

The Present Situation and Our Task

In the late fifties people seethed with anger and discontent against exploitation and oppression under dispensation of the Congress rulers. The self-styled Marxist and leftist parties channeled the popular outbursts into alleys of aimless, disorganized agitations, aiming only to reap petty electoral dividend while working masses bore the brunt of state repression.

In this background, Comrade Shibdas Ghosh delivered this address, wherein he analyses the root-cause which has driven the country into this sordid impasse. For the people, he shows the way out to close in on winning emancipation.

Comrade President and Friends,

You heard why this meeting has been convened today. There are many issues which need to be discussed. The situation of the whole country has become so critical and complex that a discussion on it would require a lot of time. Many points are there to discuss. But you see, we do not have so much time in this meeting. So, I want to raise before you some of the basic issues and draw your attention to a few basic questions. Firstly, there are certain events or facts which are acknowledged by all today. You too realize these in the core of your heart; every day you are discussing and deliberating on them. As you find, even though India became independent long ago, still the basic problems of the Indian society have not been solved. Of course, it is true, there has been construction of roads and some factories have been set up. But what is important to note is that while some new factories have come up, many more which were in existence closed down at the same time. There has been no solution to the unemployment problem. The earlier understanding, which we had, was that with industries developing, the unemployment problem gradually declines; as industrial revolution begins, unemployment gets reduced. In this country we find just the opposite. As some industries are coming up, it is being claimed that through

planning we are proceeding on the way to industrial revolution. But the more we are trying to proceed with this planning, the more we find the unemployment problem growing by the day. What is the reason for it? This is one of the basic questions confronting our national life.

Secondly, the moral standard of the whole nation is declining day by day. In the mind of people of all walks of life, it has become a matter of serious concern. This being a reality in our country, we are thinking deeply about it — we have to go into its cause, no doubt. But today, if you look at the entire capitalist world, you will see that this problem has become an international problem. In the USA itself and also in Europe, centring round teenagers, a serious problem has appeared. The moral standard of all the capitalist countries today is rapidly falling. What is the reason for it? In our country, too, all of us have been crying hoarse over the cultural standard; that the moral standard of the nation is going down. What is the reason — this is another basic question. On these two questions I shall mainly concentrate my discussion. Then as regards the solution to these two problems, if time permits, I shall deal with it afterwards.

The first pertinent point is that though the country is politically independent, we must keep it in mind that the very use of the word “country”, or when we talk of “the country’s interest”, when we, or whoever it be, use these words simply like that, they conceal a vital truth both from themselves and from the masses. The truth is that today our society is not an undivided, not an indivisible society. No matter, whether we want it or not, whether we like it or not, our society, in accordance with the inexorable law of history, is class-divided. On one side there is the capitalist class, the owners of all wealth and means of production who own and control the entire production, trade and commerce of the country. On the other side there are the have-nots, the proletariat who sell their labour power, who are not the owners. Whether one likes it or not, this social reality cannot be dismissed by a pen-stroke, by any wishful theory. If one does so, one will land in great trouble. And in this country such troubles have been brought on. In this country we have concealed this stark reality with catchwords like “country’s interest”, “national planning”, “national development” — we have concealed it not only from ourselves but from the masses, we didn’t let people know it. While delivering lectures, writing articles, participating in debates on “national planning”, even we who call ourselves leftists, we do not try to raise this question straightaway, be it in Parliament or Assembly, we do not try to highlight every day that in a class-divided society no planning, no “national planning” can be free from class interest. Either

it would operate in the interest of the capitalist class labelled as the “national interest” or would be in the interest of the working class, the real national interest. Those who want to adamantly deny this truth actually deceive themselves if they are honest, and if they are dishonest, then obviously nothing more needs to be spelt out. If they are honest they deceive themselves as well as the people. And this way the people of the country are being deceived continuously.

