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Punjab Elections — A Review

Queer indeed were the reactions to the results of the Punjab assembly elections and various by-elections in 10 states, noted among the Congress, BJP, the ruling combine at the Centre and the CPI(M) - one of its main constituents.

The Akali-BJP combine got 93 seats and thus acquired an over three-fourth majority in the Punjab assembly. Of the 4 parliament seats in the state the BJP won 2 and Akali Dal won the Ropar constituency. Top Congress leaders like Buta Singh, Ram Niwas Mirdha and Kamalnath who contested from different states, were defeated. So the Congress again met with failure everywhere, including Punjab. The natural fall out has been increasing infighting among themselves while the old leader Narasimha Rao and his henchmen use this opportunity to pressurize the new leader Sri Sitaram Kesri. It was the first elections after Sri Kesri became the Congress president. It is now his responsibility to provide an explanation for their wretched results. He had said, Punjab elections signify 'the victory of democracy'. What he wanted to convey is that the Congress had removed terror in Punjab and brought back 'democratic environment' conducive to holding elections there. If that were so, then the Congress should have won a majority. Then why these poor results? In the '92 elections (only 24 % votes were cast) the Congress got as many as 87 seats. Why did it come down to 14 this time? Sri Sitaram Kesri argued that had he not removed Sri Brar, the Chief Minister of Punjab during the regime of Sri P.V. Narasimha Rao, the Congress could not have made more than 2. That the Congress got at least 14 was due to the selection of Smt. Bhattal by Sri Kesri as Chief Minister before the elections. So according to the Congress President, the elections were actually a victory for the party. Such childish argument only underlines the present condition of the Congress.

While explaining the election results nowhere did the Congress dissect the country's economic and political problems and Congress's policy and programme regarding them. And nothing was heard either before or after elections about policy and programme from any leader of the BJP, United Front, including CPI(M) and CPI etc. The truth is, none had anything to offer in the interest of the people.

Was there a single policy and programme of the Congress in Punjab that could be said to be different from those of the ruling UF or BJP? The Congress Working Committee held a meeting on 16th February, after the election results were out. There they declared that the Congress would not extend its unconditional support to the ruling UF

anymore. The support would henceforth be issue based. But they were silent as to why they would do so and on which issues differences cropped up between their policies and the UF's. This stance is not without reason. There is no real line of difference between the principles and policies of the Congress and that of the UF government as pursued by it. The same liberalisation policy that the Congress introduced in the interest of the national and foreign monopolies is being pursued to the last by the Deve Gowda government and the CPI(M) in faithful service to the capitalists' class interest. Yet at the same time the UF leaders cry themselves hoarse with pro-poor slogans loaned from the Congress.

In the political sphere too, there is actually no difference between the Congress and the UF. The same holds true for the Congress policy vis-a-vis BJP. The BJP too is pursuing that same economic policy of the Congress. On the question of communal politics there is no basic difference either between the positions of these two parties. If at all, the difference is one of degree merely, and regarding tactics.

CPI(M)'s attitude to the Congress is also not much different. It did its utmost to portray the Congress as secular in its crave for power. If it can make the Congress appear secular, then it is convenient for the CPI(M) to combine with it and show the combination as principled. But nobody can make the Congress secular. If the rabid communal politics practised by the Congress is considered starting from the time of Indira Gandhi to Rajiv Gandhi and Narasimha Rao, which culminated in the demolition of the Babari Masjid, the communal character of the Congress becomes clear. So, although there had been a contest between the Congress and BJP in Punjab elections, that was a mere electoral contest between two bourgeois parties who stand for capitalist interest. Both the parties there were bereft of any pro-people policy and programme.

The same holds true for the CPI(M), CPI and the entire ruling UF, who pose as the third alternative in elections. It is clear that the UF has no policy or programme to propose, which is a real alternative, nor did it make any attempt or show any intention to do so.

Here also lies the reason why the UF leaders are quite happy over the victory of the Akali Dal-BJP combine in Punjab. In their view the Congress, because of their very poor result in the elections would not dare to head for interim parliamentary elections at this very moment. For this very reason the Congress would be unable

(Contd. on page 4)

Comrade Nihar Mukherjee Expresses grave concern at Tripura killings

Expressing grave concern over the wanton killings of innocent men, women and children in Tripura, Comrade Nihar Mukherjee, General Secretary, SUCI in course of a statement on 22.2.97, strongly indicted the Centre and the State governments for their utter failure to protect the life and property of the common people.

Pointing out the fact that both the Centre and the State governments were fully aware of the grave threat posed by the so-called extremists against the common people of Tripura, he charged them for not taking any precautionary measures which, if adopted timely, would have prevented this calamity. Instead, they were found to be placating this rabid anti-people forces in their bid to advance their electoral interests.

He also strongly criticised the ruling CPI(M) for its indulgence in divisive and parochial politics which was very much responsible for the outbreak of this carnage.

He appealed to all sections of the people of Tripura to do their best to maintain people's unity and preserve communal peace and harmony and demanded of the governments stringent measures to forthwith curb these barbaric acts.

He also demanded of the governments for payment of adequate compensation to the families of those killed as also to the injured and rehabilitation of the refugees on war footing.

SUCI Condemns anti-people budgets General Budget

Comrade Nihar Mukherjee, General Secretary, SUCI issued the following statement on 28.2.97 on General budget :

The fiscal policy of the UF government as again reflected in this year's general budget placed in the Lok Sabha today by Mr P Chidambaram, the Finance Minister, is truly in "strong continuity" of the anti-people policies of the previous Congress government. The policy of pre-budget increase in the administered prices of the essential commodities, this time rice, and wheat, hike in railway fare and freight is continued, the Finance Minister routinely pleads that the government has taken "measures", to check price level but fails to mention the zero result, millions of unemployed are assured that

(Contd. on page 4)

Recall the teachings of Comrade Stalin

... Nor shall I deal at length with the growth of inner-Party democracy in our Party. Only the blind fail to see that inner-Party democracy, genuine inner-Party democracy, an actual upsurge of activity on the part of the mass of the Party membership, is growing and developing in our Party. There is talk about democracy. But what is democracy in the Party? Democracy for whom? If by democracy is meant freedom for a couple or so of intellectuals divorced from the revolution to engage in endless chatter, to have their own press organ, etc., then we have no use for such "democracy," because it is democracy for an insignificant minority that sets at naught the will of the overwhelming majority. If, however, by democracy is meant freedom for the mass of the Party membership to decide questions connected with our work of construction, an upsurge of activity of the Party membership, drawing them into the work of Party leadership, developing in them the feeling that they are the masters in the Party, then we have such democracy, that is the democracy we need, and we shall steadily develop it in spite of everything. ...

