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Petroleum Price Hike

A BLOW TO PEOPLE'S LIFE

Putting an end to almost a six-month old comic drama played by the CPI(M)-led 'Lefts' and the Union Finance Minister and his cohorts in the United Front (UF) policy making body, in Steering Committee meetings, the Prime Minister, Mr I K Gujral stepped in to announce a steep hike of petrol and petroleum products with effect from 1-2 September midnight, 1997. Within a space of 18 months, the Central UF Government has, for the second time, resorted to massive hike of prices of petroleum products with the covert support of the CPI(M)-led lefts. The prices (excluding state's taxes) of petrol went up by Re.1 per litre, of diesel by Re.1.80 per litre; and of cooking gas by Rs.15 per cylinder. The figures of retail prices for the three items of petroleum

products, in the capital, Delhi, for example, have reached Rs.22.84 (a rise of 5%) per litre in case of petrol; Rs.10.34 (a rise of 27% per litre) in case of diesel; and Rs.135.95 (a rise of 12% per cylinder) for LPG.

According to the Petroleum Ministry the measures adopted are of "painless surgery". The decisions are to annually provide an additional revenue of Rs.9,729 crores a year, giving a Rs.1800 crore surplus per annum in the Oil Pool Account. On the other hand, the total accrual to the Oil Pool Account on account of the price rise would be of a staggering amount of Rs.11,207 core on an annualised basis, the Ministry sources added.

While flaying steep hike in prices of

petroleum products, the General Secretary of the SUCI Comrade Nihar Mukherjee, said: "This drastic increase, apart from its direct effect, will further spurt the prices of all essential commodities, causing greater hardship to the common people". Does not this heinous act of post-budget mopping up operation for raising revenues make a complete mockery of the UF Government's declaration on Common Minimum Programme (CMP), emphasizing "frontal attack on poverty as an important element in its development policy"? For is it not a fact that as

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Central Committee on Train Disaster in M.P.

Expressing deep sorrow on the incident of train accident in M.P., the Central Committee of the SUCI issued the following statement to the press on 15.9.97 :

"The accident of the Dn. Ahmedabad-Howrah Express that occurred on 14th September, reveals again the utter callousness of the rail authority. We demand a judicial enquiry into the accident and exemplary punishment of the persons involved and adequate compensation for the dead and the injured immediately.

We express our deep sorrow and sympathy for the bereaved families."

Preplanned Police Brutality on Mass Rally in Calcutta

Police brutally lathicharged and showered teargas shells on the massive peaceful demonstration at Esplanade East, Calcutta on 19 September when over 10,000 people violated law under the banner of the SUCI. The programme of violation of law was held in protest against burning problems like hike in prices of petroleum products, price rise of essential commodities, globalisation-privatisation, joblessness and retrenchment, soaring rise of electricity charges, tenancy bill, corruption at high places, abolition of English and of pass-fail system at primary stage, etc. The huge, fervent procession became trapped in a narrow passage within two solid walls of buses stationed by the police. While the narrow passage was overflowing with people, the police started all of a sudden to lathicharge the demonstrators and showered teargas shells on the thick of the crowd. From there police brutality spread over a large area attacking people even at the most unexpected spots.

People then were compelled to resist resulting in a tussle with the police. Police at the Calcutta Medical College, which is far from Esplanade East, arrested the injured and the comrades attending to them and also some common people, and that too 3/4 hours after the law violation.

The police opposed bail of those arrested from the Calcutta Medical College, who are remanded in custody for over one and half month. Police is

harassing the political workers and people, with the ulterior motive of spreading terror so that no movement can develop against fare rise in Left Front ruled West Bengal.

This has been severely condemned by common people, who have pledged to carry on the movement till their demands are met.



Waves of people violating law in Calcutta on 19th September '97

Petroleum Price Hike

CPI (M)'s Ploy to Hoodwink the People

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a chain reaction to this drastic rise in prices, the prices of all essential commodities would receive further spurt hitting hard the common people? One shudders to think of the fate of those hapless millions already below the poverty line, constituting more than 50% of the total population, and who are most affected by it. This frontal attack on the people, for the second time in quick succession by the UF Government, on the pretext of 'deficits' on oil front, prove to the hilt that the UF government is carrying on with the hated Congress policies and measures, to bring about this frontal attack on the people!

As was to be expected, the Congress led by Sitaram Kesri has come out into the fray of distributing protest declaration against this price-hike! Being out of governmental power directly, the Congress is in mere positional contradiction with the Central UF Government. Keeping their eyes fixed on the elections round the corner, it comes out with occasional feigned opposition to some of the decisions of the present UF government. More importantly, with the induction of Mr I K Gujral as Prime Minister, he does not move an inch on all crucial issues against the wishes of the Congress president Mr Kesri. Naturally, the same holds true regarding the decision of hike in oil prices. Despite this well-known fact, why this seeming opposition by the Congress? The answer is not far off to seek: the Congress took a leaf out of the same book that used to be invoked by the CPI(M) to deceive the people by such crafty means.

The BJP is also out in the fray to reap dividend. Otherwise, as a main opposition party in the Lok Sabha, if it really meant business, especially when it also holds the reigns of power in Delhi, Rajasthan alone, and jointly with Shiv Sena in Maharashtra; with Akalis in Punjab and with BSP in U.P., surely it could have set timely pressure on the Gujral government at the Centre to stall such a perilous decision at all. But that won't be since its opposition to price hike in petroleum products is merely for show. More than that, in Maharashtra, the BJP in league with Shiv Sena, has brought about record hike in public transport fares the other day. It is thus crystal clear that parading of such gimmicks by the ruling parliamentary parties are quite natural inasmuch as the monopoly houses and agencies of corporate sector who enthusiastically welcomed this massive hike of oil price are, themselves the patrons of the BJP, too, like those of the Congress, CPI(M) and CPI, etc.

But the bankruptcy and the double-talk opportunist politics of the CPI(M) found its shameless manifestation over this much debated oil price hike issue. As a matter of fact, since the talk of hike in oil prices began catching headlines in the media, the CPI(M) has gone propagating in the press and other media too, against any rise in prices of petroleum products. Not satisfied with it, their polite buro member Mr Sitaram Yechuri in the very first meeting of the UF's Steering Committee meeting, presented a "cogent alternative" to explode the "no alternative myth of glib tongue" Finance Minister Mr Chidambaram and his ilk. But all their tall talk and publicity glare in the media ended in a fiasco as soon as the announcement of oil price hike came from the

Prime Minister. Rather, in a volte face, they became engrossed in effecting transport fare rises in public transport in West Bengal where they hold the reigns of power for the last 20 years. People in their bewilderment observed in anguish that all their rhetorics come to an end with some routine exercises in street corner meetings here and there accompanied with distribution of some protest statements for consumption of the press. Surprisingly enough, in the neighbouring state of Orissa, the CPI(M) came out in vehement opposition to the fare hike in public transport. Rightly so, but why this double standard? Is it not hypocrisy, par excellence! And lo! Their boastful exhortation, over the underlying issue of price hike in oil prices by the UF government in their central English organ, *People's Democracy*, dated June 1, it "highlighted the fundamental clash of class interests that lay behind the Government's (central UF government supported by the CPI(M) itself. — Ed.) intention of hiking the petroleum prices". It is indeed a clash of class interests, there is no doubt about it. But the moot question is: In the interest of which class the CPI(M) takes objective stand? Let us just have a glimpse of that. Immediately after the announcement of oil price hike, the CPI(M)-led L.F. Government in West Bengal, on their own, came out in the press with handy justification to enhance the fare hike in public transport. As a matter of fact, even before the owning class of private transport could come up with any demand of rise in existing fare structure in the state, the CPI(M)-led L.F. government unilaterally began hobnobbing with the private owners of surface and river transports in bi-partite meetings, to explore, perhaps, the "painless surgery" in price hike of public transports in the state. The intelligent reader is sure to draw apt conclusion out of it. When already CPI(M)-ruled West Bengal ranks next only to Maharashtra with the reign of power by the BJP-Shiv Sena combine, as is apparent from the existing comparison in fare structure of public transport in terms of fares per km. in different states, the fare hike in public transports already announced by the LF government today (30.9.97) will surely lead all the rest.

