

Flicker of Light Amidst Gloom and Darkness

Amidst gloom and darkness in the working class movement the Dock and Port Workers' strike for 26 days, longest on all-national plane is undoubtedly a flicker of light of the mettle of the Indian Working Class. After a decade since the historic railwaymen's strike for 20 days, defying brow-beatings and most naked coercive tactics of the Indira Government, Dock and Portmen rose in struggle with exemplary unity and courage to convey to the mass of the toiling men, the message of struggle that alone can enliven them from self-destroying stupor and frustration. Threats from the government and pressing into service of navy could not daunt them. But like the railwaymen, the Dock and Portmen too have been let down by the same kind of treacherous leaderships, but that in no way can undermine their fighting stamina. The contrast of heroism and sacrificing spirit of the workers on the one hand and the treachery and betrayal of the leaderships of the INTUC, HMS, AITUC and CITU on the other once more signal the urgency of the real struggling leadership to emerge to guide control and lead to correct destination of workers struggles.

BACKGROUND

For years, the working class movement has been passing through the agonising moments of surrendering the rights and benefits, already achieved, to the ever-extracting demands of the crisis-ridden bourgeoisie. The Boothlingam recommendations were the blueprint of crisis-ridden capitalism. Onslaughts came one after another thence. On the one hand, the trade union rights, the right to organize strike, right to boycott even overtime work as a form of struggle, all became illegal by the draconian enactment ESMA and NSA. On the other hand, wages were freed by bringing in parameter on wage increase, ceiling

and tapering on DA, cutting the variable formula of neutralisation in DA from pay and introduction, instead of a fixed amount on per point increase in consumer index, productivity linkage and what is more, mechanisation-automation to drastically cut wage cost by decrease in work force in a country flooded with unemployed. By all these means, self-defeating though, crisis-ridden Indian bourgeoisie has been trying to shift the entire burden of crisis of the capitalist productive system on to the working class. Over and above all these, unbearable burden has been on the increase over the toiling people by way of increased taxes both by the Central and state governments as also skyrocketing of prices of essential commodities. Crisis-ridden bourgeoisie apprehended resistance to come against its bankrupt class policies from the organized section of the working class movement. But, this apprehension was belied by the active help and cooperation that it could get readily from the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parliamentary parties and the trade unions under their grip. Not to speak of INTUC, HMS and other trade unions under control of the bourgeois parties, even the CPI(M) and CPI who call themselves 'left' have come in rescue of the crisis-ridden bourgeoisie. Instead of striving to develop mass and class struggles against the anti-working class policies of the Indira Government and exposing the real class character of the bourgeois parties-led union leaderships to isolate them, CPI, CPI(M)-led trade union leaderships are playing the second fiddle. They are showing equal interest, if not more avidly as in West Bengal, to defend the moribund capitalist order.

Against this dismal picture, the dock and portmen's struggle came as a welcome relief. But from the very beginning, the
(Contd. on page 2)

Proletarian Era

ORGAN OF SOCIALIST UNITY CENTRE OF INDIA (Fortnightly)
Founder Editor-in-Chief: COMRADE SHIBDAS GHOSH

Vol. 17
No. 17

JUNE 1, 1984
FRIDAY

Price 40 P.
Air Surcharge 5 P.

Comrade Nihar Mukherjee's Statement On Sikkim

Condemning strongly the clamping of the President's rule on Sikkim as yet another glaring instance of striking at the very root of democracy, Comrade Nihar Mukherjee, General Secretary of the SUCI has issued the following statement on 25th May, 1984 :

"The imposition of the President's rule on Sikkim, striking nakedly at the root of democracy cannot but cause deep concern to all well meaning and democratic minded people of the country.

The turn of events in a space of two weeks preceding Presidential proclamation is pointed to the extent the ruling parliamentary parties in the country, the Congress(I) in particular as the most trusted representative of the ruling bourgeoisie, can go to anyhow cling to the seat of power. On 11th May Mr Nar Bahadur Bhandari, the Congress(I) Chief Minister of the State, was dismissed by the State Governor and Mr B B Gurung of the same party brought into the office without any official assignment of reason. Only a few days elapsed before Bhandari and 16 other Congress(I) MLAs quit the Congress(I) to launch a new party, Sikkim Sangram Parishad, and stake claim to form the ministry as the majority in the 32 member Assembly. President's rule was proclaimed in Sikkim the day after, dissolving the Assembly with election due only in October next. As Mrs. Gandhi's Central Government sped into action, a special courier took the proclamation to Varanasi for the President's signature.

The entire development leaves no one in doubt that Mr. Bhandari had fallen out with the Central Congress(I) leadership, for some reason or other.

Earlier, at the time of the Janata rule at the Centre, Bhandari and his followers had quit the Congress to join the Janata Party. With Mrs. Gandhi's return to power, the flock returned to her fold. In this familiar political trapeze Bhandari knows best what he will do next.

The point is not about Ner Bahadur Bhandari or any other disgraced bourgeois political aspirant for that matter. Squabbles or in-fighting among groups in the Congress(I) leading to the ministerial crises are of daily occurrence and characterise the party. The party's leadership, in a bid to maintain the party's rule in various states, contrives patch-up formulae to hold together the warring factions, regardless of norms, ethics and democratic code. Not only the Congress(I) but all the bourgeois and petty bourgeois parliamentary parties, with Left or Right stance, are ridden with dissension and in-fighting of groups within them. And the blatantly unethical means resorted to by the leaderships and groups of these parties are vitiating the country's political atmosphere and fast lowering the public standard.