Nor shall I, comrades, deal at length with the fact that, parallel with inner-Party democracy, collective leadership is growing, step by step, in our Party. Take our Central Committee and the Central Control Commission. Together they constitute a leading centre of 200-250 comrades, which meets regularly and decides highly important questions connected with our work of construction. It is one of the most democratic and collectively functioning centres our Party has ever had. Well? Is it not a fact that the settlement of highly important questions concerning our work is passing more and more from the hands of a narrow upper group into the hands of this broad centre, which is most closely connected with all branches of our work of construction and with all the districts of our vast country?

Nor shall I dilate on the growth of our Party cadres. It is indisputable that during the past few years the old cadres of our Party have been permeated with new, rising cadres, consisting mainly of workers. Formerly, we counted our cadres in hundreds and thousands, but now we have to count them in tens of thousands. I think that if we begin from the lowest organisations, the shop and team organisations, and proceed to the top, all over the Union, we shall find that our Party cadres, the overwhelming majority of whom are workers, now number not less than 100,000. This indicates the immense growth of our Party. It indicates the immense growth of our cadres, the growth of their ideological and organisational experience, the growth of their communist culture.

Lastly, there is one further question, which there is no need to deal with at length but which ought to be mentioned. That is the question of the growth of the Party's prestige among the non-Party workers and the masses of the working people in general of our country, among the workers and the oppressed classes in general all over the world. There can scarcely be any doubt now that our Party is becoming the banner of liberation for the masses of the working people

all over the world, and that the title of Bolshevik is becoming a title of honour for the best members of the working class.

Such, in general, comrades, is the picture of our achievements in the sphere of Party affairs.

This does not mean, comrades, that there are no shortcomings in our Party. No, there are shortcomings, and grave ones at that. Permit me to say a few words about them.

Let us take, for example, the guidance of economic and other organisations by our Party

[On the occasion of the 44th Death anniversary of Stalin, the great leader of the proletariat we are giving here excerpts from his teachings on self criticism and inner party democracy, which are immensely valuable to us at the present juncture to remould ourselves and conduct the party in the correct line.]

— Ed. Proletarian Era.]

organisations. Is all well with us in this respect? No, not all. Often we settle questions, not only in the districts, but also at the centre, by the family, domestic-circle method, so to speak. Ivan Ivanovich, a member of the top leadership of such and such an organisation, has, say, made a gross mistake and has messed things up. But Ivan Fyodorovich is reluctant to criticise him, to expose his mistakes and to correct them. He is reluctant to do so because he does not want to "make enemies." He has made a mistake, he has messed things up - what of it? Who of us does not make mistakes? Today I shall let him, Ivan Fyodorovich, off; tomorrow he will let me, Ivan Ivanovich, off; for what guarantee is there that I, too, shall not make a mistake? Everything in order and satisfactory. Peace and good will. They say that a mistake neglected is detrimental to our great cause? Never mind! We'll muddle through somehow.

Such, comrades, is the way some of our responsible workers usually argue.

But what does that mean? If we Bolsheviks, who criticise the whole world, who, in the words of Marx, are storming heaven, if we, for the sake of this or that comrade's peace of mind, abandon self-criticism, is it not obvious that that can lead only to the doom of our great cause?...

Marx said that what, among other things, distinguishes the proletarian revolution from every other revolution is that it criticises itself and, in criticising itself, strengthens itself.* That is an extremely important point of Marx's. If we, the representatives of the proletarian revolution, shut our eyes to our defects, settle questions by

* Karl Marx, The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte (see K. Marx and F. Engels, Selected Works Vol. I, Moscow 1951, p.228)



the family-circle method, hush up each other's mistakes and drive the ulcers inwards into the organism of the Party, who will correct these mistakes, these defects?

Is it not obvious that we shall cease to be proletarian revolutionaries, and that we shall certainly perish if we fail to eradicate from our midst this philistinism, this family-circle method of settling highly important questions of our work of construction?

Is it not obvious that by refraining from honest and straightforward self-criticism, by refraining from honest and open correction of our mistakes, we close our road to progress, to the improvement of our work, to new successes in our work?

After all, our development does not proceed in the form of a smooth, all-round ascent. No, comrades, we have classes, we have contradictions within the country, we have a past, we have a present and a future, we have contradictions between them, and our onward progress cannot take the form of a smooth rocking on the waves of life. Our advance takes place in the process of struggle, in the process of the development of contradictions, in the process of overcoming these contradictions, in the process of bringing these contradictions to light and eliminating them.

As long as classes exist we shall never be in a position to say: Well, thank God, everything is all right now. We shall never be in such a position, comrades.

Something in life is always dying. But that which is dying refuses to die quietly; it fights for its existence, defends its moribund cause.

Something new in life is always being born. But that which is being born does not come into the world quietly; it comes in squealing and screaming, defending its right to existence...

The struggle between the old and the new, between the dying and the nascent - there you have the basis of our development. By failing to note and bring to light openly and honestly, as befits Bolsheviks, the defects and mistakes in our work, we close our road to progress. But we want to go forward. And precisely because we want to go forward we must make honest and revolutionary self-criticism one of our most important tasks. Without this there is no progress. Without this there is no development.

But it is precisely along this line that things with us are still in a bad way. More than that, it is enough for us to achieve a few successes to forget about the shortcomings, to take it easy and get conceited. Two or three big successes — and

(Contd. on page 7)

Global Encirclement with Imperialist Military Bases Condemned

This neocolonial attack through political, ideological, economic and military means directly affects the developing countries as huge resources of these countries are drained out annually to the imperialist countries. According to the published data, transnational corporations exported an annual average of 9 billion dollar in profits from the developing countries in the 70-s, which is almost twice as much as was transferred into these countries in the form of direct foreign investments. The transnationals received an additional, unrevealed annual profit of nearly 16 billion dollar through the use of transfer prices during the same period. If the payment on foreign debt services is taken together the figure is much more. In the post 'cold war' period the degree and intensity of exploitation are much accelerated. It is estimated that the imperialist states fleece the developing countries to the tune of 200 billion dollar annually. So one can easily imagine the real situation obtaining in these countries which are practically reeling under oppression and exploitation of multinationals as well as native exploiters and are in the debt-trap through the intrigue of the Fund-Bank combine.