In justification of bringing in hike in petroleum products, the UF government's Finance Minister, who holds strong brief for its price increase, has adduced his newer argument thus: The government was forced to take the decision of oil price rise following growing oil pool deficits which stood at Rs.18,000 crore in June, would assume Rs.22,000 crore as on March-end, 1997-98. Increase in deficits has been @ Rs.32 crore a day. The national economy has not amassed that much of strength to manage such huge deficits piled up year after year. Hence, according to him, having no other courses left, increase in prices of oil products has become inevitable. This is the crux of his logic to square up the staggering deficits in Oil Pool Account.

One pertinent question is sure to arise: when government itself describes this price hike as "painless surgery", meaning thereby the burden of taxes to be 'feather-light', why then are they so eager to spare the corporate sector from "this painless surgery" in the case of LPG? Now let us see how far the contention of the Government is

true and what is this Oil Pool Account?

The Oil Pool Account was created in 1975 in the aftermath of massive hike in oil prices by the OPEC in 1973, especially designed to supply oil and other oil products at uniform rates throughout the country (excluding levies, surcharges fleeced by state governments). Besides, an arrangement of providing subsidies to any item of oil products in lieu of compensation to Oil Pool A/c came in vogue along with it. Indeed, the Oil Pool A/c was set up as a separate fund, separate from other budgetary revenues, precisely to allow such measures, which would insulate the country from such sudden shocks as it experienced in 1973 and 1979-80.

In abject disregard to their own making, successive Congress governments not excluding the N.F. Government at the Centre, had long been going in for "Cross-subsidization", i.e. within the petroleum products-mix some items began to be over priced to finance the under pricing of others. Petrol and aviation fuel, as for example is overpriced while diesel, kerosene and LPG are under-priced. Evidence suggests, between 1975 and 1989, income in Oil Pool Account always exceeded expenditure. Still then, on some pretext or other, price-hike in oil and allied products had been brought forth by the then Congress government. As of March 31, 1989, this Oil Pool Account had a surplus of Rs.8,900 crore. Surprisingly enough, despite this surplus, the then Congress Government neither did reduce the prices of oil products although internationally oil prices had fallen steeply, nor did it then refrain from additionally taxing oil products to garner huge incomes out of these essential items of modern economy. From 1990 onwards, expenditure began to exceed the income as a result of totally flouting the principle of Oil Account stated earlier, mainly to cover up budgetary deficits out of this account and sundry other diversionary tactics, which issue no other parliamentary parties including the CPI(M) ever raised in the Lok Sabha. Had these sums not been withdrawn through manipulative exercises but kept in the Oil Pool Account, they could have now grown to the point where they could have funded the entire deficit around an astronomical figure of Rs.24,500 crore by the end of March 31, 1998, as of now told to us.

From the findings cited above, it becomes incumbent on us to trace the circumstances which led to the present perilous turn for the Oil Pool A/c vis-a-vis the fall out of growing import of oil products, including the crude oil. The policy pursued by the successive governments at the Centre for development of indigenous extraction of newer oil fields also calls for critical review in this regard. Knowledgeable circles know very well that the policy of expanding the activities of ONGC to specially explore newer oil fields led to discovery of large oil fields offshore in Bombay High in 1970s. As a result of this unfolding opportunities the domestic oil production could meet about 70% of country's oil needs by the end of '70's (Source: *EPW*-20.7.96).

For, before Bombay oil started flowing in, India imported 16.2 million tonnes of crude oil and 7.3 million tonnes of petro-products. Between '80 and '86, domestic production of crude oil rose

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A Critique of Harkishen Singh Surjeet's

"Twenty Years of LF Govt. in West Bengal"

In *People's Democracy*, the weekly organ of the CPI(M), published on June 22, 1997, Mr Harkishen Singh Surjeet, the General Secretary of the CPI(M), wrote an article under the caption "Twenty Years of Left Front Government in West Bengal". In the said article he recalled, "The political developments that finally culminated in the formation of the Left Front, the achievement of the L.F. Government, and also its limitations." He mentioned the limitations of, "a government working within the bourgeois-landlord order" and "the constraints of the Indian Constitution". He claimed that "influence and strength of the left has increased considerably" and this, according to him, is due to "service rendered by the Left Front Government to the people of the State through measures aimed at improving the lot of the working class, peasantry, employees, and other sections of the toiling people." Mr Surjeet also boasted of maintaining communal harmony and peace in the State of West Bengal during the Left Front government rule.

As for our party, the SUCI, we are quite conscious of the limitations of a government working within this exploitative capitalist order and also within the constraints of the Indian Constitution. But even working within these handicaps how should a truly left and pro-people government conduct the administration? We know that no basic and fundamental change can be brought about within the limitations as mentioned above. But a government run by a party having correct Marxist understanding, cannot work as a caretaker of this existing exploitative system. But how are we to distinguish a truly left and pro-people government from that run by the others? Surely, the quantum of reforms can never be the yardstick to judge this question, because the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties also bring some reforms for the people, when in governmental power, in the parliamentary interests. Naturally it is the attitude to the democratic mass movements that differentiate a truly left and pro-people government from the governments run by others. To be precise, it is nothing but the attitude towards legitimate democratic mass movement that is of utmost importance. In this context, let us recall how Comrade Subodh Banerjee, the then Labour Minister of 1967 UF Government implemented the policy accepted by the UF government, as formulated by Comrade Shibdas Ghosh, the founder General Secretary of our party — the policy of non-interference of police in legitimate democratic mass movements with the aim of promoting legitimate democratic mass movements. The police was then clearly instructed not to interfere in any such movements. This policy tremendously boosted the trade union and other mass movements and the people tasted for the first time their democratic rights.

But what is the attitude of the present Left Front government towards the democratic mass movement during its twenty years' rule? Is it not a fact that let alone encouraging the legitimate democratic mass movement, the Left Front government has crushed and is crushing all legitimate democratic movements with the help of police and the cadres of the CPI(M)? Was not the anti-bus fare hike movement in 1983 a democratic one? But the police shot dead two of our comrades in Purulia. Comrade Madhai Halder was shot dead

on 31st August 1990 to quell movement on burning problems of people's life. Hundreds of our comrades were also maimed. Even this issue carries news of brutality of the police on our comrades who violated law against hiking prices of petroleum products, and for introduction of English at the primary level, among others.