But the Sikkim episode is far more alarming. To resolve the inner party conflict and squabble the central Congress(I) leadership headed by Mrs. Gandhi used the administrative lever—the office of the Governor in this case—to oust an elected Government despite its majority in

the legislature and knowing well that Bhandari enjoyed majority support of the Congress(I) MLAs, imposed the President's rule only to maintain the party rule over the state through the Centre's administration. Still Mrs. Gandhi and her strong-voiced colleagues would cry hoarse over the need to observe democratic code and norms. Height of hypocrisy and autocratic highhandedness indeed! However, this 'virtue' does not single out the Congress(I) alone. The Janata Party, when in power, betrayed the same quality.

Conflicts and squabbles within the bourgeois and petty bourgeois parliamentary parties are but reflection and outcome of the severe crisis gripping the ruling bourgeoisie in all spheres—economic, political, social, cultural. In fact, whoever goes to defend this crisis ridden capitalism today betrays anti-democratic attitude and outlook, disregard for democratic norms, values and cedes and a leaning to autocratic character. All these parties, from the Congress(I) and the Janata to the social democrats, stand on a par. The people of Sikkim should realize that the restoration, protection and extension of democratic rights and norms are the concern and task of the toiling people today not of the ruling capitalist class. And the only way to accomplish this task is to build up broad based legitimate democratic mass movements against the anti-people policies and measures of the Central and State Governments. The democratic minded and well meaning people all over the country should voice their condemnation of this undemocratic act of the Central Congress(I) Government and bear pressure upon it to force it to desist from such heinous acts.

Dock Workers' struggle led to Blind Alley of Economism

(Contd. from page 1)
potential of the struggle got limited due to wrong direction as also the method of conduction of the struggle. Why we say so?

WRONG COURSE— FAULTY DIRECTION

The UTUC (Lenin Sarani) leadership while hailing and pledging all support to the united struggle of the lock and port workers pointed out not to miss its essential political character. Their fight must not be viewed in isolation but as a part and parcel of the working class on common issues and against the common enemy. That is why involvement of not only the organised section but also of common people must be ensured.

The time was opportune. As Mr. Vijay Bhaskara Reddy, the Union Shipping and Transport Minister, had to admit: "This strike comes at an unfortunate time for us". Why? Because, a strike in March/April by dock workers "places the trader-industrialists gentry in a very embarrassing position." It is the end of the season for winter exports especially to West Asia and Europe and also the beginning of the sounding season for spring. Indian exporters, generally faulted in keeping the schedule, apprehend very much if the delay is further prolonged by the strike.

Naturally, with 176 ships stranded in mid-stream, export worth Rs. 460 crores unable to move out, ship-owners losing Rs. 1.5 crores daily, the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industries (FICCI) was urging upon the government to settle the dockmen's disputes immediately (The Economic Times, April, 9, '84). So, the pressure of the traders and industrialists was very much on the government. All this was in favour of the strikers. But how this favourable situation was utilised by the leaderships?

From the very beginning, that is to say, five

months before the last agreement expired, in the month of August, last year, negotiations started between the unions and the government. At the negotiations, the leaders of these four central trade unions led by Congress(I), CPI and CPI(M) set the tune of the struggle by the demand of 'parity' with the steel workers. Parity in what respect? Was the 'parity' in gross wages? Or, was it in individual components of wages? Or was it in both?

Remember the 'parity'-question raised by the MHT employees led by these leaderships with the BHEL employees. That strike was a long-drawn one of seventy days or more. It ended in a fiasco due to the treachery and manoeuvrings of the leaderships of the same unions. Funniest of all, after sometime, the same leaderships of the dock and port workers were changing the tune from "parity" to "similarity" with steel workers' settlement.

So, from the very beginning, the dock workers struggle was led to the blind alley of unprincipled economism, with the sole object of getting some economic benefits, that too, varying portwise to the respective advantages of the trade union leaderships. There was neither any principle in wage negotiations nor was there slightest concern to guard the job security of the workers, especially the casual workers who number in rough estimate about 40% of the total 3,00,000 dock and port workers; their work-load against further increase and against the erosion of their real income by a scientific variable percentage-wise formula of neutralisation in D.A. In fact, all these principles and objectives were thrown to the four winds and instead the demand for 35% increase with a total cost load of Rs. 102 crores originally placed was scaled down step by step to Rs. 67 crores, Rs. 57 crores or a hike by 26% to the final settlement of Rs. 44 crores or 18.5% increase, that

to on staggered basis. The government had to concede 3.5% more or Rs. 4 crores and odds over its original offer. The entire bargain was shifted to HRA (House Rent Allowance) and CCA (City Compensatory Allowance)—whether at the flat rate as proposed by the government or with differential rates, fought vigorously by Kulkarni's HMS, AITUC and CITU. The government conceded to the latter as it found in it, the divisive element in the workers' solidarity.

The dock and port workers' strike was not dragged further as was the intention of the government, primarily because of the pressures that were coming from the industrial and business communities. But more particularly, it was successful in wooing the INTUC leadership to declare severance of its connection with three other trade unions for a unilateral and speedy settlement with the government. Three other trade unions immediately responded in favour of an immediate settlement, as if they were waiting for the initiative to come from the INTUC! But working people expected a different role from at least the left trade unions.