Now let me cite an instance of the nature of the 'help', the imperialists extend to the developing countries. Columbia was trying to get rid of drug trafficking. It contacted the US rulers and requested them to set up a radar station in the southern border of Columbia so that movement of mafia helicopters may be watched and stalled. The US rulers agreed, but established the station at San Enders island near Nicaragua, 500 miles away from Columbia. The latter protested and complained that the USA had set up a military base there to keep watch on Nicaragua. Costa Rica also made the same complaint. In fact, the US imperialists established a permanent radar watch station against Nicaragua. This is the type of 'help' they extend to these countries.

Comrades, I like to remind you that the imperialists are able to establish bases in foreign territory through exertion of pressure or use of force. Here I cite a few such

[The first part of the speech of Comrade Manik Mukherjee, Central Staff and Deputy, International Department of our Party, at the Havana meet against "Foreign Military Bases" was published in our previous issue dated February 18, 1997. In this issue we are giving below the concluding part of the speech. — Ed. P. Era]

instances. In order to build up an army base, the US imperialists sought some land on lease from the Government of Haiti. But when President Ceders of Haiti did not agree, the US imperialists invaded Haiti and captured it by using the UNO as a rubber stamp for approval of this treacherous act. Again, the US lease on the naval base of 'Subic Bay' in the Philippines, was to end in 1991 and the USA pressed for renewal of the lease. But Aquino, in spite of her earnest desire, could not get it passed in the Senate. The USA lured them with a fresh loan of 200 billion dollar, but the ice did not melt and Aquino had to quit, a victim of US machination. Similarly, the US administrative control was to be withdrawn from Panama Canal in 1990, as per contract. So when the US President Bush failed to make any manipulation he attacked Panama and placed Gukerno Endara in office, who announced that the Panama Canal would remain under the management of the USA. The US imperialists are also exerting pressure on Bangladesh for leasing out St. Martin Island in the Bay of Bengal for establishing a military base there to keep surveillance over a wide area of this part of Asia. The pressure is still on.

I like to emphasise that the setting up of a system of military bases by the imperialists, particularly the US imperialists, has been prompted by their desire to ensure global aspiration by militarist means. During the so-called 'cold war' period they justified their setting up of bases on the plea of containing Communism. But that this contention of theirs was false and made only to hoodwink the people is proved to the hilt by the fact that in the post 'cold war' period they did not dismantle a single military base; moreover they are now trying to extend NATO even when the so-called threat of Communism is no more there. They are doing this because these bases are vitally important to the imperialists to

pursue their hegemonism. The agreements the imperialists enter into and concessions they derive by coercing the countries where they set up these bases are quite illegitimate and illegal too, from the point of view of international law as enshrined in the UN Charter. These bases pose a grave threat to peace to the adjoining states and also to the country which yields to pressure to concede to the demand of the imperialists in setting up of the bases.

Comrades, I think, all of you will agree that after the fall of socialism in the former Soviet Union and in the east European countries, the forces of war and reaction have temporarily gained over the forces of peace and progress. I have already mentioned that the danger of outbreak of war is real in the present-day world situation. In such an eventuality the imperialists would use the military bases as the launching ground of attacks against the adjoining countries. So the demand for dismantling of the bases must be raised by all peace-loving people of the world. A powerful united and broad-based militant peace movement is the need of the hour. However powerful the imperialists may appear to be, massive militarization and encirclement of the entire globe by establishing military bases by the imperialists are in fact signs of their weakness. They are mortally afraid of mass movement and popular mass upsurge and to crush them they have encircled the globe with military bases. But it is the people who say the final word. The peace-loving people of all the countries including those of the imperialist countries constitute the vast majority. We have to rely on the patriotic people of all countries, the workers, the peasants, the youth, the women and all sections of the toiling masses for building up an effective anti-imperialist struggle, also conducive to the emancipation struggle of the people of the respective country. The morally inspired people of the

world are sure to attain the ultimate victory, however powerful the imperialists may appear.

In fine, I like to say that Cuba, though in a sandwiched position because of severe economic sanctions and threat of imperialist interference and intrigue, can still play a leading role in coordinating the anti-imperialist struggles of different countries. We hope, socialist Cuba will stand true to our expectation and fulfill the aspiration of the peace-loving people all over the world.

With revolutionary greetings to you all.

With revolutionary greetings, I express confidence in the success of the Cuban people led by Comrade Fidel Castro in the struggle against imperialism despite severe setback, temporary though, in the world communist movement, caused by attack from within by modern revisionism.

After analysing the root cause of war I hold that the danger of the outbreak of war lies in inter-imperialist contradiction.

Deterrent role so long played by the socialist camp being absent, the neo-colonial attack has become ruthless. In view of crisis, the imperialists have not only militarised the economy but spread their tentacles through military bases all over the world. For globalization, the military base are used for intervention, interference, pressurization, etc. The more developed among the backward countries like India which has already developed imperialist features are trying to reach a new understanding with the imperialists.

The sovereignty, territorial integrity and national independence are jeopardized and colonial situation is created in some countries. The bases are established through pressure and use of force.

A militant peace movement is the need of the hour. Massive militarization and encirclement of the entire globe through bases are really signs of the weakness of the imperialists. They are mortally afraid of popular mass upsurges; it is to crush them, that the imperialists have set up military bases round the globe. But the people say the final word. Cuba though in a sandwiched position can still play a great role in coordinating the anti-imperialist movements of different countries.

PUNJAB ELECTIONS**Build up real Left alternative to defeat Communalism***(Contd. from page 1)*

to withdraw support to the UF government. The Centre would survive. Ministers will remain ministers for some more time. What about all the fire against communalism and all the tears for secularism?

This is the UF's true character. This is that very front to form which the CPI(M) spared no efforts and after it came into being the CPI(M) leaders cried themselves hoarse to claim credit for forming this 'secular progressive combine'. Thus the CPI(M) combined the Janata Dal, a casteist party, the Samajwadi Dal, no less a casteist party, the parochial Asom Ganaparishad, the regional DMK and Telugu Desham, as well as a Congress faction - the Tamil Manila Congress - and such other parties and forces, and then called it United Front. They declared: the communal BJP is now the main enemy. So the BJP must be stopped anyhow from forming a government. The main task now is to stall communalism, now one should not examine other parties' character or anything other than this purpose. Whichever party seeks to form the government without the BJP that party is secular! So the 13 party UF has emerged as the 'instrument of struggle' against communalism. It also argued that as the UF was lacking majority, there was nothing wrong in seeking and accepting Congress support. For, Congress, too, is secular. The entire calculation was made only with a view to capturing power. The slogan of secularism is raised only to cover up this rank opportunism.