Was not the junior doctors' movement a democratic one? But the Left Front government deployed the police against this movement. How brutally the refugees were evicted from Marichjhapi area by the Left Front government bears testimony of its utter anti-people character. So is the case of hawkers in the streets of Calcutta. By deploying a large posse of police contingent and the CPI(M) cadres, this Left Front government most brutally evicted thousands of hawkers with the help of bulldozers and payloaders. The trade union movements of Kanoria and Gouri Shankar Jute Mills were brutally crushed by the police, and Vikari Paswan, a jute mill worker, was picked up by the police, and he is reported to be murdered and his body thrown away. Can it be imagined even from a democratic government, not to speak of a left one?

Even if the question of attitude towards democratic mass movement is kept aside what has this government done for the people? After coming to power in West Bengal the CPI(M) has been promoting the politics of distribution of largess and by this politics the people of the state, once the citadel of left democratic movement of the country, have been largely emasculated. Has this government taken any pro-people measures? What is the condition of the hospitals? How many persons can expect any proper treatment in any hospital without bribing the touts? How many persons can get any job done in government offices without bribing the proper channel? What has the government done to improve the sanitation in hospitals both in rural and urban areas? What measures has the government adopted to control pollution which has already assumed a gigantic magnitude? Mr Surjeet boasts of covering 80% of the rural population under drinking water scheme. But is it not the reality that lakhs of people of most of the South Bengal districts are exposed to arsenic poisoning and this government has shown criminal negligence to them. The conditions of the roads are indeed nightmares. Hundreds of crores of rupees shown as spent for health care, sanitation, repairs and construction of roads and irrigation bundhs are actually gobbled up by the CPI(M) and their henchmen in bureaucracy. Hundreds of thousands of acres of land are annually inundated in Midnapore, Hooghly and in the Sunderbans of South 24-Parganas district as a result of bursting of irrigation bundhs owing to complete lack of maintenance. Corruption is rampant in the administration of the CPI(M) led Left Front Government. It is a total loot-raj. Mr Surjeet has boasted of decentralization of administration through panchayat. But what has actually been decentralized is corruption. Through the panchayats corruption has been virtually brought to the doorsteps of every rural households.

Had this government been guided by pro-people attitude and had it shown minimum concern for the people it would not have jumped to the idea of hiking the fares of public transport as soon as hike in prices of petroleum products was

announced. In Chennai, a minimum fare of public transport was increased from 75 paise to Re.1, which in Calcutta is already Rs. 1.25, though the price of diesel was more than what is prevalent in West Bengal. Yet, this Left Front government is indulging in false propaganda that the public transport charges in Calcutta are minimum in the country. Is it leftism? Does this government feel any concern for the people? This government is increasing the electricity charges abnormally. It is abnormally increasing the prices of milk without caring a whit for the children, the sick and the old. Yet Mr Surjeet claims, the Left Front government in West Bengal has commendable achievements to its credit!

Mr Surjeet boasts of Land Reforms in West Bengal. Propaganda blasts by the Left Front government on land reforms has been piercing the ears. Those who are not acquainted with the ground realities might be impressed by such loud claims. But what is the reality? It is a fact that considerable amount of land was recovered during the UF regime in 1967 and 1969 through militant peasant movements. But during the subsequent Congress rule a portion of that recovered land was again taken away by the rich peasants. During the last twenty years of Left Front rule hardly any *benam* land has been recovered despite subsequent lowering of ceiling on land holdings. *Benam* land cannot be recovered by administrative fiats alone. It is possible only being backed by militant peasants' movements with clear perspective. But instead of encouraging militant peasants' movement involving the poor and the marginal farmers, the middle peasants and the landless peasants, the CPI(M) is hobnobbing with jotedars in the rural areas, who are in actual possession of *benam* land. The concentration of land in the hands of the jotedars has been increasing and the rate of increase of landless peasants has been more accentuated during the rule of the Left Front government. The landless peasants who cannot find an job in rural areas are now beggars on the streets of Calcutta, living in inhuman condition in the burgeoning shanties and on the footpath amidst filth and squalor in the metropolis. The condition of the marginal farmers and the middle peasants has not changed a whit from what it was during the Congress rule. They do not get fair price for the produce like potato, jute, etc., since the middleman rules the roost as before. What is the real achievement of the Left Front government is that whereas during the Congress rule the people were vocal against the injustices, during its twenty years' rule the people have been lulled into silence by its waving the red flag.

In the field of education this Left Front government has brought total chaos. The campuses in West Bengal are in total disarray. Corruption like leakage of question papers, manipulation of mark-sheets, etc., are regular phenomenon. Incomplete result-sheets seal the fate of thousands of students. The answer scripts are lost in hundreds every year. The students union election in every institution is rigged and manipulated by the CPI(M) in league with their chosen men inducted in that institution and among the teaching staff of the institutions. The other day the Education Minister openly declared that 25,000 students who passed the Madhyamik examination could not be admitted because there

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CPI (M) Rule in West Bengal has Shattered the Struggling Heritage of the People

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was no berth for them in the higher secondary classes. There is no building for many a primary school. This government is now embarking on privatization of education. The new Education Policy as enunciated by late Rajiv Gandhi has not been basically contradicted by the Left Front government. When Mr Surjeet claims that this Left Front government made education free up to Class XII, the reality is that this government is trying to shirk all responsibilities regarding education. This government is making ridiculous claim on the question of literacy. After gobbling up crores of rupees allotted for literacy campaign, the CPI(M) is declaring one district after another as literate despite the fact that this is far from truth. What the Left Front government did in the field of education is that after coming to power it disbanded all the democratically elected bodies of the educational institutions, and its chosen men were inducted. Besides all these misdeeds, this government has banished English at the primary stage and introduced no detention policy up to that level. So English medium schools are mushrooming in the state including at the remotest rural areas. Thus class division in education is complete — one for the poor and the other for the upper middle class and the rich. The standard of education has sharply fallen from what it was even during the Congress rule.

What is the employment situation in the state? Is it not a fact that hundreds of thousands of workers are rendered jobless owing to closures and lock-outs in industries? Is it not a fact, there are innumerable suicides and starvation deaths among workers of closed and locked-out factories? But what steps has this government taken to reopen these factories? The employers have misappropriated crores of rupees of workers' provident fund and ESI contributions. Has this government apprehended a single employer on this count? Mr Jyoti Basu, the Chief Minister of West Bengal, is often seen taking the brief of the employers when he argues: Why will the employer establish factories if he does not make profit — but the employer should also see that he does not exploit the workers. The Congress failed to mislead the workers. But by waving the red flag the CPI(M) is doing what the Congress failed to do. As a result of crushing of trade union movement and emasculating the workers with the help of the CPI(M) controlled trade unions, a new feature is discernible in the trade union movement in West Bengal. Of late, bi-partite and tri-partite negotiations are often conducted not on the basis of workers' charter of demands but on the basis of owners' charter of conditions.