It cannot be that the leaderships of these unions were unaware of the possibility of such a turn of events. They could have easily prepared the workers, in advance, about this possibility. Had they done so, it would not have been so easy for the INTUC leadership to do what they did out of fear about loss of support and isolation. In absence of that, there can hardly be any line of distinction between the two leaderships as regard the basic orientation of the struggle.

The Economic Times made the editorial comment in its issue of April 12, the day following the settlement thus: "the government's negotiating techniques leave much to be desired. If the present increases conceded were untenable on March 16

(the day the strike began) and even on March 30, when talks were broken off, how did they become tenable, yesterday?... With good will on both sides, there could have been a way out without paralysing the country's economy."

THE GOVERNMENT'S ROLE

Sm. Gandhi's government that 'works' most obediently, in furtherance of the class interests of the crisis-ridden bourgeoisie, has, as usual, evinced rabid anti-working class attitude this time also. It had the temptation to tire out the workers by prolonging the strike as it did in case of the HMT workers. It had also the intention to crush the movement with the coercive instruments of the state machinery as it did at the time of 1974 railwaymen's movement. But the year being the election year, INTUC-Kulkarni factors and the question of projecting the pro-worker image of the ruling party to the people being there, it did not move beyond pressing to service, the navy in unloading crude, edible oils and other essential goods. The supply lines gradually choking, it took recourse to diversifying means of transportations through railways and trucks. It may be worth recalling that in the year, 1974, the Japanese railwaymen won their battle because the working class solidarity did not remain a catchword but was extended to road and waterway transportation services whereas absence of that, our railwaymen had to fight alone a losing battle, with unique heroism, of course. This time the water transport workers had to fight alone while railways and road transport remained open.

The Indira Gandhi government banked on the support and cooperation of the parties like CPI(M) and CPI and the trade unions run by them for restricting the strike within the four walls of economic bargaining and, that too, without raising any fundamental question of principles. Thus, they succeeded in having in an atmo-

sphere of cordiality from both sides, the negotiations breaking down at one point, notwithstanding.

Apart from the usual propaganda of the 'national economy' in danger, the loss of earnings of the ports, of the ship owners and the workers themselves, it dished out the untruths that the ports barring Bombay were losing concerns. And that if the Dock worker's demands were to be conceded, the cost of handling of cargo could go upto the extent that the foreign liners would not touch country's ports anymore. On all these counts, there were deliberate misstatements of facts.

First, if the ten major ports of India have lost Rs 70/80 crores as revenue earnings because of the 26 day strike, who is responsible for that? The workers or the government? The negotiations started well ahead of the time the last agreement expired. Had the government accepted a just settlement, there would have been no cause of dislocation in water transport service, why it did not do it? Why did it instead, drag the matter so long?

Secondly, it has come to light that the handling cost at Indian Ports is the lowest, working out to less than 1 p.c. in terms of value of cargo moved. The rate was recommended to be raised to 9 p.c. by the Major Port Committee appointed by the government. But still it would have been less than the international rate of 11 p.c. recommended by the World Bank. In fact, therefore, as it has been rightly pointed out: "The Indian Ports and their employees are subsidising the profits of the shipowners, the bulk of whom are international shipping 'cartels'"

Thirdly, despite such lowest rate, other than Cochin, all other ports registered operational surpluses in 1982-83 with Bombay Port's earnings shot up from 31.5 p.c. in 1980-81 to 40 p.c. in 1982-83.

Fourthly, and this is very interesting, when on an average 10,000 dockmen

(Contd. on page 5)

On The Latest 'Shift' Of CPI's Position

The National Council of the CPI had a meeting in New Delhi from 22nd to 25th April last. It has been reported in the press that a political resolution was adopted at this meeting which, after noting that the Janata-led United Front had collapsed and the Lok Dal had aligned with the "rightist BJP," the CPI would have nothing to do with the the two sets of alliances, went on to say "a viable alternative to the Congress(I) with left and democratic orientation has not emerged. . . we do not want a Rightist alternative. The Left and Democratic alternative we are working for is yet to emerge. Hence, we would lend support to a combination which takes anti-imperialist position and continues our country's progressive foreign policy, and does not include such pro-imperialist communal parties as the BJP" (quoted in *The Statesman* dated 29.4.84).

This led to speculation in the press about the future course of action of the CPI and there were comments in columns of some newspapers that this marked a shift from the CPI's 'anti-Indira stance' towards renewed closeness with Sm. Gandhi and her party. Mr. Biswanath Mukherjee, Provincial Secretary of the West Bengal Council, asserted in Calcutta on 3-5-94 that there had been no change or deviation in his party's political line on removing Sm. Gandhi and her party from power at the Centre and that a section of the press had deliberately misinterpreted the National Council resolution to slander and damage the CPI politically. Mr. Mukherjee stated that his party's stand on forming a left and democratic national alternative remained unaltered but as such an alternative had not emerged so far, the National Council had given a call for cooperation with those parties which were opposed to imperialism and communalism (Report in *The Statesman* dated 4. 5. 84).

This debate and assertion are pointless really. In the present situation, what does the latest stand of the CPI National Council actually boil down to? The National Council states that a "left and democratic" alternative has not yet emerged (what they conceive this "left and democratic alternative" to be, we shall see later) and the CPI does not want a rightist combination to replace Sm. Gandhi's Government. The Six-Party Combination headed by the Janata has collapsed and there is no ques-

tion of the CPI having any understanding with the BJP. Even so, the National Council asserts, the CPI would lend support to a combination upholding the country's present "progressive" foreign policy. Who will constitute this combination? We like to ask: Looking at the present spectrum of parliamentary political parties, the only major political force remaining is the Congress(I) and of course, the Congress(I) can be trusted to uphold the "progressive" foreign policy of its Government at the Centre! Therefore, objectively, the only possible combination to which the CPI could lend support, would have to be with the Congress(I) as a whole or with sections and elements within the Congress(I), overtly or covertly.