That all these are nothing but opportunist politics born of greed for power, is also exemplified by these elections. The victory scored in the Punjab elections, as well as in most seats of the bye elections by the Akali-communal BJP-Shiv Sena combine undoubtedly signals the emergence of a communal force. Then what struggle did the 8-month old 13-party led UF government wage which, as mentioned before the CPI(M) had helped form with the support of the Congress and with the proclaimed aim of fighting communalism? What was the UF government's alternative policy and programme against communalism? Let alone put up a policy and programme the UF constituents could not even fight unitedly in Punjab. The CPI, a constituent of the UF Ministry, won two seats, and that too, only by entering into seat adjustment with the Congress. And it is with these two seats alone that the UF is represented in Punjab. It was only after the election results were declared that the CPI(M) General Secretary, Sri Surjeet loudly criticised the Congress-CPI seat adjustment and castigated the CPI as 'breaker of left unity'. Sri Surjeet said the CPI should not have gone in for seat adjustment with the Congress as that party has now become 'discredited'. But Sri Surjeet did not clarify how and when the Congress, which was certified as secular, became discredited. Moreover, before the elections, Sri Surjeet himself went to the Congress leaders with the proposal for an electoral understanding. Afterwards, however, for whatever reason, such an understanding materialised between the Congress and the CPI and not with the CPI(M), about which the CPI(M) preferred to keep a low profile. Had the Congress been in a position to form the government after the elections, and had the CPI(M) won a few seats, and from Congress largesse got a little share in the spoils, then Sri

Surjeet might not have made above criticism. In that case the CPI could have acted as a link to bring about a liaison. Actually this criticism of the CPI(M) is just for show, a put up act. Likewise, the CPI leadership, not lagging behind, countered that it was the CPI leaders of Punjab who contrived the electoral adjustments with the Congress, the central leaders were in the dark about it. And with that the issue was clinched! How very simple! What wonderful principle!

If the inner-party difference within the CPI(M) over the question of whether to join the UF cabinet or not is examined, it becomes clear that this difference has nothing to do with people's interest and it is unrelated to any ideological question. For if it is a question of principle, then let alone being a constituent of this government of rank opportunist combination, it could not even be supported. The irony is the CPI(M) is not only the most important member of the Steering Committee but often the CPI(M) leaders act as the mouthpiece of the UF; its programme came up on the basis of CPI(M)'s proposal and direction, and above all the CPI(M) is supporting the 13-party combination unconditionally. If there is no difference in principle on all these aspects, what was the objection against participating in the government? Actually their difference, their point of contention boils down to when it would pay dividends to join the ministry, and when not. In this outlook there is no trace of principle to be found, solely opportunistic considerations.

Thus, for example suddenly we see that the CPI(M) takes a very fiery attitude in the Steering Committee meeting. As if all of a sudden they awoke to the fact of steep price rise. But it was not really difficult to know their game. In the Steering Committee meeting the CPI(M) note revealed the crux of the matter - elections. Due to election possibilities the CPI(M) considers it important to wear the pro-people mask. This is CPI(M)'s principle and ideology. There is ample reason for the BJP to be happy. It is impossible for the BJP to forget the pain of abandoning the seat of power after it enjoyed it for 13 days. To that is added its severe intra party clashes. As a result Gujarat slipped out of hand and Rajasthan is in crisis. Under the circumstances the victory in Punjab and some important constituencies has made the BJP happy. So in one breath it is speaking of interim elections, no-confidence motion and so on, as if, were parliament elections held now the BJP would surely win single majority. The BJP claims itself to be the alternative to the Congress. Both are bourgeois parties. Both aim to serve the ruling class, to protect this capitalist exploitative system. The only point is that the two should have some verbal difference at least, otherwise how would they fight each other in elections? But one should not lose sight of the fact that in so far as people's interests are concerned, there is no difference between the two. As mentioned before, the economic policy of both of them are the same. And what about Hindutva, the BJP's weapon to catch votes? The Congress paved the way for the BJP to take it up. The BJP raised a hue and cry over 'swadeshi' against the multinationals, but all its 'swadeshi' vanished after its volte face regarding Enron when BJP came to power in Maharashtra.

In fact, capitalist crisis has become so deep

that all weapons used by the bourgeois and sham leftist parties to befool the people are getting blunted. The situation calls for either directly and nakedly serving capitalists or stand all out against the exploitative system. For this the social democratic parties and forces of compromise between labour and capital are in a bad situation. Their socialist masks are tearing, bit by bit.

Thus, BJP-Akali victory is achieved neither on the basis of any difference with the Congress or the UF, nor on pro-people attitude. This victory is the victory of communal politics of BJP. It proves that the emotional upsurge, the deep stir, created among secular, democratic people after the demolition of Babari Masjid in 1992, could not be retained and transformed into people's movement against communalism, despite its great potential. And for this the rank opportunist politics of the CPI(M) and its associates are responsible. With their politics of 'gaddi' they have betrayed the cause of the people and are still betraying the people. In fact the combined attack of foreign and domestic capital is pushing people further and further into destitution and unemployment and creates the fertile breeding ground for such evils as communalism. Without organising movements against this attack, any talk of fighting communalism tantamounts to hypocrisy. People have to build up movement for a real left alternative. Should not the rank and file of the CPI(M) and CPI examine their leadership and march forward in this direction?

SUCI Condemns anti-people budgets*(Contd. from page 1)*

a golden future is awaiting them if only they can sustain themselves by self-employment. Poor people are also assured that "all of us should be on the side of the poor". With this pro-people sound promises' customs duty has been enormously reduced, corporate sector has been rewarded with so many tax-cuts and a staggering deficit of Rs.30,266 crores is kept for future assault on the people. Strong voices of countrywide protest should be raised against this pro-capitalist and anti-people budget.