On the question of communal harmony and peace, it is to be remembered that West Bengal has a long tradition of democratic movement and so communalism and casteism could not raise their ugly heads. But what do we see during the Left Front rule? Communal riots broke out in Purulia and Nadia districts of West Bengal during Advani's Ramaratha Yatra. Murshidabad district also witnessed communal riot on Katra Masjid issue and Calcutta witnessed a violent communal flare up in the aftermath of the destruction of the Babari Masjid. The complicity of the CPI(M) besides other bourgeois parties in these disturbances for gaining political mileage came to light. The only

way to contain communalism is to release democratic mass movements. But instead of doing that the CPI(M) is hobnobbing with the Congress to keep the BJP out of governmental power. Because of this policy of crushing the democratic mass movements, the communal parties are gaining, as is evident from the increase in percentage of votes polled by the BJP or by the minority parties in West Bengal. It is known that the branded bourgeois parties use the communal or casteist cards to keep the people divided against the exploiting class on one hand and to have electoral gains on the other. The CPI(M) under the garb of pro-people vocabulary hardly lags behind in this game.

Now, is the victory of CPI(M) in election achieved due to correctness of its policies? But are not the election results determined, in the main, by money power, muscle power and the media power? If the correctness of the policy is the cause of electoral victory is it then to be presumed that the policy of the Congress or the BJP which gains electoral victory in a particular state is correct in that state? Or, conversely in states where the CPI(M) loses, is its policy incorrect in those states? These arguments are indeed ridiculous.

Again, formation of the Left Front government was no product of any struggle. After the Emergency when the Assembly elections were due, the CPI(M) tried its utmost to come to an understanding with the Janata Party and even conceded more than 50% seats to it when Morarji Desai government was at the Centre. But because of the internal squabbles of the Janata Party such an understanding could not be arrived at. In such a situation, the ruling class backed the Left Front

instead of the loosely knit Janata Party or the discredited Congress. So it is clear that the Left Front came to power in West Bengal in 1977 not basing itself mainly on mass support but being backed by the ruling class. After the results came out even the leaders of the CPI(M) expressed that they could not assess previously that they would be showered with such a mass support in the elections! After coming to governmental power, the CPI(M) has built up a powerful rigging machinery and it has been winning the subsequent elections by the most efficient use of this rigging machinery along with the help of the CPI(M)-police-anti-social nexus in the state. By going through the article of Mr Surjeet, one gets an impression that the burning problems in the life of the people can be solved if only the CPI(M) is voted to governmental power. We appeal to that section of the rank-and-file members of the CPI(M) who still cherish the dream of revolution and socialism to ponder seriously whether their leadership is leading them to. By coming to governmental power the CPI(M) which has long since shunned the path of democratic mass movement, is acting, true to its social democratic character, as a compromising force between labour and capital. Because of this role the CPI(M) has earned the confidence of the ruling capitalist class. Is it accidental that the national and international press is full of praises for Mr Jyoti Basu and the CPI(M)-led Left Front government in West Bengal? The Tatas, the Birlas, and the multi-nationals have found the CPI(M) most trustworthy in serving the interest of capitalism. Can these facts be wished away by the rhetorics of the kind Mr Harkishen Singh Surjeet has resorted to?

Turbulent North Bihar protests assault on SUCI leader

With spears, lathis, bows and arrows in one hand, and, clenched fist raised high, tens of thousands of people were demanding punishment of the RJD goons and the police personnel guilty for the assault on SUCI workers and particularly on Comrade Shivsankar, a member of the Bihar State Secretariat of our party. With a thunderous roar and waving red flags and festoons the people were marching in an endless stream towards the Paru Block Development Office, Muzaffarpur. This was the picture of the 'historic rally' as termed by the Bihar press, on 22nd September last

To foil the rally police and administration in consultation with ruling RJD (Rashtriya Janata Dal of Laloo Prasad Yadav) declared 144 CrPc in one kilometer area around the BDO Office of Paru and a contingent of armed police were deployed there. But despite all these attempts on behalf of the police-administration-RJD nexus who were responsible for innumerable incidents of murder, rape, dacoity and molestation in the area, people joined the rally in thousands and attended the meeting at Paru ignoring the prohibitory order in presence of the armed police contingent. The police tried to stop the procession but the people broke all the barriers and pushing aside the police personnel continued their march ahead. It was really a thrilling experience to witness. The police could not fire or even lathi-charge on the mob in fear. The procession turned into a huge meeting near the Paru BDO Office maidan which was presided over by Comrade Shivshankar and was addressed by the

eminent leaders of different parties including Comrades Arun Kr Singh, Baleswar Rasulpuri, Lakhichand Roy, Rampriti Roy (all from SUCI), Mangmilal Mondal (ex-Minister and General Secretary of Janata Dal), Vijendra Yadav (ex-Minister and State Secretary of JD), Ganesh Prasad Yadav (Leader of the JD in the Assembly), Sashi Kr Roy (MLA, JD), Sharadamal (JD), Mina Tiwari (CPI-ML), Umashankar Yadav (CPI), Umesh Prasad Singh (CPI-M), Randev Sharma, ex-MLA & freedom fighter (CPI), Vidya Singh (CPI), Kusheswar Prasad Verma (MCPI), Jawahar Jha (F.Bloc), Bhagyanarayan Roy (SP), Rajeswar Prasad Gupta (SP), Satyanarayan Singh (SJP).

The incident which triggered off such a people's protest took place on 29th August last when Comrade Shivshankar was leading a demonstration at Paru BDO office and RJD hoodlums at the instigation of local RJD MLA pounced upon them. Earlier to this incident, they attacked BJP-Samanta Rally and that of the CPI(ML). They had to retreat in face of such violent attack.

The incident of attack invoked a vigorous protest from all sections of the people and political parties. Nearly 20 political parties including Congress, BJP, Samanta came out openly with their statements to condemn this heinous attack and 17 left and democratic parties chalked out a joint plan of action to resist it. Accordingly, the leaders of these parties met the DM of Muzaffarpur and

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Movement in States

Massive Rally against Petrol-Diesel Price-hike

Baipadiguda, 12.9.97 : A massive rally was organised by the SUCI at Baipadiguda on 11 September against the anti-people price hike of petroleum products from September 2. Two thousand people including 500 women took part in the rally. Tribal peasants, agricultural workers, youths, students and others marched in the procession which passed through the main streets of Baipadiguda town. The procession reached the Block office gate and a public meeting was held there in which youth organizer, Comrade Dhaneswar Majhi presided. Comrade Sadasiva Das, District organizer, SUCI addressed the gathering. Comrade Surya Bisoi Block organizer, Goura Dalai and Pradeep Rai spoke in the meeting. After this a memorandum addressed to the Prime Minister of India was submitted through the BDO demanding withdrawal of the price hike on petroleum products. A separate memorandum was handed over to the BDO containing 12-point charter of demand on people's burning issues.

The BDO accepted the memorandum and assured to take quick steps. The Block office would be gheraoed if the demands were not met in two months, the organizers declared in the meeting.