So, what I want to tell you straight is that the economic system, the state structure, that prevails in our country is a capitalist economic system, a capitalist state structure — a reality that cannot be denied by any trickery of words. Though, I know, there are one or two political parties which pose as Marxist-Leninists and always proclaim themselves to be diehard revolutionaries, they are trying to deny this truth, resorting to any means, in the name of analysis with jugglery of words. However, it is not possible to judge their activities or examine their political analyses in today’s discussion. So, I am not entering into this. Earlier in various discussions and writings of ours we dealt with these issues. In today’s address I shall try in particular to discuss, in broad terms, some characteristic features of our capitalist economic system and political system. I think, in order to thoroughly comprehend the problems of our capitalist economic and political system, to realize them properly, it is of utmost importance to understand to a certain extent the present-day features of the capitalist world.

The present-day capitalist world is faced with a grave crisis. This is not a crisis of general pattern with which we are conversant. Until the Second World War the crisis in the capitalist world was of a completely different kind. Crisis was there. Since the beginning of the 20th century when capitalism acquired imperialist character, it got battered with crisis. Yet, after the Second World War the nature of the crisis into which capitalism-imperialism plunged bears an altogether different character. Its difference from the old crisis lies in the fact that even amid innumerable crises in the past, and despite the worldwide depression or monetary crisis of 1930-1932, there had been in the old one a relative stability in the capitalist world market. To make out why I say this, it has to be understood that the capitalist world and its society, its production system, are market-based. The foundation of the entire production system rests on demand and supply. What is the necessity of the people — to plan on its basis, to produce on the basis of this and distribute accordingly — the capitalist economy has no bearing on these. The nature and character of the capitalist economy is such that it is solely governed by the demand of the

market, which is invariably linked with people's purchasing power, solely on consideration of what will be the amount of profit coming out of the sale of goods. To put it in other words, on all these rests the foundation of the capitalist economy. So, if there is no stability of the market then the capitalist economy's state of existence becomes highly volatile. However, until the Second World War, until the last War, despite a thousand crises and many depressions, the capitalist world maintained all along a relative stability. But the crisis that ensued after the Second World War was a daily, hourly crisis. The earlier relative stability of the capitalist market is no more today, it has disappeared, that condition of the capitalist market has ceased to exist now. And because that relative stability has disappeared, the very state of existence of any capitalist economic system in this epoch is confronted with a new world situation. Till the last quarter of the nineteenth century, different countries in Europe, America were able to develop and advance through capitalist economic planning. The question arises that in our country, if we do some planning why will not also the capitalist economy, this backward economy, develop within the capitalist framework — why will it not also develop as rapidly, with the same speed, same method and based on the same ideals with which capitalism, the industrial revolution, developed in those countries? To find the answer, we have to take into view the present world capitalist market and international situation. Only then can we understand why the planning and the crisis are running side by side in our country. We make plans, but the plans are associated with a shadow of crisis. On one side, we are making provisions for employment; on the other, the already existing industries are collapsing. We cannot sustain them. In the existing capitalist economic structure it is not possible to make any radical land reform. For, if we go in for farming with the help of technology or highly developed machines, the labourers thus being created surplus at one stroke would rush to the towns. Consequently, the towns would collapse under the pressure of this army of unemployed. The rulers of the capitalist state cannot venture to take this risk. For, there works no industrial planning to provide them with employment. So, such speedy industrial development in the existing capitalist structure is in no way possible.

But this situation notwithstanding, some planning for development is going on, the government has to do something. But while carrying out the planning they are faced with insurmountable hurdles at every step. There are two reasons behind this. One, the earlier relative stability of the market does not exist any more. Moreover, there is extreme competition. On the one hand, they have to compete with the Western imperialist countries. In what environment did