Railway Budget

Comrade Nihar Mukherjee, General Secretary, SUCI issued the following statement on his reaction about the Railway budget on 26.2.97:

When the people in general are groaning under spiralling of prices of all essential commodities the proposed hike in fare, freight and surcharge on luggage and parcels will add fuel to the fire. The proposed 5% increase in sleeper coach charges. 12% increase in freight on all commodities barring a few items, 10% increase in fare of Shatabdi Express and all Rajdhani Expresses will cause immense hardship to the people.

We demand of the UF Government, supported by the Congress(I) from the outside and the CPI(M), to withdraw the proposed hike in fare, freight and surcharges. We appeal to the people to build up countrywide mass movement to compel this government to retrace its steps.

Mammoth Rally held in Calcutta

20,000 students and youths marched the streets of Calcutta on 26th February last demanding introduction of English and Pass-Fail System from Class I. Under the banner of All Bengal Save Education Committee, the procession started from Deshabandhu Park,

North Calcutta, marched for four long hours at a stretch, and culminated at Deshapriya Park, South Calcutta. Through the whole course, people flanked the massive fervent procession, hope gleaming in their eyes finding something precious, that they long in life.

The march was led by Dr Sushil Kumar Mukherjee, former Vice-Chancellor, Calcutta University, Dr Arobinda Nath Basu, former Vice-chancellor, Jadavpur University, Prof Sunanda Sanyal, Sri Manik Mukherjee and others. A brief meeting was held at Esplanade where eminent personalities demanded of the government to concede to the education demands, which the people upheld and fought for, for about two decades.

The Language Movement, demanding among

others, re-introduction of English and Pass-Fail System at primary stage started at the end-Seventies and this movement is unique on this score, which could have been impossible without people's true identification with the cause of education. All Bengal Save Education

Committee conducted this Long March after, on 17th December last, it had held a procession with signatures of people well over one crore supporting this cause. Yet the government remained adamant to stick to the out and out anti-people and disastrous education policy. In the given situation, there is no other way but to intensify the movement to a higher pitch to compel the government fulfill the just demands.



A portion of the mammoth rally organised by the Save Education Committee on February 26 last in support of reintroduction of English from Class I and abolition of no detention policy at primary level.

PRESS CLIPPINGS

Life in Russia

One's first introduction to the "New" Russia is the amount of Roubles that one can collect for a dollar and the mindboggling figures on price tags. Picking up a baggage trolley at the Moscow Airport costs 18000 Roubles, a decent cup of coffee in the city anything between 10,000 to 15,000 Roubles, a short taxi ride something like 40,000 roubles and if you have a shopping list you must first buy a calculator (upwards of 60,000 Roubles) to make sense of the six digit prices.

Russians say that in the "Old days" they could buy a car for 5000 Roubles (equivalent of a dollar) and now the same money is barely enough to fetch them a loaf or bread. The difference is that then few could spare 5000 Roubles, and now that the pockets are jingling with roubles they have no purchasing power. ...

The cost of living is prohibitive, unemployment is crippling up, the crime rate is spiralling, and social tensions are on the boil. A Russian economist, speaking in a recent seminar in Moscow to coincide with the "Days of Indian Culture", said that economic "Reforms" might have brought down the Iron Curtain but what they have turned up in return was even worse. According to the figures she gave, more than 30% of the population has gone under the poverty line, living standards generally have fallen; the gap between the rich and the poor is up by 20% and longevity is down, particularly for men. The glittering Neon signs outside the smart

department stores and the sparkling new Lemosines on the Moscow Streets are deceptive. For only 10% Muscovites have sufficient purchasing power to afford consumer goods; and certain sections of society like teachers earn so little that they cannot buy even all the household goods they were used to under the old system. "It is very sad and very frustrating", says an academic at the Institute of Oriental Studies. The Russian Society is deeply divided between those who miss the security of the old system and those who think that anything is preferable to the regimental of the past. In almost every home parents and children find themselves in opposite camps. Ideology has got caught up in a generation gap. For the older people, used to free housing, free medical care, guaranteed employment and crime free streets, the uncertainties of the new system are unsettling. ...

Others who are nostalgic about the past are the workers, both the blue and white collar variety. Many have lost their jobs and a large number are employed only notionally; they have jobs but wages take a long time in coming, and when do they come they are not enough. Some enterprises dump their surplus stock on their workers in lieu of wages putting on them the additional burden of hawking them in the bazaar.

More than five years after the collapse, a new "working system" has yet to take its place resulting in adhocism, conflict of interest not only between State-owned and private enterprises but also among the Government's own agencies. The Government's writ no longer runs even in enterprises which it theoretically owns. A typical example is Moscow's oldest and biggest hotel,

Hotel Rossia. It is owned by Government but the responsibility of paying the staff and maintenance is with the management with the result that its managers often refuse government bookings if a private party is paying more for the same facilities. It is the same story with other such "hybrid" organisations.

Foreigners who have to deal with the Russian bureaucracy say it is a nightmare. The collapse of the old chain of Command has created a vacuum in which everyone plays the boss and yet nobody is in a position to call the shots. "Earlier, once a decision was taken at a certain level it automatically percolated down the hierarchy and was implemented. Now nobody cares anyone and there is total confusion," says an Indian diplomat in Moscow. If there is no respect for authority any more, it's because nobody is in charge.

It is laissez faire with a vengeance and its effect is evident everywhere. Mafia groups have taken over stretches of roads which they rule with iron hand. Officially, a licence from the local authority entitles anyone to set up a shop or kiosk (stalls selling household goods) which have mushroomed all over Moscow, but the fact is that you cannot do it unless you pay what in India is called a "Hafta" to the local mafia. Gangs control everything from retail trade to private transport and other utilities. So, the "free" market is not really free.

Mugging is common. An official of the National Book Trust of India who recently was in Moscow was attacked in broad daylight, a few distance from the State Library, and robbed. Parents fear for their children, specially girls, if

(Contd. on page 8)

Heroic Movement in South Korea

Workers, students and intellectuals in South Korea have set a glorious example of unity and solidarity in their protest against a most undemocratic and devastating labour law introduced by the Government. Their nationwide demonstrations, in defiance of a civilian regime that is no less despotic than its military predecessor, under the cloak of parliamentary democracy, has almost brought the country to a halt and left the government somewhat shaken, forcing it to backstep. At the same time it has focussed the economic crisis of South Korea - the 'Asian Tiger' held up as a model to demonstrate to people in our country the success of free market economy'.