Rasta Roko Movement Against Petrol-Diesel Price Hike

Malkangiri-Koraput, Orissa, 14.9.97 : Demanding withdrawal of price hike of petroleum products, a rasta roko movement was organized in Malkangiri district by the SUCI on 13 September. People were organised in thousands against this anti-people policy of the central government and raised their voice of protest. At Malkangiri town, Kalimela, MV 79, MV II and Balimela one thousand party supporters made road blockade for hours together. By that vehicular traffic was paralysed. Thousands of people welcomed this movement and they participated in it. While this blockade was going on armed police came and forcibly dragged away the supporters and ultimately arrested them. This movement created emotion throughout the district. Party unit has called upon the people to protest all the anti-people policies and measures of the government in future. The movement was led by Comrades Sadasiva Das, organizer of undivided Koraput District, Broja Majhi, Biswanath Madhi and Bhupesh Karmakar.

Massive Rally at Malkangiri

Malkangiri 7.9.97 : A massive rally was organized by SUCI at Malkangiri on 5 September in which three thousand people including over one thousand women took part. They came from 32 panchayats. Peasants, agricultural workers, tribal workers and youth, all participated in the rally.

A procession, well decorated, marched through the town amidst heavy downpour, and, followed by armed police, reached the collectorate at last. Later on, the processionists converged at a public meeting in the nearby DNK field. Comrade Sadasiva Das, organizer of undivided Koraput District presided over the meeting. Comrade Bisnu Das, member, Orissa State Secretariat, SUCI, addressed the huge gathering. He called upon the people to organize in thousands and develop sustained mass movements against rampant corruption, oppression and exploitation.

While discussing on the above demands the District Collector told the delegates that due to

Comrade Subir Basu Roy Memorial Meeting

Professors, teachers, educationists, students both past and present, non-teaching employees and others who were attracted by the qualities of his character had gathered at Ashutosh College Hall in Calcutta on September 24, to attend the memorial meeting of Comrade Subir Basu Roy under the auspices of the West Bengal State Committee of the SUCI. Party members and supporters had thronged in large number to pay their tribute. There was Prof. Sushil Kumar Mukherjee, former Vice-chancellor of Calcutta University, who sat through with grief-stricken heart and spoke of resolve to carry out the unfinished struggle in which Subir Basu Roy had participated with all his ardour and determination; Prof. Arabinda Nath Basu, former Vice-chancellor of Jadavpur University, who recalled the high qualities of fellow traveller, Subir Basu Roy in the language movement of the eighties; past and present leaders of the West Bengal College and University Teachers' Association, all known for their role in the professors' movements, namely Prof Dilip Chakraborty, Prof Dwijen Banerjee, Prof Gautam Chattopadhyay, Prof Amitosh Chakraborty, Prof Pabitra Gupta, who paid tribute to departed Comrade Basu Roy in voice choked with emotion when they all recalled his rare devotion as a teacher, his role to symbolise the unity in college teachers' movement, his manifold sense of responsibility with which he stood by his charge till his last.

In a calm voice Comrade Menoka Basu Roy briefly recalled how comrade Subir Basu Roy had come in contact with the party, drawing closer to its activity as his sense of obligation came to be shaped in the tune of the party. Subir Basu Roy's daughter, Sutapa Saha, and his son, Somdipta Basu Roy, also spoke of their father's noble sense of values.

Comrade Manik Mukherjee recalled his long association with Comrade Basu Roy, how together they built *Pathikrit* cultural association and

shortage of funds he was unable to repair and construct roads, bridges and take up other developmental works. The delegates demanded of the government to allocate funds required for the district. The DM assured to fulfill other demands soon. Comrades Broja Majhi, Biswanath Madhi, Ghasi Nayak, Mukunda Padiami, Bhupesh Karmakar were in the delegation.

Women's Convention to fight against Dowry, obscenity and atrocities on women

The AIMSS Bellary District Organising Committee organised women's convention on 28.8.97 at Raghava Kala Mandira, Bellary, to fight against dowry, obscenity and atrocities on women.

Students, employees and women from all walks of life, more than a thousand, participated in the convention. Inaugurating the convention Sri Mudhenur Sanghanna, a renowned folk artist said that from ancient days women had been subjugated. Parents felt that female child was a burden, if unmarried she was abandoned in the forest. Pregnant women were sacrificed to appeal to the gods to fill water in the tanks. "In modern society matrimony has become a matter of money" he lamented. Narrating an incident in Kerala he said that an alcoholic drank liquor by mixing 5cc of blood drawn from his wife everyday.

The main speaker, Dr Sudha Kamath, (Contd. on page 6)

brought out the cultural magazine *Pathikrit* and *Trend*. Comrade Mukherjee especially emphasized that erudition could not claim its victim of ego and vanity in Subir Basu Roy who was free from these traits.

What could draw a comrade of Subir Basu Roy's intellectual height to Marxism-Leninism, especially to the SUCI? Comrade Sukomal Dasgupta, the main speaker explained that it was the vast treasure of knowledge of the party built through concretisation, enrichment and elaboration of Marxism-Leninism on the soil of India by Comrade Shibdas Ghosh that kindled the unfaltering spirit of pursuit of that truth in Comrade Basu Roy, instilling the resolve in him to accept Marxism-Leninism as the philosophy of his life. The height of proletarian culture, morals and values which the life of Comrade Shibdas Ghosh set before all left its mark deep in Comrade Basu Roy to engage in the struggle to identify himself with the party and revolution. Without this background, real evaluation of Comrade Subir Basu Roy would be impossible. It helped to understand why Comrade Basu Roy never faltered on the question of the scientific or Marxist world outlook, because he did grasp that Marxism was itself a science, whose understanding was being constantly reinforced by the teachings of Comrade Shibdas Ghosh.

Comrade Provash Ghosh, the President of the meeting, fathomed the depth of the character of Comrade Basu Roy, saying that as life begets life so did help the character of Subir Basu Roy to create many characters around. What he had culled in his student days as qualities of character under the influence of freedom struggle later took the mould of his character as one of the SUCI organiser under the impact of Comrade Shibdas Ghosh and the party life. In his case time never stood in the way of discharging his responsibilities.

The *Internationale* was sung at the close.

(See OBITUARY on page 8)

Assault on SUCI leader

(Contd from page 4)

submitted a memorandum demanding immediate action against the culprits. On 10th September last, under the auspices of Muzaffarpur District Committee of SUCI a rally of more than 5000 people went to DM office and submitted a memorandum again. Innumerable street corner meetings and dharnas were organized throughout Bihar to protest the attack. On 12th September a dharna was staged at JP Golambar, near Gandhi Maidan, Patna under the leadership of the SUCI State Secretary Comrade Amritheshwar Chakraborty. The RJD leaders organised a parallel meeting there at Paru and brought 2 ministers and some MLAs to pull the crowd and thus frustrate our meeting. But their show was very poor with hardly 50/60 people present there.

Now, despite all threats and intimidation of the RJD hoodlums, the morale of the people is very high and they have resolved to continue their battle against the RJD-police-criminals nexus till it be stopped. Taking into account the growing resentment among the people and the increasing popularity of the SUCI, the RJD leaders showed their eagerness to talk with our local leaders and settle the issue. But our local leaders have rejected this offer and have demanded their public apology for their attack on the SUCI and change of their attitude before any bi-partite talk.