the earlier capitalist countries grow? The entire world was their colony — they divided those colonies among themselves and grew depending on the world market. But what is the situation the backward capitalist countries like ours are confronted with today? On the one hand, they face market competition with the Western imperialist countries. Again each of the newly independent countries wants to develop itself and is striving to do so in the capitalist path. A big chunk of the countries, the socialist camp, has already gone out of the capitalist camp. After this in what remains of the capitalist camp there are a thousand and one competitors. As for the competition with the Western imperialists, we, the backward countries in unison, are trying to confront the situation. Again we ourselves are engaged in a scramble for the market. For that we quarrel among ourselves. Among ourselves, the one that is a bit more strong and dominating, economically consolidated, is trying to subdue others. It wants to invest capital in the market of other countries; it wants to increase its own export to other countries turning those into mainly import dependent countries. Hence, the centre of contradiction lies here. So, we find, on the one side, this intense contradiction, conflict and crisis in the international capitalist market. On the other side, what is the internal condition of our country? Most of the people are turning out to be unemployed. The labourers are ill-paid. In our country 75 per cent of the people are farmers who do not get jobs for more than three months a year. The purchasing power of this vast population living in the villages is practically nil — they are simply paupers, totally devoid of purchasing power. In the capitalist economy there cannot be any production when there is no sale of the product for at least a marginal profit. They would not go in for such production. They would produce less and sell products among a small number of people at a higher price to reap profit. Invariably there will be scarcity in the country. For, production in our country runs according to the basic law of capitalist economy. So you see, the internal market of the country is getting more and more squeezed with every passing day. We have failed to provide the minimum of clothing for people, for the peasant women of this country to wear. We have not been able to ensure the minimum clothing for all the persons in this country to cover their body. But bale after bale of cloth which the workers produce through hard toil in our country are sent to foreign markets. The plea is: we want foreign currency, so we need to increase our export. Because, for the development of industries machines have to be imported from other countries. Actually, this is another grand hoax. There is a need for it, no doubt. But there is also another side to it. The commodities to be produced with these machines would have got stacked unless there was a

market abroad. Here there is hardly one to purchase those goods. How many people are there to buy these goods at the price fixed up by the producer-capitalists? It is not that there are no buyers, but there are none to purchase goods at that price. That is, compared to the spiralling rise in prices of the commodities people's income is so meagre that their purchasing power is steadily going down. The ill-paid workers, the large army of unemployed and 75 per cent of peasants have no purchasing power. This being the situation in the country how can economic development take place? Crying hoarse about planning — will it facilitate the process? Hence today the entire economy of the country has plunged into a deep crisis.

Another point I want to dwell on here, which I would also like to bring to the attention of many an economist of our country. For whatsoever reason, many fail to understand or do not want to accept it. But I firmly believe it, and hence I want to place it before you. I request you to reflect over it. Our country is comparatively backward and that is why it is being said that neither the tendency of fascization, nor the tendency towards militarization of industry can appear here. But I firmly hold, despite being a backward capitalist country, this is just what is happening in our country. The bogey that has been raised 'increase military budget' and the fact that the national Emergency is still continuing — there is a serious economic reason behind these. Its basis is that whatever planning we are undertaking, whatever industrial planning there is and steel plants are coming up, we are still not able to produce all kinds of quality steel. As a result, we have to import various kinds of quality steel from abroad to meet our needs, on the one hand, and, on the other, again much of the steel produced in our own steel plants has to be sold in the foreign market. Because, what use has our country's market for it? You are not going to eat steel. The cry 'increase steel production' is pointless if industries of various consumer goods and other light industries do not grow in our country— otherwise to what use will this steel be put? So, the steel we are already producing requires, due to crisis of external markets, an artificial stimulation in the internal market for its consumption. Where will we use it for consumption? As you see, the external market is practically blocked; the internal market is being squeezed. Then in such a situation the steel plants would close down overnight, the steel production would stop with steel stacked up and stockpiled. From the very necessity of artificial stimulation of the internal market, eventually the state itself is increasingly becoming the purchaser of such production. Hence, the clamour 'expand defence industry', even if the people of the country are to go without food as a result. Since there is crisis of external market and also squeeze in of internal market, the defence