We remember the glowing tributes paid by Narasimha Rao, former Prime Minister and former Finance Minister Manmohan Singh in Parliament to South Korea when introducing the new economic policy of privatisation and liberalization as the panacea for all economic ills. They said that India should look at the prosperity of South Korea's liberalized, growth oriented economy; that any dilly dallying in this respect could only come at the cost of growth. Today that myth lies shattered, and exposed as a ploy to mislead people.

Despite US patronage South Korea had a huge export trade deficit of 200 crore US dollar in 1996, twice that of 1995. By resorting to restructuring - meaning more unemployment — and with the help of the new labour law, it is trying to gain an edge in the 'saturated' world market - a market that is truly saturated with the sighs and pangs of deprivation of an ever growing multitude of people, as mounting capitalist exploitation puts ever more products of the market out of their reach. Today capitalism everywhere is taking advantage of the temporary absence of the socialist camp and to keep profits soaring and despite the growing crisis engendered by its own, inexorable economic contradiction is snatching away one by one the democratic rights of workers - dismantling obsolete working rules, they call it. Freed from the need to keep up a welfare state to demonstrate the superiority of capitalism over socialism, capitalism today is step by step reversing gear, going back towards the old days of inhuman exploitation where workers were treated little better than slaves, sometimes even worse, except for giving them the freedom to sell their labour power or the freedom to starve.

South Korea's labour laws already have been found to be violative of international conventions. We may recall for example, the working conditions of women in that country in US and EU MNCs, documented in 'Women in the Global Factory' by Fuentes and Ehrenreich (quoted from an Annyuchokhe publication : Imperialism — the Deadly Octopus) where it says that: "Some of the worst conditions have been documented in South Korea, where the garment and textile industry helped spark that country's so-called 'Economic Miracle'. Workers are packed into poorly lit rooms, where summer temperatures rise above 100 degrees Fahrenheit. Textile dust and lint, which can cause brown lung disease, fill the air. The

dampness that is so useful in preserving thread, causes rheumatism and arthritis among the workers." But a magazine which described the plight of the women workers there was banned. It published the diary of a worker Min Chong Suk, which narrated, "When we shake the waste threads from the cloths, the whole room fills with dust and it is hard to breathe. Since we have been working in such dusty air, there have been increasing numbers of people getting tuberculosis, bronchitis and eye disease .. it makes us so sad when we have pale, unhealthy, wrinkled faces like dried-up spinach .. It seems to me that no one knows our blood dissolve into the threads and seams, with sighs and sorrows." (Ibid)

Now the new labour law that sparked off such protests of the people in South Korea, leaves the workers entirely at the mercy of the employers, it allows the latter to increase working hours unilaterally, lay off workers, hire

[The workers of South Korea waged valiant struggle against the despotic regime of South Korea for promulgating an out and out anti-worker labour law which exposes the real face of this "Asian tiger". This struggle is an example to the Indian people who are being exposed to the policy of globalisation and liberalisation . We regret the delay in publishing the article— Ed. P. Ero]

temporary workers and replace strikers.. The law also bans more than one union at a workplace. Thus by making the unions, except the government or management-backed ones, illegal it is aimed at arresting any resistance at the same time.

Though the Kim Young-sam Government had failed to get the anti-union labour law passed in parliament, due to the stiff resistance put up by the Opposition, it did so by the backdoor. The ruling party MPs met in secret in the National Assembly before dawn and in absence of the Opposition voted for the labour bill after debate that lasted only a few minutes. At the same time another law, among others, was passed which further strengthens the powers of the dreaded Agency of the National Security Planning (NSP) used for the suppression of dissent and opposition. But for the South Korean regime such utter violation of all democratic norms and rules is nothing new. Such are the methods of democratic rule resorted to by this regime, as also by earlier ones, for the enactment of anti-people laws, including the notorious National Security Law (NSL) introduced and frequently revised by the ruling clique starting with Sygman Rhee as a legal means for maintenance of the successive ultra rightist, anti-communist and pro-US regimes, against the will of the people and trampling underfoot civil liberties and democratic rights. Every revision of the NSL, and there have been many in the course of time, has provided ever more sweeping powers to the ruling regime to incarcerate for life and condemn to death people bringing ever more types of 'offences', under its purview and lacing it with ambiguities that can be interpreted to fit any need. The NSL denies the right to freedom of expression, belief, democratic activities such as petition and criticism to the government, leave alone peaceful demonstration, etc. Among

others it calls north Korea an "anti-state body" and warns those who praise, encourage and sympathise with north Korea or give benefits to it, or communicate and contact with north Koreans, and those who "produce, purchase, copy, possess, transport, circulate, sell and receive"... "enemy benefiting publications shall be sentenced to death penalty or life imprisonment. And this National Security Law has been applied by the Kim Young-sam government even against the demands of workers and peasants for democracy and the right of existence, branding the struggle of unionists and workers for democratic freedom and rights as an "enemy benefiting act for overthrow of the government", arresting and punishing in this context more than 28,000 people alone between 1993 and 1994. Similarly, the struggle of the peasants and other people against the rice market opening was also brutally suppressed as a "violence endangering the national existence" (according to the National Democratic Front of South Korea) And it is by painting a rosy picture of prosperity and glossing over abject poverty and such worst violations of human rights, and people's interests that the advocates of liberalization in our country, try to befool the people and get them to docilely accept their increasing exploitation in pursuit of a Fate Morgana.

And it is in this background, in such a restrictive atmosphere, and oppressive conditions in South Korea braving all threats and odds, that the Trade Unions, such as the Korea Confederation of Trade Union (KCTU) have built up nationwide resistance to the new labour law, despite the fact that the new law makes them open to persecution and penalties for doing so. For the KCTU, which has reportedly a wide acceptability among the workers, and which was to have become legal this year will thus remain illegal. But despite all the powers and preparations of the state for the most ruthless fascist suppression of dissent to the enactment of the labour law, people in unique firmness and unity went ahead with demonstrations, solidarity marches and strikes for more than a month. Nothing could dampen the spirit of the people. Huge demonstrations in major cities of the country following the promulgation of the law were dispersed in sub-zero temperatures with teargas and watercannons, and workers, including white collar workers and students clashed with riot police. As they went to deliver a petition for withdrawal of both the labour and the new NSP law to President Kim Young-sam, 11 representatives of the Confederation of Trade Union (KCTU) were arrested. Summons and threats of arrest were issued against over 200 leaders of the KCTU. Undismayed, they took shelter on the ground of a Cathedral from where they continued their activities, Nor could signs of imminent crackdown, with uniformed police checking the identification papers of demonstrators dampen the spirit of the people. Even the government recognized or backed Korea Federation of Trade Union joined in the strikes, and white collar workers at government-backed research institutes and industry, associations joined in under the banner of the Korea Federation of Professional and

(Contd. on page 8)

Recall the teachings of Stalin

(Contd. from page 2)

already we become reckless. Another two or three big successes and already we become conceited, we expect a "walk-over"! But the mistakes remain, the defects continue to exist, the ulcers are driven inwards into the organism of the Party and the Party begins to sicken.