Movement in States

(Contd. from page 5)

President, Karnataka State Committee of the AIMSS in her speech said, dowry menace and atrocities on women were on the increase. Even crimes were being committed. Women were burnt and strangled to death. The dowry prohibition act was not implemented properly. Even if a culprit was caught the police would often assist in saving him from punishment.

Dr B Sheshadri, an educationist, said that the study by expert had proved women had the major contribution in production in the world (their contribution being 66%) which was not recognised. He said women should not rely on the government to come to their rescue but try to find out the causes of their problems and wage untied struggles to eliminate them." Dr Jayalakshmi, Secretary of AIMSS said "There is an onslaught on culture by the satellite TV channels and the media, and gave a call to the women to combat it by organising strong movements." She said that in society, mutual respect, love and affection were vanishing. A situation was being created where women live with fear. She called upon the women to fight unitedly to root out this malaise. Comrade M H Manjula, State Committee member of AIMSS also addressed the gathering. Comrade D Nagalakshmi, District President, AIMSS presided over the meeting. Comrade Shanta Kumari, District Secretary was also present and Comrade Shashikala welcomed the gathering.

Famous Hindustani singer Smt Subhadramma Mansur earlier inaugurated the quotation exhibition - depicting women's struggle.

Protest against unjust hike of prices of petrol, diesel

Guwahati : Protesting against the decision of unjust hike of prices of petrol, diesel and commonly used L.P.G. by the central government, a demonstration was staged on September 6, 1997, at the call of the Guwahati District Committee of the SUCI in front of the DC's office at Guwahati. A memorandum addressed to the Prime Minister of India was handed over to the DC in which it was pointed out that, when the people of the country were suffering under the pressure of a continuous rise of prices of all essential commodities, such a decision would add to the distress of the people as it would inevitably lead to further increase in prices of all commodities. Pointing out that the entire north-eastern region would be worst affected by this decision, the memorandum urged the central government to immediately withdraw this anti-people decision. Earlier, addressing the gathering of the demonstrators, Comrade Chandrakha Das, member of the Assam State Committee of the party, urged the people to carry forward the struggle until the demand was conceded and she appealed to all the left-democratic parties to build up joint movement against this policy of the central government.

Obalapuram Mines Workers' Victory

More than eighty workers, thrown out of jobs due to sudden closure of the Obalapuram Iron Ore Mines at Bellary, on 1.4.94, achieved victory after a prolonged struggle by Samyuktha Gani Karmikara Sangha, affiliated to the UTUC-LS since February 1996. The workers put forward a conciliation petition to the Assistant Labour Commissioner (Central) in Hyderabad on 21.3.96.

On 19.8.96 the workers took out a mighty procession demanding immediate fulfilment of demands. As pressure mounted from the workers' side, the Assistant Labour Commissioner called a conciliation meeting on 25.2.97 in Hyderabad. The workers were represented by Comrade K. Somashekhar, President of Samyuktha Gani Karmikara Sangha, Mr Doddabasappa and Mr Hanumanthappa, labour leaders. After prolonged discussions an agreement was reached, (i) to reopen the closed mine and to reabsorb all the workers except those who have retired by the time, (ii) to take into account the services of workers during the time of closure, (iii) to consider the amount of Rs 900/- paid to each worker in 1995 as salary for lay off and to waive the advances given earlier in addition to paying the salary for three and a half months, (iv) to remit arrears of provident fund and (v) to pay the earned leave encashment money for the period of 1993-94.

In line with the above agreement the management has paid the amounts on 10.8.97.

A jubilant victory meeting was held at the union office with Sri D R Mannar, a renowned advocate as the Chief Guest. The speakers were Comrades H V Ganapathi, the General Secretary of the union, K Somashekhar, President of the union. Sri D R Mannar distributed the cheques to the workers.

Protest against Bus fare-hike in Tamil Nadu

When the Tamilnadu government steeply hiked bus fares throughout the state on September 8, 1997, the Chennai-Chengai District Organising Committee of the SUCI organised a demonstration in the city on September 12, which evoked overwhelming response from the common people, especially as no other political party till then had done anything other than issuing statement.

In Chennai, the party organised a 3-day programme of intensive propaganda campaign at all the major city and mofussil bus stands throughout the city. From September 17 to 19, squads of volunteers entered buses, addressed commuters, distributed leaflets, and sold copies of the special *Pattali Chinthanai* bulletin. Numerous street corner meetings were also held.

A procession was organised on 23rd September from the Central Railway Station to the Government Secretariat. Comrade S. Jawahar, member of the District Organising Committee



Youths in SUCI rally against busfare hike on 23rd September in Chennai

Red Salute Comrade Laso Soren

Comrade Laso Soren, a prominent member of the SUCI, Singhbhum District Committee and a noted tribal mass leader succumbed to malignant malaria on 31 July 1997 at the age of fifty eight.

Belonging to a poor peasant family, Comrade Soren had come in contact with the SUCI and Comrade Shibdas Ghosh's thoughts under the influence of Comrade Hiren Sarkar, departed Central Committee member, and till his last breath he carried on his struggle to serve the class, the party and revolution. Deeply moved by the oppression on tribal people he played an important role in organizing mass movements on burning problems under the banner of the SUCI.

On 9 September 1997, a commemorative mass meeting was organised by the Singhbhum District Committee of the SUCI in his native village, Ganga. Amidst torrential rains, tribals and villagers flocked in large numbers to pay their homage to their departed leader.

Comrade Durga Dash, member, Singhbhum District Committee and noted mass leader presided over the meeting. Many leaders including Comrade Ranjit Modak, Secretary, SUCI, Singhbhum District Committee, spoke on the occasion. The speakers cited exemplary aspects of Comrade Soren's life and urged those present to enhance the struggle under the leadership of the SUCI for the revolutionary overthrow of the exploitative capitalist regime.

addressed the processionists and the large number of people present.

In his speech, he refuted, one by one, the arguments put forth by the DMK government in favour of raising the bus fares and called for an immediate and complete withdrawal of the bus fare hike.

He called on the people to resist this and other anti-people acts and to come forward and join the SUCI to build up a united people's movement to force the government to completely withdraw the bus fare hike.

A delegation then proceeded to the Secretariat to meet the Transport Minister and handed over a memorandum of demands regarding transport.

Petroleum Price Hike

(Contd. from page 2)

so much so that as a result of Bombay High it rose from 10.5 m tonnes to 30.5 m tonnes, a growth of 190% in six years. (Source: *Aspects in Indian Economy*: 23, June, 1997) As a result, imports of petroleum products fell to 0.56 m tonnes (*Ibid*).