Those who pose the question in such a way that the CPI is now poised for a shift towards Indira, as if it had been pursuing an anti-Indira line so long, commit a grave error. We know that Sm. Gandhi's party has so far been the most trusted political agent of the ruling bourgeois class for defending the reactionary, moribund, and exploitative capitalist system in the country which stands as the main enemy of the people blocking the way to their progress. Therefore, to smash the exploitative capitalist system to usher in a new socialist society is the cardinal question before the people. But the CPI and "Marxist" CPI(M) too have always disregarded this main task both in theory and practices. The fanciful theories of the

National Democratic Revolution of the CPI and of the People Democratic Revolution of the CPI(M), both admit of a positive progressive role for capitalism and the bourgeoisie, pursuant to this efforts of the CPI and the CPI(M) have all along been directed at searching for the "progressives" among the bourgeois parties and forces and primarily within principal bourgeois party, Congress, with the object of forming alliance with them. The only question on which there has been a shift at times by the CPI and the CPI(M) is whether it was Sm. Gandhi who presented the progressive section of the Indian bourgeoisie with which common cause should be made. A little scrutiny reveals that even parliamentary parties that CPI and CPI(M) are, their such shifts "away" from or "towards" Sm. Gandhi did not emanate from principled analysis of or from considerations for the people's interest, but were dictated by opportunistic consideration of whether they stood to gain in parliamentary politics by association with or dissociating from Sm. Gandhi in a particular situation.

The differences that crop up now and then between CPI and CPI(M) and Sm. Gandhi are not fundamental but reflect a contradiction between parties vying with one another for the spoils of parliamentary politics.

There was a time when the "Marxist", "revolutionary", CPI(M), even while secretly moving closer to the revisionist Soviet leadership, used to call the Soviet party revisionist in public and used to call the CPI names like the revisionist Dange-clique. But even at that time, on the fundamental question of attitude towards the exploitative capitalist system their stand was remarkably similar. In the political resolution of the Bhatinda Congress in March-April 1978, the CPI declared that "the country can no longer be saved either by continuation of Janata party rule or by restoration of Congress

rule. It can be saved only by bringing about basic structural changes in the economy and national democratic shifts in state power at the Centre, that is, by a left and democratic national alternative power structure at the Centre." At about the same time the CPI(M) at its Jullundhar Congress stated that "the struggle to build this front (Left and Democratic Front) is part of our endeavour to bring about a change in the co-relation of class forces to end a situation in which the people can choose only between two landlord parties and get imprisoned within the frame work of the present system," and promised in the programme of "Left and democratic forces" incorporated in the PR basic changes in the constitution to eliminate the grip of the big bourgeois landlord classes over the state and a massive plan for full employment to the rural unemployed! Thus, while the revisionist CPI speaks of salvaging the country by bringing about "basic structural changes" in the economy through forming a "Left and Democratic" Govt. at the Centre, the "revolutionary" CPI(M) is even more forthright in asserting that they could put an end to the people's imprisonment within the exploitative capitalist system by merely offering them an electoral alternative and through constitutional reforms to eliminate the grip of the ruling capitalist class over the state and solve the basic problem in the people's life like unemployment, all without revolution, within the exploitative capitalist system! If this is Marxism, then what is revisionism?

Naturally, such social democratic defenders of capitalism like the CPI and CPI(M) cannot have any basic quarrel with Sm. Gandhi and her party, the most trusted political agent of the ruling bourgeois class. That is why, although in twist and turn of the parliamentary politics, they sometimes associate themselves with Sm. Gandhi and her party and at other times dissociate themselves

from her, they have all along supported her policies—home and foreign—in the main. In the past, both the CPI and the CPI(M) supported the hated emergency measures clamped down by Sm. Gandhi and eulogized the fascist 20-point programme once launched during the Emergency. Recently, they have been fully supporting Sm. Gandhi's Assam policy aimed at keeping the problem alive in order to fish in the troubled water for making political gains. They have accorded support to new 20-Point programme announced by Sm. Gandhi after her come back in 1980 which is nothing but an economic blue print of fascism. By their activities from their governmental seat in West Bengal they have shown that they see eye to eye with Sm. Gandhi's Central Government in clamping down anti-people fiscal measures and language-education policy, in their concern to maintain bourgeois law-and-order, in crushing ruthlessly all legitimate democratic movements of the people and in trampling democratic norms in every sphere.