A second shortcoming. It consists in introducing administrative methods in the Party, in replacing the method of persuasion, which is of decisive importance for the Party, by the method of administration. This shortcoming is a danger no less serious than the first one. Why? Because it creates the danger of our Party organisations, which are independently acting organisations, being converted into mere bureaucratic institutions. If we take into account that we have not less than 60,000 of the most active officials distributed among all sorts of economic, co-operative and state institutions, where they are fighting bureaucracy it must be admitted that some of them, while fighting bureaucracy in those institutions, sometimes become infected with bureaucracy themselves and carry that infection into the Party organisation. And this is not our fault, comrades, but our misfortune, for that process will continue to a greater or lesser degree as long as the state exists. And precisely because that process has some roots in life, we must arm ourselves for the struggle against this shortcoming, we must raise the activity of the mass of the Party membership, draw them into the decision of questions concerning our Party leadership, systematically implant inner-Party democracy and prevent the method of persuasion in our Party practice being replaced by the method of administration.

A third shortcoming. This consists in the desire of a number of our comrades to swim with the stream, smoothly and calmly, without perspective, without looking into the future, in such a way that a festive and holiday atmosphere should be felt all around, that we should have celebration meetings every day, with applause everywhere, and that all of us should be elected in turn as honorary members of all sorts of presidiums. ...

Now it is this irresistible desire to see a festive atmosphere everywhere, this longing for decoration, for all sorts of anniversaries, necessary and unnecessary, this desire to swim with the stream without noticing where it is taking us ... - it is all this that forms the substance of the third shortcoming in our Party practice, the basis of the defects in our Party life. Have you seen boatmen, rowing conscientiously, in the sweat of their brows, but not seeing where the current is carrying them? I have seen such boatmen on the Yenisei. They are honest and tireless boatmen. But the trouble is that they do not see, and refuse to see, that the current may carry them against the rocks, where doom awaits them.

The same thing happens to some of our comrades. They row conscientiously, without stopping, their boat floats smoothly with the stream, only they do not know where it is taking them, and they do not even want to know. Working without perspective, floating without sail or rudder — that is what the desire to swim with the stream necessarily leads to.

And the results? The results are obvious: first they become coated with mould, then they become drab, after that they sink into the

quagmire of philistinism and subsequently turn into regular philistines. That is the path of real degeneration.

There you have, comrades, some of the shortcomings in our Party practice and in our Party life, about which I wanted to say a few bitter words to you.

And now permit me to pass to questions connected with the discussion and our so-called opposition.

... The Results of the Discussion

Is there any sense, any value in a Party discussion?

Sometimes people say: Why on earth was this discussion started, what good is it to anyone, would it not have been better to settle the disputed questions privately, without washing dirty linen in public? That is wrong, comrades. Sometimes a discussion is absolutely necessary, and indubitably useful. The whole point is — what kind of discussion? If the discussion is conducted within comradely limits, within Party limits, if its object is honest self-criticism, criticism of shortcomings in the Party, if, therefore, it improves our work and arms the working class, then such a discussion is necessary and useful.

But there is another kind of discussion, the object of which is not to improve our common work but to worsen it; not to strengthen the Party, but to disintegrate and discredit it. Such a discussion usually leads not to the arming, but to the disarming of the proletariat. Such a discussion we do not need....

When the opposition demanded an all-Union discussion about three months before the congress, before the Central Committee's theses had been drawn up, before the publication of those theses, it tried to thrust upon us the kind of discussion that would inevitably have facilitated the task of our enemies, the task of the enemies of the working class, the task of the enemies of our Party. That was precisely the reason why the Central Committee opposed the opposition's plans. And it is precisely because it opposed the opposition's plans that we succeeded in placing the discussion on the right lines by giving it a basis in the shape of the Central Committee's theses for the congress. Now we can say without hesitation that, on the whole, the discussion has been a gain.

As regards washing dirty linen in public, that is nonsense, comrades. We have never been, and never will be, afraid of openly criticising ourselves and our mistakes before the whole Party. The strength of Bolshevism is precisely that it is not afraid of criticism and that, in criticising its defects, it acquires the energy for making further progress. Thus, the present discussion is a sign of our Party's strength, a sign of its might.

It must not be forgotten that in every big party, especially a party like ours, which is in power, and which contains a certain proportion of peasants and civil servants, there accumulate in the course of a certain time some elements who are indifferent to questions of Party practice, who vote blindly and swim with the stream. The presence of a large number of these elements is an evil which must be combated. These elements constitute the marsh in our Party.

A discussion is an appeal to this marsh. The oppositionists appeal to it in order to win over some part of it. And they do indeed win over its

worst part. The Party appeals to it in order to win over its best part, to draw it into active Party life. As a result, the marsh is compelled to exercise self-determination in spite of all its inertia. And it does indeed exercise self-determination as a result of these appeals by giving up one section of its ranks to the opposition and another to the Party, thus ceasing to exist as a marsh. In the general balance-sheet of our Party development this is an asset. As a result of our present discussion, the marsh has diminished; it has wholly ceased, or is ceasing, to exist. Herein lies the advantage of the discussion.

The results of the discussion? The results are known. Up to yesterday, it turns out, 724,000 comrades voted for the Party and a little over 4,000 voted for the opposition. Such are the results. Our oppositionists thundered that the Central Committee had become divorced from the Party, that the Party had become divorced from the class, that if "ifs" and "ans" were pots and pans they, the oppositionists, would certainly have had 99 per cent on their side. But since "ifs" and "ans" are not pots and pans, it turns out that the opposition has not even one per cent. Such are the results.

How could it happen that the Party as a whole, and after it the working class as well, so thoroughly isolated the opposition? After all, the opposition is headed by well-known people with well-known names, people who know how to advertise themselves ... people who are not afflicted with modesty ... and who are able to blow their own trumpets, to make the most of their wares.