industry and military construction have to be developed to sustain the given pace of industrialization, to some extent at least, in the given circumstance in India. This is why, based on deficit financing and thus breeding inflation, the state becomes purchaser of steel and various types of essential products for defence. As a matter of fact, the mindset that clearly works behind the slogan 'we shall have to strengthen our defence' is in the main prompted by this very necessity of staving off the crisis of market, both internal and external, from which the capitalist economy of the country is suffering. Yet that cannot be revealed to the people. So, in order to carry the people along with them, they need a politics before the people of the country, that is, the national Emergency — 'the country is in danger from all sides, enemies all around are about to attack, India is about to be swallowed up — so we have to put our whole strength behind defence'. But we have to understand that the actual reason for it is lying in our economy. The economy is a crisis-ridden economy which is trying to stave off the crisis, to the extent possible, by taking recourse to militarization. The fact that Emergency and DIR or Defence of India Rule is still in force in our land reaffirms this contention of mine. Almost all sections of the people, all political parties have time and again demanded withdrawal of Emergency. Despite this why has the Emergency and DIR still not been repealed? Over the last four years peace prevails on the northern borders. The war with Pakistan has come to an end, and there is no war-like situation with the Tashkent agreement concluded. Notwithstanding this why are Emergency and DIR even today not being lifted although the different political parties have unitedly raised the demand for it ? To realize its social, political and economic significance, you have to thoroughly grasp the discussion which I have just made, although that has been done very briefly. Thus you see, this is the inner face, the real face of planning of our so-called socialist society, the true significance, the real face of our 'national planning'. So, when we go on clamouring 'we don't get food, there are no civil liberties', and so on and so forth; when we go on developing people's movement, we need to have a clear understanding of this very real picture as well as the character of the Indian ruling class.

I also want to discuss another point here. In the post-Second World War period when the waves of revolutionary movements were sweeping from one end to another of India, this country's political leaders of the party of the Tatas and Birlas backstabbed such a great anti-imperialist freedom struggle from one side, and the British imperialists did the same from another side. When a revolutionary struggle was developing, together they hatched, apparently

with great finesse and very cleverly, a compromise, and by chanting the slogan of ‘freedom’ they doused the fire of patriotism, as if by administering an intoxicating drug. The fruits of the freedom of our country came into the hands of the bourgeoisie, the capitalists. We started dancing with joy: the country has attained independence. This is not to say that independence was not achieved. I do admit, yes, the country has become politically independent. You see, the pertinent point is that simple independence was not our aim. We wanted the rule of the workers and peasants, the real democratic rights of the people, their right to live. One thing we realized even at that very time: the nation that is engaged in freedom struggle against the British rule was not an indivisible one. Indeed it was already divided into two antagonistic classes — the capitalist class, on the one hand, the workers, peasants and the toiling millions, on the other. That freedom, when attained, would be shared by both the classes, both of them would unitedly develop the country — this is propagated by none but the bluffers. The pertinent truth is, if independence is achieved and if power goes into the hands of the capitalist class, the working class will have to forge another struggle for emancipation. The struggle was conducted against the British rulers for freedom, but its fruit was usurped by the bourgeoisie. Hence the working class, the toiling millions will have to engage once more in the struggle to achieve emancipation. But if, as a result of independence, power really went into the hands of the proletariat, then the people of the country also would have attained complete emancipation through one single freedom struggle. That is why our freedom movement had two objectives — the country’s independence as well as the people’s emancipation. Independence has been achieved but not people’s emancipation. People have been betrayed. The capitalist class has come to power. Now, this capitalist system is leading the country in an irreversible course with two consequences. What are they? Now, I am going to say a few words on this.

The first one is, when we had just attained freedom from the clutches of imperialism, in the initial stage the country had to adopt an anti-imperialist role and the national bourgeoisie had to maintain initially an anti-imperialist stance for a certain period. The representatives and political leaders of the capitalist class in this country had to do so in their own interest. At that time they felt that for the sake of this country’s economic development they had to adopt a give and take policy and bargain with the imperialists. And through this bargaining they aimed to extract advantage from both the imperialist and socialist camps. According to some people this is a rather intelligent tactic, and Jawaharlal Nehru a great intelligent man! India needs such a man! In