In the matter of foreign policy, PRs, statements and utterances of CPI and CPI(M) are replete with praises of the "progressive" foreign policy of the Indira government which they call "our foreign policy" the "foreign policy of the country" or the "foreign policy of the nation". We wish to remind these "Marxists" that in a class divided society, the foreign policy like any other policy, must serve the interest of this or that class. It cannot be supra class, cannot reflect the aspirations of the whole country or the nation. We have repeatedly shown in earlier writings that the foreign policy of the central government is being pursued in the aggregate interest of the ruling capitalist class and the posture of neutrality maintained by the Indian government is for the purpose of gaining loan, aid, and advantage from both the imperialist camp headed by the USA and the countries

(Contd. on page 4)

Both CPI and CPI(M) pursuing opportunist policies to get dividend in Parliamentary Politics

(Cont. from page-3)

tries in the Soviet block and the neutral position between the two blocks allow the ruling Indian capitalist class more elbow room, better manoeuvrability and their bid to consolidate and strengthen their class rule. And yet the CPI and the CPI(M) call the Indian foreign policy pro-people and progressive. And when Shrimati Gandhi in the aggregate interest of the ruling capitalist class, recently raised once more the scare of war and Pakistani attack in order to divert the attention of the people from the burning problems in their life and the total incapacity of the crisis ridden moribund capitalism to ameliorate their lot, the CPI and the CPI(M) danced to the tune and even outbit Sm. Gandhi in harping upon the danger of war and Pakistani attack. Their leaders like Nambudiripad and Rajeswar Rao demonstrated their anti-authoritarianism by calling upon the people from the public platforms to rally round Sm. Gandhi's government to resist the danger of war and foreign attack! And to believe the press comments on the latest CPI National Council Resolution it is this Rajeswar Rao who has been pursuing an anti-Indira course which the present CPI National Council Resolution has sought to rectify.

The unity of approach between CPI and CP(M) is remarkable. Truly, it can be said that the CPI is as "Marxist" as the CPI(M) and the CPI(M) is as revisionist as the CPI!

The sole concern of these parties is to anyhow improve their position in parliamentary politics. In any given situation, they try to assess which alliance, or handling of which elements would be most advantageous to them, taking into consideration the existing combinations of political forces and the people's mood. Having decided the course of action, they raise outcries against either authoritarianism or right reactionary forces, whichever is handy, to confuse the masses and to justify their move.

When they desire to come close to the "radical", the "progressive" section of the bourgeoisie, meaning Sm. Gandhi and her party, they magnify the danger of the rightist reactionary and communal forces in justification. When they plan to join hands with the rightists, that is the conservative bourgeois forces, they suddenly become alive to the danger of Sm. Gandhi's authoritarianism and raise slogans against her to justify joining hands with the rightist bourgeois forces.

During the period when Sm. Gandhi was consolidating her position through infighting with "Syndicate Congress" elements, the CPI and the CPI(M) steadfastly supported her describing her "fight" to gain ascendancy as a fight on behalf of the "progressive" forces against right reactionary forces.

Even during the Emergency, they continued to support Sm. Gandhi by highlighting the danger posed to the country by imperialism and right reactionary forces, precisely the very excuse given by Sm. Gandhi to hoax the people and justify the draconian Emergency measures!

When, faced with the growing unrest against the Emergency, the ruling class became apprehensive, felt the need of substituting another political alternative of theirs to replace the Congress(I) so that the situation did not go out of hand and overnight propped up the Janata combination to sweep the polls, the CPI, because it had totally compromised its position through open alliance with the Congress(I) was left in the lurch. But the CPI(M), more favourably placed, perceived which way the wind was blowing and turned a somersault to join the Janata bandwagon in company with the very same forces it had been so long decrying as rightist reactionary forces and rent air with anti-authoritarianism, anti-Indira cries to suit its petty political exigency and the mood of the people. But in two

years' time, the CPI(M) suddenly re-discovered the danger from rightist forces, found that the Janata had become dominated by communal RSS elements and withdrew support from the Janata ministry in favour of Charan Shing in the hope of some quick gain in parliamentary politics. This led to the downfall of the Janata ministry and objectively paved the way for Sm. Gandhi's re-emergence as Prime Minister in 1980. On the morrow of Sm. Gandhi's come back, the CPI(M) laid aside its anti-authoritarianism and in a resolution hastened to assure her that so long as she did not try to topple the CPI(M)-led Governments in the states, there would be no confrontation with her!

Notwithstanding the failure of the Janata experiment, the urge of the ruling class to have provision for a political alternative of its own within the system is still there because with two alternatives in hand it can rule alternately through each and keep the people enmeshed in and confined within the bounds of parliamentary politics. In furtherance of this bourgeois class design to bring about two-party parliamentary system in the country and with the coming Lok Sabha poll in view, the parliamentary opposition parties are now engaged in attempts to group and regroup through the series of opposition conclaves as also informal bilateral parleys in the hope of evolving a hotch potch combination which, in favourable circumstances, could provide the ruling bourgeoisie with the much needed national alternative to the Congress(I) and with their blessing, come out as the winning combination in the coming poll. For obvious reasons, the CPI and CPI(M) cannot openly join hands with Congress(I).

So, their best bet is to move with these opposition conclaves and at the same time to maintain contacts with the Congress(I) avoiding con-

frontation with it so that all the options in the opportunistic game of parliamentary politics remain open. This is what they have been doing. The bourgeois, regional and parochial forces of the opposition need the association of the CPI and CPI(M) to give a "radical" look to their planned combination to match the "radicalism" of Sm. Gandhi for capturing public imagination while this association provides the CPI and CPI(M) with greater manoeuvrability in dealing with Sm. Gandhi and her party openly or in secret.