With Rajiv Gandhi's ascendancy in power, a sea change came about with regard to exploration of oil after 1985 in the wake of his 'economic reform'. This trend of gradual liberalization on the oil front too went on unhindered and with accelerated pace even during V.P. Singh regime and finally turned full-circle with the on-set of Narasimha Rao-Manmohan Singh duo's wider economic liberalisation in the package of New Economic Reforms, 1991. Following this path, aggressive policy of privatization in oil sector rolled on. As a result, oil fields already explored indigenously began to be handed over, one by one to the private investors at home and from abroad. Even a short-lived Deve Gowda regime in the Central U.F. Government., made over as reward 23 oil producing blocs to domestic and foreign MNCs, and joint ventures were signed with an Enron-Reliance Consortium for the Panna-Mukta in the east coast, and Tapti fields in the west coast of the country as well as with a Videocon-Morabeni Consortium for the Rava field. These contracts are a bonanza for the private investors and stink of massive fraud, so much so that the ONGC had not been reimbursed for Rs.677 crore it spent on discovery and development of the Panna-Mukta and Tapti oil fields. For the relatively easy job of oil extraction, the joint ventures are to be given international prices which are multiples of the price that the ONGC otherwise receives. The other side of this aggressive policy of privatizing domestic oil fields is to weakening the instruments for exploration and refining of oil, viz., the cream of P.S. Units, the ONGC and the OIL, also began, resulting in slowing down of oil production. Last year's budgetary provisions of Central Government is an eye opener, for example, wherein investment in ONGC was slashed to the tune of 1100 crore along with disinvestment spree of creamy PSU oil firm shares. The net result of this disastrous policy has been drastic fall in domestic oil production. Whereas in 1995-96, crude oil produced was 34.52 MT it came down to 31.54 MT in 1996-97; in percentage term the fall was 8.6%. And an unhealthy competition ensued to import more and more crude oil from abroad as if it were to fill the needs of the country's economy. In terms of rupee value, thus imports worth Rs. 17,838 crore in 1994-95 jumped to Rs. 33,380 crore in 1996-97 (Source: Ministry of Petroleum, Government of India). Data available says that during the first seven months of 1996-97, import of diesel increased to 22 percent whereas petroleum products increased to a 41 percent high (*Yojna*, May 1997). As we have stated earlier, whereas during the 80's out of total needs of the economy 30% was met through imports, as a sequel to reversal of encouraging domestic oil production, it now came to be as high as 60% of total needs of the economy. What a perilous turn for oil economy which was almost at the doorstep of achieving self-sufficiency! One more question remains to be answered as to why this surrender to import substitution, albeit, by foreign oil companies.

It is worth recalling in this context that while

in 1970 foreign oil companies were prohibited to continue their business in the oil sector, a unique experience was in store as a lesson to us inasmuch as the foreign MNCs in the oil sector were not at all interested to invest capital for exploration of newer oil fields. Rather, they were keen to sell oil in India through import of oil from suitable oil fields abroad. The present ground reality also corroborates more pronouncedly that compared to 70's, foreign MNCs in oil sector are now rewarded with bonanza of rewards in the aftermath of 1991 economic liberalization. No wonder, therefore, that with unhindered entry of private capitals from home and abroad in the oil fields, no augmentation of the country's oil production was achieved. Rather, their entry has considerably slowed down the existing production, paving thereby the way for more and more import of oil from abroad.

One may ask what is the harm of dependence on import of oil and oil products to cope with country's needs? Furthermore, is there any relation between oil pool deficit and the increased dependence on import of oil products? The answer to it lies in facts: comparative estimates made out show that whereas production of 1 MT of crude oil in the country costs Rs.2500.00, the international market price of the same quantity of produce comes to Rs.6800.00 That is to say, for an additional 1 MT crude domestic oil production, Rs.4,300.00 can be saved. Likewise, it has been estimated that for 1 litre kerosene produced in the country, as little as 75 paise subsidy is required and for 1 litre diesel, Rs.3,80 accrue as income from it. Naturally, therefore, if the country's requirement of oil and oil products can be met domestically then the Oil Pool Account is sure to reflect a highly favourable surplus for the country. Even then, this is not the sole factor responsible for such a gigantic deficit in Oil Pool Account. There are other factors, too. We can vividly recollect what the proponents of the new economic policy made us believe while devaluing the Indian rupee a number of times. As a result of successive devaluations, they pleaded, foreign goods becoming dearer in our country, import of foreign merchandise would be reduced considerably, enabling India to earn precious foreign exchange reserves. What was kept secret from the public was that since petroleum and petroleum products constitute a significant part (above 26% of total imports) of Indian imports with its inelastic character, the import of these items of petroleum products are bound to grow day by day. The ground reality corroborates our stand firmly. The immediate fall out has been the increased deficits in Oil Pool Account by leaps and bounds with passage of time.

From above it is amply clear that out and out anti-people, pro-MNC oil magnet policy of successive central governments, especially after the liberalization spree let loose by the Narasimha Rao Congress Government, are solely responsible for the Oil Pool deficits to assume such a gigantic proportion.

When right from the erstwhile Commerce Minister of the former central Congress Government, turned UF Government finance minister, down to all other constituents of the Central United Front, know very well what is what, why then are the CPI(M) leaders trying to pose as the champion of people's interest and cause by opposing price hike in petroleum products for the

sake of opposition? Everyone knows that Narasimha Rao Government did not dare not to hike the price of petroleum products during the penultimate days of his reign, contrary to his desire to do so. The reason lay in the fact that the election was round the corner. The CPI(M) also took a leaf out of the same book. With Deve Gowda Government having collapsed and Mr I K Gujral being foisted in his place as Prime Minister, the UF Government at the Centre has now become Congress dependent, living solely at the pleasure of the Congress president Mr Kesari. In such a situation, it is also uncertain how long this Congress support will last. Over and above this, there are fierce internal squabbles among the UF constituents. At any rate, the government may thus fall at any time and this may necessitate mid-term polls. Under such a compulsion, the decision to hike the petroleum products is not tactically sound. This is the reason why the CPI(M) is trying to pose as the champion of the people's interest through their 'opposition' to the oil price hike.

Like the Congress Government the ruling UF Government at the Centre is also steadily raising the prices of every essential commodity. Not only the price of rice sold through the PDS has been raised, even the supply of it has been stopped. In such a predicament, the CPI(M) is a silent spectator, not to speak of uttering a word of protest. Now to cover up their manoeuvre tactics, they are craftily pretending as if it was they who kept the price of petroleum products under control so long. Now the UF Government is causing price hike riding roughshod over their opposition. Going by the name of leftism, this sham show of the CPI(M) is designed to deceive the public in the petty parliamentary interest.

Glorious Victory for Srikakulam Peasants

The protracted agitation of the peasants of Srikakulam District of Andhra Pradesh has started yielding results. The three year long agitation of the peasants for early completion of Madduvalasa Reservoir project (M.R. project) has met with its first success. The Government of Andhra Pradesh has agreed to release necessary funds for early completion of the project. Now the work of the project is in progress.

The agitation of the peasants under AIKKMS leadership started in the early months of 1995. For the last three years the movement grew from strength to strength. Rallies, conventions, post-card campaigns, gheraos of revenue officers and road blockades were conducted. In this process peasants struggle committees were formed.

In this year on 25 February AIKKMS and Struggle Committee organized blockade of National Highway. The blockade lasted for three hours as declared in advance. Thousands of people participated in this programme. Peasants, agricultural labourers, youth, students teachers and even artists participated in this road blockade programme. There was a great general response from the people and peasants from all the villages. The press had widely covered the news of this programme. With this programme the whole movement became popular in the District of Srikakulam. For the last two decades such movement did not take place in this district. The AIKKMS and Peasants Struggle Committees declared that the agitation would continue till the completion of the project.