my opinion, the tactic might be good. But in whose interest is it, the people or the Tatas and Birlas? Who is going to benefit, who is going to get advantage out of this plan — the people, or the capitalists of the country? Is it consolidating the rule of the capitalist class, or is it further advancing the cause of people's emancipation, or is that becoming far more difficult to achieve? The question lies here. The more the bourgeoisie of this country are concentrating power in their hands, the more they are snatching away by force the democratic rights of the people. They are ruling as they want it. They are not at all for preservation of people's rights, rather they are snatching away personal liberties and civil liberties; they are abusing power autocratically within the country. The problem of food, of provision for such other minimum basic needs is not being possible to solve. Emancipation of the workers from capitalist exploitation within this system cannot be conceived of. I have already said that many issues crop up, but I cannot deal with all of them in this meeting. For example, there is the issue like nationalization of industries in this capitalist state. What it is — whether it is socialism, whether it would bring emancipation to the working class, whether it has any relevance to socialism. In plain words, I want to say — no. The reason is that through nationalization of industries in the capitalist state, state monopoly capitalism has developed which is the rock bottom foundation of fascism. In this country nationalization of industries is laying the foundation of fascism and not of socialism, though this is being done with the label of socialism. The real meaning of socialism is altogether different. In socialism the basic motive force of production changes. The production relations change. With this, the class character of the state changes. The principle of law and order, its very moral background also changes. The structure of law and order in our country is still a continuation of the imperialist tradition even today having basically no contradiction with it. If you just ponder over it, you would see that, let alone repealing the repressive laws enacted during the British rule, they have been introducing even more draconian laws. For, those earlier laws have become inadequate for their purpose. So, following the same line they are continually devising new laws and black Acts and constantly thinking of making them more repressive and coercive — these are being done in the name of security of the nation. It is on this point that I raised the question initially — whose nation is it? Is it the nation of the Tatas and the Birlas, or that of the toiling millions? The nation of the Tatas, Birlas, or of the people who toil for a living? Had it been the nation of the toiling people, there would have been no need to impose such draconian laws on those very people in the name of national security. Rather, if needed, these should have been

enforced on the black-marketeers, on the anti-social elements, on the Tatas and the Birlas, on the agents of the imperialists. But just the opposite is happening. They are applied here as punitive measures to suppress the legitimate democratic movements of the people. Who are disturbing law and order in this country? The people themselves, it is being said. According to their version the people who constitute the nation, they themselves are endangering law and order. Their nation, therefore, is not the nation of the people, but the nation of the Tatas and Birlas! The law and order serves the latter, under whose millstone the people are being crushed. Those people cannot obey that law and order throughout their life — at best out of fear, reluctantly and worn out they carry its burden for some time. But when it becomes unbearable, their accumulated grievance bursts out, they want to defy this law and order, they want to break it. It is quite natural. This will happen again and again and this is what is happening at present also in the country. People had fought in the past, they are fighting at present and will do so in future, too. This fight sometimes assumes an intense character, sometimes takes a very militant form, sometimes it bursts forth violently, sometimes losing its momentum, when it slows down.

But the fight is continuing and will keep on continuing. However, two questions always appear before these fights, again and again. The first one is: what ideology does provide such inspiration on the strength of which a firm political objective can steadily emerge before the movements which are developing centring round problems of daily life and other immediate demands? And the second question relates to different aspects of organizational problems in different stages of conducting movements. These two problems that appear again and again in movements every time — we have not yet been able to solve them. If we are to solve them in the future, then our political outlook which is getting muddled up day by day has to become clear first. And the main question on which our political awareness remains blunted is that in a class divided society instead of trying to induce and develop the class consciousness, almost all of us in unison, are chewing the cud of catchwords like ‘national interest’, ‘national planning’, ‘national development’. One thing has to be always kept in mind concerning these catchwords, and which the political leaders, too, not to speak of those calling themselves Marxist-Leninists but others also have to be asked: which class interest, which class planning, which class development do you mean by national planning and national development? If your purpose is to develop anti-capitalist revolutionary consciousness, then why are you averse to propagating the class ideology and object of each of the movements? But what does my saying all this matter?