Sm. Gandhi is quite alive to the danger that an opposition electoral alliance may pose to her, especially if it gathers momentum and is found suitable by the ruling class; as a possible replacement for her government. So, she cannot be averse to handling the CPI and CPI(M) with an idea to thwart the possible opposition alliance through them. We do not know what transpires at the parleys of the CPI and CPI(M) leaders with her, but the open overture she made to the CPI and CPI(M) at the time of the AICC-I Calcutta Plenum is known to all. At that time, she reminded them that it was a pity that they, being leftists, should chose to gang up with the rightist forces against her. She admonished them that while they already supported her progressive(!) foreign policy, how was it that they were opposed to her domestic politics, meaning how was it that they were opposing her in domestic politics, because as far as domestic policies are concerned, who knows better than her that the CPI and CPI(M) have no basic difference with her domestic policies as well? It is possible that Sm. Gandhi counts upon creating a rift between the CPI and CPI(M) and the other opposition parties and forces to give a jolt to the idea of opposition unity against her. It is also not impossible that she might have tried to use her Soviet connec-

tion to make the CPI and CPI(M), both of which are close to and under considerable influence of the Soviet, to fall into line. It is significant that just when the projected anti-Indira alliance is in the doldrums, there has been a marked cooling off of the enthusiasm of the CPI and CPI(M) for the opposition alliance and the CPI had come out with a shift in position, translated into practice, can only mean an alliance or an understanding, overt or covert, with the Congress(I) and non-participation in any move to topple her ministry through the polls. Can the hand of the Soviet behind this be ruled out?

The CPI and CPI(M) are fond of talking about "Left and Democratic" alternative and lament that it has not yet emerged. But in the conclaves, they have been hobnobbing not only with the bourgeois parties in the opposition but also with such regional and parochial forces like the Telugu Desam, the DMK and the Akalis. We like to ask: Are these leftist forces? Are these democratic forces? Can one move towards genuine left and democratic alternative in association with such forces? The left and democratic alternative can emerge only through the course of legitimate democratic mass movements against the anti-people policies of the governments. Not only are the CPI and CPI(M) not conducting mass movements, they are actually crushing from the governmental seat in West Bengal, the mass movements led by our party, the SUCI and are acting in furtherance of the bourgeois class design to foist two-party parliamentary system in the national context. Even while resisting the anti-people policies of the Government led by them, we have time and again appealed to them for united movements. By not paying any heed to these, they are hindering the emergence of the true left and democratic alternative in the country and objectively strengthening the hands of Indira Gandhi and the ruling capitalist class.

Statement of Assam State Committee, SUCI

The extended meeting of the Assam State Committee of the S.U.C.I. was held on 13th, 14th and 15th April '84 at Gauhati under the conduction of Com. Asit Bhattacharjee, Secretary, Assam State Committee. The State Committee of the party on reviewing the latest economic and political situation of the State in course of a statement expressed its deep concern over the mounting price rise and alarming unemployment that has gripped the lives of the people of the State during the last one year rule of the Cong(I) Government. The State Committee of the party further added that the State administration has become more corrupt and it is being used by the ruling Cong(I) for its narrow party interest. The statement pointed out that the State Government is nakedly encouraging the communal and divisive forces to hide itself from the wrath of the people.

The State Committee firmly opined that the course of united democratic mass movement alone can bring some relief in this present unbearable situation. Pointing out the fact that the atmosphere of united democratic movement of all sections of oppressed people has totally disappeared since the beginning of the Assam movement, the State Committee further added that in spite of our repeated appeal emphasising the urgent necessity of pressurising the central and state Governments for the fulfilment of some burning economic demands especially the question of industrialisation of the state, the leaders of Assam movement has completely neglected this task.

Expressing grave concern over the desertion of the CPI, the RCPI and the Congress(S) from the six party alliance which in spite of its limitation reflected the genuine aspiration of the people, the statement said that the tendency of gaining in parliamentary politics by any means and practising opportunism stand as the main danger before the democratic movement. The State Committee further observed that CPI(M)'s failure to develop sustained democratic movement centering round the burning issue has contributed much to the collapse of six party alliance.

The statement further added that the CPI(M) while scrupulously avoiding the path of united democratic movement is also trying to hide itself by raising hollow slogans about movements and

people's demands and is engaged in demonstrating its strength solely with the purpose of drawing benefit in parliamentary election.

While emphasising the urgent necessity of immediate solution of Assam problem for bringing back the congenial atmosphere of democratic movement, the State Committee expressed its firm opinion that the four-point solution of Assam problem enunciated by the party long four years back still constitutes the only practical and legitimate solution of the problem.

The State Committee strongly demanded the immediate withdrawal of all black Acts and prohibitory orders upon the democratic movements by the state government.

Party Foundation Day Observed in Trivandrum

Trivandrum, April 24 :—

The 36th anniversary of the Party Foundation Day was observed here through a central meeting organised on April 24 last. Putherkkavim maidan, the venue of the meeting was well decorated with flags and festoons with an attractive and big dais in the middle. A quotation exhibition with quotations from Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, Mao and Comrade Shibdas Ghosh was also organised. A large number of people attended the quotation exhibition and also the nearby book stall with party literature.

Dock and Port Workers' Strike

(Contd. from page 2)
reire every year and no replacement is made by fresh appointment, the cargo handled by the ports including the two new ones, Tuticorin and New Mangalore, rose by 62 p.c. between 1971 and 1983 from 59 million tonnes to 96 million tonnes. This shows clearly what has been the rate of increase in work load on the workers.

Fifthly, the government that speaks volume about abolition of contract labour, is itself the biggest protector of the system. More than 40 p.c. of the dock workers are called unskilled and the jobs they perform are of perennial nature. They remain under the clutches of the Stevedo-

res (Contractors), listed or unlisted by the Dock Boards. Paradip in Orissa is one such port, where a veritable carnage occurred in March last.