It happened because the leading group of the opposition proved to be a group of petty-bourgeois intellectuals divorced from life, divorced from the revolution, divorced from the Party, from the working class....

A little while ago I spoke about the successes we have achieved in our work, about our achievements in the sphere of industry, in the sphere of trade, in the sphere of our economy as a whole, and in the sphere of foreign policy. But the opposition is not concerned with those achievements. It does not see, or does not wish to see them. It does not wish to see them partly because of its ignorance and partly because of the obstinacy characteristic of intellectuals who are divorced from life.

(Excerpts from the speech at the 15th Congress of CPSU)

Declaration

Statement about ownership and other particulars about newspaper PROLETARIAN ERA to be published in the first issue after last days of February.
From IV (See Rule 8)

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Name and address of individuals who own the newspaper and partners or shareholders holding more than one per cent of the total capital :

CENTRAL COMMITTEE

SOCIALIST UNITY CENTRE OF INDIA

I, Sukomal Dasgupta hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

5.3.1997

Sd : SUKOMAL DASGUPTA
Signature of Publisher

UTUC-LS Condemns Repression on Haryana government employees

Comrade Tapas Dutta, All India General Secretary of UTUC(Lenin Sarani) issued the following statement on 21.2.97:

No word is strong enough to condemn the state repression that has been let loose by the Government of Haryana on its own employees who are on strike with effect from 16.12.96 on the demands of getting their monthly salary through government treasury, etc. 5,000 people are reportedly behind the bars and some hundreds have been dismissed.

We urge the government to stop repressive activities, release all the imprisoned, re-instate all the dismissed and concede to the legitimate demands of the agitating employees. While extending our firm support to the on-going struggle, we call upon all the central trade unions as well as the government employees of the country to stand unitedly in support of the striking employees of Haryana.

Life in Russia

(Contd. from page 5)

they do not return homes before sunset. In fact, even the enthusiastic young votaries of the new system become defensive when talking about the law and order. "Now I am scared walking down from the Metro Station to my flat in the evening, whereas earlier I felt safe no matter how late it was," says Svetlana, the teenage daughter of a journalist. Yet nobody — not even those who missed the protective cloak provided by the communist regime — wants the old system to be restored in the same form. It is universally acknowledged that there is no turning the clock back. Everyone agrees that reforms, both economic and political, were needed but opinion is divided on whether this was the way to go about it.

The 50 plus generation and the less starry-eyed among the youth, however, question the manner in which the changes have been sought to be introduced. They feel that the pro-reform lobby while embarking on the changes was not clear about the direction in which it was taking the country and blamed Mr Mikhail Gorbachev for letting things drift after initiating the process of perestroika.

In fact, Mr Gorbachev is detested, in almost equal measure, both by pro-changers and conservatives. The former blame him for "betraying" the 1990-91 "Revolution" and the latter for rushing into things without deliberating on the consequences. Nobody mentions his name in Moscow without smirking, though for different reasons.

The question "What is to be done?", which Russians answer so emphatically many years ago, is haunting them again, but with no Lenin around this time answers are not easy to come by.

From all accounts, the average Russian appears resigned to a long period of confusion and those who survive it can hope for a new deal. But how many would survive and what kind of a



Sri K. E. Mammen, the veteran Freedom fighter is addressing the picketers before the Secretariat in Trivandrum

Picketing and courting of arrests in Kerala against Electricity charge increase

The LDF Government in Kerala immediately after assuming power in Kerala steeply increased bus and boat fares. Now, from the month of February 1997, electricity charges have been hiked by 26% not because the KSEB is in loss, but in order to please the World Bank and avail further huge loans by showing the required rates of profit as described by World Bank.

SUCI workers instantly came out in the street protesting against the latest anti-people move by conducting torch-lit demonstrations, protest marches and innumerable street corner meetings and propaganda squads. February 11 had been declared 'Civil Disobedience Day' in protest against electricity charge increase and unbearable price rise in general. On that day, picketing and courting of arrests by hundreds of SUCI activists took place throughout Kerala.

In Trivandrum, picketing was done in front of the Secretariat. Comrade A Jalaluddin, member State Secretariat, SUCI and President, UTUC(L-S), Kerala State Committee, inaugurated the picketing. Notable thing occurred in this picketing. Veteran freedom fighter Sri K.E. Mammen was viewing the enthusiastic protest programme of the SUCI volunteers. Inspired by it, he joined with the comrades in the picketing and himself courted arrest along with our party comrades. Before courting arrest, he made a fervent speech. He said, "Pretending to be pro-people and coming to governmental power, the Nayanar Ministry is following the same old footsteps of previous anti-people Congress(I) governments. Building up people's own instruments of struggle is the only way out."

In the district headquarters of Quilon, Alleppy, Kottayam, Idukky, Ernakulum, Trichur,

new deal is waiting for them at the end of the tunnel is a big question. (Source: The Hindu, 2.10.96.)

Kozikode and Kannur also picketing was also held attracting tremendous people's support.

Heroic Movement in South Korea

(Contd from page 6)

Technicians Unions. Thus wave upon wave of strikes almost brought the country to a halt. While work at shipyards and automobile plants ground to a total halt, other major industries such as chemical, mining, textile and metal industries were severely affected. Even service sector and public sector companies strike was resorted to selectively, including subways, hospitals, telecom, bank unions, television broadcasters, port, bus and taxi drivers, etc. For several weeks, hundreds and hundreds of thousands of workers, intellectuals and students have kept to the streets demonstrating their well organised opposition to these new black labour laws. It is only when the government in the face of such organised protest, solidarity and unity of the people was forced to backtrack and promised to review the labour Bill in parliament, and revoked the threat of arrest of union leaders, that the TUs toned down the workers' protest to once a week strikes and demonstrations, demanding complete scrapping of the labour bill. However, after the collapse of the country's second largest steel-maker the Hanbo Co under a mountain of debt worth \$5.8 bn, (a pointer to the huge corruption) the KCTU announced that in view of the economic turmoil, it would hold rallies in place of weekly strikes till February 18, when it plans to resume strikes and demonstrations not only in full force but on an intensified scale if their demands were not met by that date.

The valiant struggle of the toiling people, intellectuals and students of South Korea have provided inspiration to the people everywhere.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF : NIHAR MUKHERJEE