You see, they are all national heroes, national leaders ! No one intends to project himself as a class leader. They do not dare to do so as they want to win elections! The votes of the middle class, upper middle class and the rich have to be got. The votes of all the people have to be pocketed! They are aware that unless they manage to somehow unite all sections of the people, one cannot get the votes of all sections of the people as they desire. You see, class battle means a serious hindrance to them in their electioneering activity. Hence you find, knowingly or unknowingly, the very interest of electioneering is becoming the overriding aspect of our politics, behind all our practice and behaviour. All of us want struggle and we do conduct such struggles, too. But if the tactics with which these struggles are being conducted are analysed then it would clearly be revealed that the main political outlook behind all these movements is mainly agitation oriented. Hence it may not be nice to hear, but the fact is that since struggles basically remain confined to the stage of agitational movements, these ultimately serve the interest of whipping up election fever. So, I say, all their talk about struggle is simply election oriented, their struggles are but struggles to whip up electoral fever. Whereas the real object of struggle is to achieve people's emancipation— to hasten it up through struggle, to educate the people through struggles and while gradually organizing people to ultimately decide the question of their emancipation that either we shall wrest people's emancipation peacefully — you will relinquish power, and we shall seize it or if you resist, it will be settled by way of revolution. But what is wanted is people's liberation, it has to be achieved by all means; even today people's liberation has not been attained. The toiling millions of the country have not achieved liberation, they are yet to achieve emancipation from class exploitation.

You see, these national leaders, those who claim themselves to be national leaders, while drawing up plans they never reveal to the people that these plans have been designed in the interest of the capitalist class. What they alone discuss about the plan is that it has got defects here and there. But I say the entire planning is vile. Its sole motive is to further consolidate the entire capitalist system — how to extricate it from the crisis in which it is enmeshed. Whenever it plunges in a crisis their concern is to find out ways and means to extricate it from that so as to prolong its existence. Then what is the need for you to bring about some petty changes here and there through some minor omissions and trivial suggestions and alterations. This is their concern — it is the headache of the representatives of that class, of those who defend the interest of that class. Your task is to clearly bring home to the people that it is not a question of minor reforms

of the planning. This very planning itself will ruin the entire country, it will ruin the entire population of the country; it is a conspiracy to utterly ruin the people and further promote the interests of the capitalists. And this conspiracy is being passed off in the name of national interest, in the name of patriotism. Patriotism, true patriotism, if it does not mean love for the people, if it does not uphold the interest of the people, then it is not patriotism. That patriotism which motivates serving capitalism is no patriotism, it is nothing but shameless servility to the monopoly capitalist system. And this is what is being practised in this country. What is being observed is that while talking aloud about defending 'national interest', knowingly or unknowingly, such slavery is being indulged in. So this question needs to be settled straightforward. We have to remember that our country has attained independence, capitalist state power is in existence, capitalist social system is in existence and a capitalist government is well-established. So, our course of action, our political goal is the people's anti-capitalist liberation struggles. The people's emancipation which we should have achieved through our freedom struggle — we failed to do due to lack of correct leadership. So, in developing movements, the question of leadership turns out to be a crucial one. After discussing this last question, I shall take my leave.

Movements come about in this country; this time also one has occurred, and the movement witnessed this time is unprecedented in our history, unprecedented in the history of mass struggle. I could not be personally involved in the movement this time owing to illness. I was away for treatment. Yet I have closely observed all the developments. I am well acquainted with what has happened, with whatever went on as my party was one of the constituents of that movement. You all know that our party was involved in this movement. So, I have all the information, I know what has happened. And from this experience, one thing has come uppermost in my mind. What is it ?

I do not know whether you remember it, many of you perhaps heard my discussion, my speech of last 24th April at a similar gathering here. At that time a view was widely prevalent in the political quarters that the people do not want to fight, they are indifferent to movements. The only thing that concerns them is elections. I said, it is wrong to think so. The people will fight again. No one can say when their anger will explode like a bomb in society. Don't say that the people of the country are not willing to fight. Yes, they have suffered, time and again they have