Neither the unions, nor the government did show any serious concern for ending this barbarous system and strike was withdrawn, settlement reached after shelving this serious issue to a government committee, to be manned by persons from the ministries of Shipping and Transport and Labour.

It was a curious experience that none of the unions was telling the government to honour the recommendations of all the previous expert committees in the matter of housing for at least 50 p.c. of the dock

workers by constructing quarters around the dock areas. Instead all of them were for the HRA, at differential rates, 30% for Bombay, 25% for Calcutta and Madras and 17.5% for Visakhapatnam/Cochin, 15% for Kandala, Marmagao, New Mangalore, Tuticorin, that too in the last year, of the four-year agreement and at the flat rate of 10% with a minimum of Rs.50/- for others.

Has the new agreement ensured guards against erosion of real wages due to double-digit inflation in the country? No.

The leaderships made 'parity' with the steel workers' wages the main issue but in reality there was neither the parity with the steel workers' nor was it in terms of gains within the workers themselves. Thus whereas the minimum gross wages of the steel workers after the last revision has become Rs. 1,171.50, the same for the dock workers is Rs 1,009.20, the difference being Rs 162.30. This difference between the gross wages of both rises to Rs 258.90 at the maximum stage.

Again, the parity between the clerical and artisan or between the monthly rated and piece-rated staff has been neglected.

That is why whereas the wages of general port-workers got a hike in their wages by about 21.5 p.c. the rate has been 14.5% for the piece-rated workers.

—(Figures quoted from The Economic & Political Weekly—April 14, 1948)

The agreement has given no doubt some monetary benefits but makes no difference in the matter of guarding even real income. For, due to high rate of inflation the value of rupee is now 13 paise compared to its worth in 1960. And the formula of Rs 1.30 per point increase in index does not prevent further erosion in real wages.

Another obnoxious feature in the agreement is the acceptance of productivity linked bonus. Thus, these four federations have accepted all the pre-conditions set down by the Bur-

(Contd. on page 6)

Sixth Annual Conference of Sukinda Upatyaka Mines Workers' Union

Sukinda, April 15 : The Sixth Annual Conference of Sukinda Upatyaka Mines Workers' Union, affiliated with UTUC (Lenin Sarani) was held amidst great enthusiasm from 10 to 12 April at Samabil with Comrade Mayadhar Nayak, General Secretary of the Union in the chair.

Comrade Tapas Datta, Orissa State Secretary of the SUCI and a distinguished mass leader while addressing the Open session as the main speaker, called upon the workers to build up the broad unity of the workers stressing at the same time the need to forge alliance with the poor peasants and khetmazdoors on the face of the growing on-sloughs of the owning class and their state machinery to repress all legitimate democratic struggles of the working people.

The meeting was well attended. Comrade Jalaluddin, member Kerala State Committee of the Party and Secretary UTUC (Lenin Sarani) presided over the meeting. Comrade Krishna Chakraborty was the main speaker on the occasion. Others who addressed the gathering were Comrade. C. K. Lukose, member of Kerala State Organising Committee and Comrade Subramani. Comrade Venugopal rendered the speech of Comrade Chakraborty into Malayalam.

Comrade Bishnu Das, Vice-President of the Union, among others, also spoke. A unique feature of the conference was holding of a School of Politics with an eye to equip the assembled delegate workers with necessary social consciousness so as to enable them to sharpen their fight against their main enemy, the exploitative system and its state machine.

The Delegate Session was held on 12th April under the presidentship of Comrade Tapas Datta. The General Secretary's Report was placed by Comrade Mayadhar Nayak himself on which a large number of delegate-workers deliberated reflecting their united will to fight against the main enemy. The notable speaker who addressed the Delegate Session were Comrade Karen Soren, Niranjan Sethy and Charu Din. A resolution condemning the unprecedented violence, arson and murders resorted to by the Orissa police and administration at Paradeep during the Port and Dock Worker's strike in March last was unanimously adopted.

Heroic struggle by Dock Workers' betrayed by leadership

(Contd. from page 5)
 eau of Public Enterprise (BPE) which stem from the Boothalingam prescriptions of curbs on real wages like—(a) ceiling on rise in basic pay, (b) productivity-linked increase (c) Rs. 1.30 per point increase as DA, and (d) modernisation-mechanisation to reduce the work force.

What is most unfortunate in all these matters, the CPI(M), CPI in practice show no difference in attitude and approach as they too have become now active defenders of the moribund capitalist order and the ruling capitalist class from governmental power. These parties were saying to their supporters that but for the somersault of the INTUC at the last moment, the bargain would have been better. But the real reason for dragging the strike a few days more has also come to the press.

The Economic Times of 28.3.84, gave the news under the caption, "Dock T.U.'s dilemma". It said that Dr. Shanti Patel's pro-Janata Party HMS, though a member of Bombay Port Trust and Bombay Dock Labour Board was pushed out of the negotiations at the insistence of Mr. S. R. Kulkarni who leads the pro-Congress(I) faction of HMS, supported by AITUC and CITU. But Dr. Patel's union has about 25% following in Bombay Port and "not-too-insignificant" a following in Calcutta. So, the "recognised unions are in a dilemma. If they agree to a compromise which will not get the workers to what had already been demanded", Dr. Patel and others will call it a "surrender" and may even ask the workers to continue the strike for a couple of days. "Such a position may strengthen his position in Bombay and other ports." It is to be noted however that there was already the offer of 18.5% increase in emoluments at which the agreement was subsequently made. The question before

the four trade unions was therefore as to who would call the day. And the INTUC leadership did the good brotherly job by taking this responsibility which was immediately responded by the others. After all these facts, can there be really any line of distinction between the leaderships of the left trade unions with those of others?