RED SALUTE COMRADE SUBIR BASU ROY

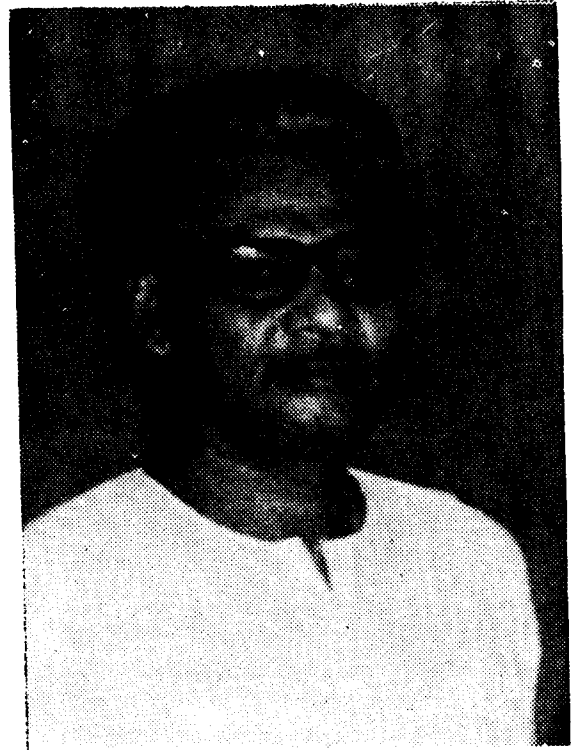
Comrade Subir Basu Roy is no more. He breathed his last at 5.20 p.m. on 18 September last, at the age of 65 after suffering for long 31 days from massive heart attacks and cerebral strokes. A leading organizer of our party, the SUCI, who rendered a great service in the work of the Editorial Board of the *Proletarian Era* from the beginning and in the commissioning of the works of Comrade Shibdas Ghosh, a well-known figure of the movement of teachers, especially of professors — his demise has dealt a stunning shock to comrades and to a vast circle of people. For, in him they found an elder brother, a friend they could always turn to for advice on any matter — whether education, questions on science, or issues of philosophy, politics, art, etc. How deep was his knowledge, how broad his command over the range of art, science, literature and epistemology. A scholar so vastly read yet without any trace of pedantry or the slightest of vanity. Modest in conduct and broad in outlook, he approached everything with unflawed candour. Even when a junior comrade raised a valid point, he would accept it readily and smilingly. Love for the common people, and the party tuning and culture which he had acquired with his struggles drew people irresistibly to him, young and old

alike. Great in mind, pleasing in personality and loving to the common people, he has left us with these traits of his to emulate.

Nursed in the ethos of the freedom struggle and in the glory of the international communist movement when he was a school-level student, he was drawn into contact with the party by the late Central Committee member Comrade Hiren Sarkar, when the impact of the thoughts of Comrade Shibdas Ghosh and the character of the great leader shaped his dreams and yearnings into a revolutionary bent and finally into deep involvement and activity of the SUCI. That was the beginning, and, till he breathed his last, his life and conduct bore a glowing testimony to the thoughts and culture of the party.

Wherever he went, he spread the message of the party and the thoughts of Comrade Shibdas Ghosh. From the day the *Proletarian Era*, the central organ of our party, saw the light, he served it as a member of its staff. He was among the founders of *Pathikrit* and *Trend*, and he contributed to them on very many aspects and problems of science, philosophy, art, culture, etc.

Comrade Subir Basu Roy taught Chemistry



first at Manindra Nandy College and then at Ashutosh College, Calcutta, and he was respected by students for his unflinching devotion to teaching till his last. For a long time till the other day he was a member of the executive committee of the WBCUTA (West Bengal College and University Teachers' Association) and one-time joint Secretary of the WBCUTA. He was a former member of the Academic Council of Calcutta University for two terms, and member, Executive Committee, AIDTO (All India Democratic Teachers' Organisation).

Comrade Subir Basu Roy was also a member and treasurer of the West Bengal Primary Education Development Board, a leading figure of the Save Education movement, and advisor of the Breakthrough Science Society. He was also an Assistant Secretary of the All India Anti-Imperialist Forum. He acted as the convenor of the professors' sub-committee of the party.

Deeply attached to everything pertaining to the educational world, his character and conduct has not only won him countless friends and admirers, but the respect and admiration even of his political adversaries.

The Red Flag dipped at half mast at the party office on his demise. That same night his flower bedecked body was brought first to the WBCUTA office where wreaths were placed by leading members of the Executive Committee and other professors. From there his body was brought to the central party office where Comrade Nihar Mukherjee, General Secretary, and other leaders of the party and of the mass organizations paid their last tribute and respect. Song on Comrade Shibdas Ghosh and the Internationale were also sung in that somber and solemn atmosphere. Led by 65 volunteers with red flag at half mast, his body, accompanied by comrades mourning in silent grief, was carried to Nimtala burning ghat.

In his demise the party has lost an impeccable character and a communist of higher cultural mould.

(News of MEMORIAL MEETING on page 5)

Words of Agony

These lines were found in two sheets of paper in the study of Comrade Subir Basu Roy after his death. It is an unfinished letter which he had planned to address the leadership to set down his agonized feelings as they welled from the core of his heart when he was trying to fill in a questionnaire circulated among the party members, some two months before his death, for their self-evaluation as responsible party workers. Now it assumes the character of a testament of a beloved departed comrade, while other comrades, supporters and sympathisers of the party and the people at large should go through to have a glimpse of the arduous struggle a communist party worker must pursue to be in the mould of a true communist character.

These days I feel agony deep in me when I am to fill in a questionnaire like this one. There is no appropriate item here where I can set down my feelings; so I have taken to writing this letter.

Around fifteen years back it was a feeling of joy, and not of pain, I would have when called upon to fill in a form like this. Because, at that time, my physique did not stand in the way of applying myself with heart and soul. I could do then a lot of work.

Now-a-days, it often sets me thinking that I am given to hold my party card as a matter of recognition of my past activity. In the past several years, my ability to work has declined because of various physical ailments. I have

lost much of the physical fitness essential to accomplishing today's task in particular. Years are telling, too.

Strictly speaking, my party activity today consists in assisting the party to the best of my ability in its ideological campaign by studying literature on various issues, that is by doing library work. Nothing more than this, to be precise. So it strikes pain in me when I am filling in the form but find myself short of adequately giving priority to the party work, for which I cannot really fill in the relevant item.

I have been assigned by the party to be in charge of the professors' front. But, strictly, I am not discharging my duty the way I am expected to. I feel diffident within to criticize or point out to those comrades of my front whom I find moving about lackadaisically or attending to their duties in a slipshod manner, even as I should be criticizing them for their own rectification and for the improvement of their style of work. For, then it makes me alive to the fact that now-a-days I am not doing my work like I did earlier, and that I am myself to blame for so many shortcomings and faults of mine. Do I have the moral right to criticize my erring comrades? But in the end it only harms the party front.

So, I believe, if the charge of the front be assigned to some other capable comrade, that may improve the situation and yield good results for the front. I do hope, the party leadership would think over it.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF : NIHAR MUKHERJEE