trusted the leadership and fought; time and again they have laid down their lives. True it is that failing as yet to recover from the atrocities they suffered in the 59 movement has given rise to this ongoing repercussion. Having seen this it is our feeling that the people do not want to fight any more! Being subjected to repression again and again, when their sufferings will cross all limits, then the anger of these very people will explode again like a bomb. Even so, a question remains. Which is, despite having burst out in anger, having rushed to the arena of struggle, being prepared to sacrifice their lives, baring chest to bullets, having thrown challenges to the police like “Shoot us, fire as many bullets as you have,” despite the people having come forward in this manner, the leadership is found to have collapsed just like a thrombosis patient. What this leadership understands is agitation only. They do not even know how to organize the masses when they jump into movement, how to transform them into an organized army in order to carry out a disciplined protracted battle — to conduct a militant struggle, not just a sporadic outburst. Here it is needless to say that we will not let our resources be wasted — nothing will be allowed to happen in an unpurposeful and unplanned way. If need be we will retreat. But when we will strike it shall be an organized attack which cannot be subdued by any military or any police force within days. But what is the result if it is a sporadic spontaneous outburst from people’s accumulated anger? The movement continues on its own for as long as it can, but after a few days a time comes when it fizzles out on its own.

And just when it is fizzling out, the leaders of these parties say, there is nothing left in the movement any more, nothing more can be done now, nothing more will come out. So, let there be an honourable settlement and save the prestige somehow. And what has happened, glorify it, pat the back of the people who fought, praise them profusely. To these leaders the issue is like this : whatever loss the people incurred as the consequence of onslaught of repression is theirs alone. If there is victory, it is well and good. But there is no harm even in defeat, even if demands are not achieved. For even if frustrated a bit, the people are sure to become anti-Congress, develop tremendous anger against the administration. These leaders will capitalize on that and reap dividends in the elections. So, they go on stirring up the people into agitation with reports of how many people have fought in the movement how many have been killed, how intense the battle has been! That is sufficient, nothing else matters! This is what struggle is about! Such fights will recur and they will reap rich benefits in the ballot box !

My question is : is this what leadership is about? But this is what is happening over and over again in this country. This is what I call pure and simple demagogic leadership. Their objective is not to educate the people, but only to win cheap popularity. When people have to be taught about organization and inculcated with the ideology, when they have to be taught the tactics of the movement — how to fight, how to advance, how to retreat — at that very juncture, having aroused the people with harangue and winning cheap applause these leaders withdraw from struggle. This is the characteristic of our leaders.

I am going to say a little more about the leaders, because in this leader-centric country the tendency is such that people are bent on simply following the leader and that too in a blind, uncritical way. The country is known for blind obedience to Gurus. We are yet to get rid of such psyche and practice, we are yet to overcome this pernicious habit. Hence the integrity of the leaders, the standard of their political consciousness, their dedication to revolution and their personal code of conduct — these are all vitally important questions here. For, in most cases the people mould their character and political consciousness based on the example set by the conduct of these leaders. Naturally, if the leaders cannot free themselves from all kinds of careerism and various tendencies of opportunism, people's revolutionary character, sense of discipline and political awareness cannot be distinctly forged. Therefore, to strengthen the leadership of the movement the trend of opportunism and careerism which has become vividly and increasingly manifest in the character of many a leader needs to be severely criticized — I believe so.

The parties which so long have been providing leadership to the movements in our country are basically election-oriented parties. Be these self-styled, fake Marxist-Leninists or bearers of Left or Right 'communist' flags, be they contenders of this ism or that ism — their bottom line is the same, they are absolutely election-oriented parties. On the eve of the movements whenever we proposed to the United Left Front (ULF) Committee to organize, to build up people's committees as the revolutionary force in the mass movements, that is, to build up people's instrument of struggle, they insisted: organize ULF Committee of different constituent parties. That is, instead of people's committees they stressed on forming ULF committees with representatives of different parties at various levels. But these ULF committees, as a matter of fact can never replace the function of the people's committees. If an organic link is to be established between the leadership and the people who join the movement and take part in