LESSONS & THE TASK

The dock and port workers have fought gallantly. They have shown exemplary sense of unity. Their fight for 26 long days against the government of Sm. Indira Gandhi armed to the teeth with all the draconian laws conceivable, must be a source of inspiration to other sections of the toiling people, dejected due to no resistance being built up against the onslaughts of the crisis-ridden bourgeoisie through its subservient governments. They have shown that the fighting metal of the Indian working class is there but what really lacks is the real fighting leadership. The contrast of heroism and sacrificing spirit on the part of the workers and the treachery and betrayal of the compromising leaderships has once more been revealed, repeating the sorry tale of the working class movement in our country.

Our criticism about the leaderships is not therefore about how much economic benefits, they could wrest but on the more deeper reason about their very political purpose and angularity. The economic benefits achieved from a sincere struggle might be minimal or even nil but if it could rouse the political consciousness and organisation of those in struggle be substantial then the success measured by this must be welcome. But what about the type of dockers' struggle, which was of so much potential?

Long before pointing at the same kind of

leadership, that led the present struggle, Comrade Shibdas Ghosh, the great teacher of the proletariat brought this solemn lesson to the fore: "When the sole activity of the trade union leaders is to agitate the workers and get them into their fold by projecting a false image about (their) ability to wrest concessions from the management, then know it for certain that this party or union leadership is practising moderate trade unionism or economism like the Labour Party in England or the giant trade unions of the USA..."

What pained him most was the fact: "...the workers too approach only those leaders who they think, can manage some concessions for them. So, we find that, the workers usually run after the bosses of those unions that are run by the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties with the hope that these leaders can make the managements hear their demands and they have a chance to get some concessions."

("On Working Class Movement In India"—Proletarian Era—November 1, 1980.)

Comrade Ghosh therefore always urged the workers to sharpen their political education and alertness while conducting the trade union struggles. And he deplored working people show less political concern and interest. They fight gallantly in trade union and other democratic battles but do not equip and arm themselves with adequate-political education and class consciousness.

What is missed in all such struggles therefore, are the real working class political outlook, aims and objectives as also the goal. Such fights do not help the working class to learn the hard lessons of ever-sharpening class struggles nor do they contribute to building up their own instruments of struggle, essential for their emancipation.

Bibi Amar Kaur, Revolutionary Freedom Fighter Passes Away

On 12th May last, Bibi Amar Kaur, a revolutionary freedom fighter and sister of Saheed Bhagat Singh, breathed her last at Ludhiana in Punjab. In her death the people have lost a valiant and ceaseless fighter for their cause, a source of inspiration to the toiling masses and the youth in particular, a personality whose absence will be felt all the more in the prevailing situation in Punjab and elsewhere in the country.

Bibi Amar Kaur joined the ranks of the revolutionary fighters for the country's liberation from the British imperialist subjugation in her early youth, following the footsteps of her unforgettable illustrious brother, Saheed Bhagat Singh. She bore heroically, the torture and oppression brought down upon the freedom fighters by the imperialist rulers. To defend the people's cause Bibiji never lagged behind and all through life she was in the forefront standing by them in their hour of need.

Age or failing health could not inhibit the spirit, and the dauntless struggle she carried out against oppression of the people drew her into the movement for defence of democratic rights, civil liberty and secularism against the onslaughts mounted by the Central and State Governments on the toiling people. Last year, from the platform of All India Democratic Convention held in Delhi, she gave a stirring call to the youths of the country to rise to the occasion and fight for the people's cause, defend their unity and free themselves from caste, communal and parochial influence. She was elected an Adviser to the Committee for Protection of Democratic Rights and Secularism (CPDRS) which emerged from the same convention. Bibiji, to set the example herself, stepped out, unconcerned at her failing health, into the communal strife torn situation of Punjab and Haryana to strive for the unity of the toiling people against the machination of the ruling parties at the Centre and the States and the parochial Akali Morcha and other such forces. This is the hour when people, people of Punjab Haryana in particular, needed her most. Expressing the grief of the Central Committee of the SUCI at the demise of Bibiji, Comrade Nihar Mukherjee, General Secretary of the SUCI, observed: "The loss is all the more poignant at this hour when the presence of saner personalities is required to help the situation in Punjab."

Death has taken away Bibi Amar Kaur, but death can never put down the undying spirit she embodied. Many torches have been lit all over the land from this spirit and her unfulfilled mission will be achieved by her true successors.

The politics of status quo, the politics to keep the workers entangled in economism, the politics to defend the moribund capitalist order and the ruling capitalist class is all that matters to these leaderships who are no better than forces of compromise between labour and capital.

It is in other words, the politics to keep the workers "slave" or at best, "slightly better paid slaves"

but not the politics of doing away with wage slavery and making the workers prepared for this task, history has devolved on them. Let the workers grasp this truth and carry the lessons of their struggle to the concrete task of building up real struggling leadership of their own.

Long Live Workers
 Fighting Solidarity!

Long Live Revolution!

Editor-in-Chief—COMRADE NIHAR MUKHERJEE

Edited and Published by Sukomal Das Gupta from 48, Lenin Sarani, Calcutta 700013 and Printed by him at Ganadabi Printers and Publishers Private Limited, 52B, Indian Mirror Street, Calcutta 700013