growth can happen with such an approach towards public health.

Likewise, in the field of education, the emphasis is on expanding private education and developing the education sector on the basis of PPP. Various new legislations are pending before the Indian Parliament

to bring about such changes. The Plan document calls for a change in treating education as a non-profit making institution and to permit large-scale profit generation in this sector. The financial squeeze on the existing public education system is accompanied by permitting privatization. This is only legalizing the commercialization of education. Private higher education today already accounts for four-fifth of enrollment in professional education and one-third overall. Ironically, even in the USA, less than one-fourth are enrolled in private institutions. The universal right to education, international experience shows, can only be achieved with a network of State-run “neighbourhood schools”. This has laid the foundation of all developed countries. Unfortunately, the 12th Plan seems to abandon this approach.

Thus, in terms of inclusive growth, in all these sectors of poverty reduction, employment expansion, universal public health and universal education, the emphasis seems to be to facilitate private profiteering as against achieving the socio-economic objectives. This does not auger well for India’s future.

IV

As regards the high growth trajectory as well, there are serious problems in the Plan prescriptions. The focus is on providing capital – both foreign and domestic – a larger access for profit maximization. Under capitalism, the State is meant to create such opportunities. But will this serve the objective of achieving higher growth? Unfortunately, this does not appear to be so. For instance, in the last year, tax concessions worth Rs. 5.28 trillion were given, as incentives for growth. These concessions outstrip the high 6.9 per cent fiscal deficit which translates to Rs. 5.22 trillion. Yet, the growth in manufacturing declined from 3.6 per cent in July 2011 to 0.1 per cent in July 2012. This only indicates the fact that it is neither the lack of capital nor the lack of

investment opportunities that are constraints for a high growth trajectory. This approach may, however, make capital available for speculative ventures that may create temporary ‘bubbles’, which can devastate the economy when they burst. The world is continuing to experience the pain and agony of such a consequent economic slowdown bordering on recession.

The basic problem in India lies in the fact that the aggregate domestic demand in the economy is not growing proportionally to sustain a high growth trajectory. On the contrary, all studies indicate a contraction in recent years.

Contrary to tackling this situation, the policy makers seem to concentrate on reforms that will make access to capital cheaper and easier. Speaking to the chiefs of the public sector undertakings, the Prime Minister and the Finance Minister urged them to use the combined rupees two lakh crore cash reserves that they currently hold to increase investments in the economy. *The Economic Times* carried a banner headline report (August 20, 2012) stating that the top 500 listed corporates in the country reported that for the three years ending March 2012 they held cash reserves of over Rs. 9.3 lakh crores or \$ 166 billion. These resources are enough to double India’s current power generating capacity or to build 40,000 kms of six-lane highways annually as against the current 800 kms.

A capitalist is not a miser to sit on accumulated stocks of money. There has to be a reason why such accumulated reserves are being held by the corporates. The answer lies in the fact that a vast majority of our people have very little purchasing power left after meeting their survival needs. This contraction of aggregate domestic demand inhibits any investment. This is all the more so in the current situation where the global economic slowdown has drastically reduced global trade with India’s exports taking a severe beating. In the absence of growing

aggregate demand, corporates would rather sit on the cash reserves than invest in a situation where people simply do not have the money to buy what they produce. These reserves will eventually flow into speculation which explains the soaring prices of real estate and gold today.

The reforms that are required to put India back on a high growth trajectory therefore are those that would significantly increase aggregate domestic demand. Unfortunately, this government egged on by international finance, in this age of imperialist globalization, which is looking for fresh avenues in the wake of the global slowdown, seems to embark on further reforms of financial liberalisation hoping that this would draw in international capital for higher levels of investment in the economy. Thus, on the agenda appear the permission for FDI in retail trade; increasing FDI cap in the insurance sector; banking reforms and the privatisation of pension funds. The irony lies in the fact that precisely because these reforms were not allowed to be put in place by the Left parties during UPA-I, India could relatively protect itself from the devastating impact of the global financial meltdown in 2008. By going ahead on such a trajectory, Indian economy will make itself more vulnerable to international financial volatility.

India's growth, therefore, is crucially dependent upon expanding its domestic demand rapidly. This cannot happen by merely making available larger and cheaper access to capital for investments. The purchasing power in the hands of the Indian people needs to be exponentially increased to make this happen. For this, the 12th Plan must ensure large-scale increases in public investments to build India's much needed infrastructure. This would generate jobs and, hence, increase the purchasing power in the hands of the Indian people and the aggregate domestic demand. This will be a more sustainable

trajectory of growth that would be relatively more inclusive as well. The financing of such public investments can come from the monies that are now not collected due to tax concessions which, in any case, have not resulted in any additional growth – inclusive or otherwise.

What India requires today is virtually an Indian “new deal” – a massive hike in public investments for which there are no dearth of resources. These resources are today either being looted through mega corruption scams, reflecting a ‘crony capitalism’ of the worst order, or, are given away as tax concessions to the corporates. We can only hope that such a shift in strategy takes place as the 12th Plan is finally adopted. But, unfortunately I am reasonably certain that the final document of India’s 12th Plan will not do this.

V

The current policy trajectory of reforms in the 12th Plan approach naturally leads us to question the ‘growth’ and who are benefiting from it. During the course of last year, the number of US dollar billionaires in India doubled to 52 holding combined assets equivalent of 25 per cent of Indian GDP. Apart from these people, there are another minuscule section who are called high net worth individuals (HNWIs). They are just 0.01 per cent (120,000) of the total population of our country and their combined worth is close to one-third of India’s gross national income. The top 20 percent own 45.3 percent of the total income while the bottom 20 percent own only 8.1 percent of the income in India (2012, *Hunger Report*). According to the 2010 World Wealth Report brought out by financial services firms Capgemini and Merrill Lynch Wealth Management, India now has 126,700 HNWIs, an increase of more than 50 per cent over the 2008 number. These are the people who have not lost in the period of global economic crisis, but in fact gained.

That growth will be accompanied by a `trickle down' process, thus, reducing levels of poverty continues to remain an illusion. It has never happened and will never happen unless there is an interventionist effort by the planning process. It is precisely this that is being jettisoned today. Unfortunately, this will only widen the hiatus between the two Indias that are being created today.

VI

A powerful people's movement must be consistently mounted to force this government to reverse this neo-liberal policy trajectory and set in motion alternative policies outlined above. India today lacks neither the resources nor the talent of our youth to build a better India. In memory of Com. V. P. Chintan, we must redouble our resolve to strengthen these struggles and mount the requisite pressure on India's ruling classes. These struggles are integral, for the CPI(M), in the efforts to forge the largest revolutionary unity of the vast masses of the exploited sections to march towards our objectives of people's democracy and socialism.



This is the collection of lectures delivered during the course of two decades. These lectures deal with a vast variety of subjects like Bonapartism, the caste and class overlap in India, language, communalism, liberation theology, economic crisis etc. By this very nature it is a heterogeneous mix of various themes and ideas. However, there is a commonality in most of these. This is concerned with the consolidation of our secular, democratic republic in order to advance the peoples' struggle for emancipation through the victory of peoples' democracy, leading to the establishment of socialism in India.

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