struggle then it is necessary to build up people's committees consisting of chosen people possessing due qualities from among the participants in the movement at different stages. Instead, if the ULF committees are formed simply with representatives of different parties they have no other role than releasing press statements and giving directions only. In such a situation what happens then? When people are inflamed to fight they will fight in the streets and we, the leaders, would go there by car on being informed, if necessary, and deliver an oration and then depart. We do not know who are taking to the streets and who are fighting, where they are retreating to and wherefrom are they coming! The attitude appears to be like this: we need not bother about all this information. The fighting masses are the common men on the street, they take to the streets to fight and merge into the crowds in the streets again. That is enough to serve our purpose. But why is it enough? Because the hardship suffered by these people throughout the movement foments contempt for the Congress, breeds intense hatred against it. If the movement meets with a setback it is not that they do not criticize the leadership also. But the way the leaders think is : however much the people may criticize us, basically they cannot but be anti-Congress. And if we contest the election then for whom else but us will they cast their votes? In that case what does it matter if there is a bit of criticism? Those who think in this way are evil charlatans; very clever and unscrupulous in furthering their self-interest, they wreak havoc. These very charlatans are deeply entrenched in the political arena of the country today, having usurped a large part of the leadership.

That is why I say, a struggle needs to be led on the basis of an ideology and well thought out organizational planning. A struggle does not materialize by resorting to just any means. Similarly, an organization can never be built up by taking recourse to just any means. An ideology will have to be upheld before it. What is that ideology the Lefts have upheld other than the routine demands of food, clothes and education? The Congress is trying to implant an ideology, an idea among the people. That is national chauvinism. They are trying to pass off this national chauvinism as patriotism. Some Leftists are raising the slogan of people's democracy, some again are superficially raising the slogan of socialism. But what kind of socialism? Where lies its difference with national chauvinism and where is it in conflict with the latter? Where does it agree with patriotism, where with nationalism and what is its contradiction with it? They do not consider it to be their prime responsibility to clarify all these questions to the people. But if these questions are not clarified, the purpose of the struggle not explained, it does not become a

clear thought in the mind of the people. This is nothing else than throwing a stone in the dark. Simply on the basis of a grievance, a hatred fostered in our mind, we burst out violently against the personified expression of the administration we set eyes on. This grievance is bound to explode. As is well known to all, every time people had to countenance worst form of oppression and persecution. But it is also true that people have their own way to fight back and as such they will invariably give their own reply to repression — whether with a leader guiding them or not. Hence, my emphasis is that a distinct ideology is a must for movements. What is that ideology of ours? This is our ideology of socialism and proletarian internationalism. There cannot be any socialism, true socialism, without proletarian internationalism. Socialism divorced from proletarian internationalism is worst opportunism, perhaps worse than national jingoism. But you see, that very socialism exists among some of us who claim to be Leftists! Among us Leftists there exist such type of socialists who have not the slightest obligation to proletarian internationalism. They do not feel any obligation. They feel proud of their nationalistic orientation. Still they speak of socialism. But wherein lies the danger of such pseudo-socialism? Maybe, they also do not know. And what is more, we have kept the people too almost completely in the dark about it. That is why I am saying that the people of the country should have to understand this. Those who speak of socialism must be proletarian internationalists because socialism cannot but be proletarian internationalism. But for this, any other type of socialism is in reality a variety of either Nehruvian socialism or Morarji's socialism, Bertrand Russell's socialism, or socialism of Nasser of Egypt, or similar such varieties of socialism set forth by various people — but through none of these is there any possibility of establishing scientific socialism. Nor has it come about anywhere in the world. What has been established is either capitalism or fascism, or Hitler-Mussolini's socialism that brought on nothing else than fascism. They too did vociferously clamour for their variety of socialism, but what they brought on was fascism, chauvinist militancy, national chauvinism, jingoism — anything but socialism. So, we have to keep in mind this inextricable relation holding between the ideology of socialism and proletarian internationalism. Whenever socialism does not admit of any obligation to proletarian internationalism, it clearly turns out to be usurping the good name of socialism. There is no doubt about it and there can be no compromise whatsoever in this regard. This usurpation you must detect. If you can detect it, then you can do the screening of who among the so-called Marxist-Leninists gets eliminated at the first instance. It has to be kept in mind that the matter

does not end simply with verbal declarations. It must be ascertained further whether you have been able to make the correct scientific analysis of the Indian social system, and been able to apply the socialist ideals in the concrete conditions of India. Whether or not you have diagnosed the malaise of the Indian society, of Indian nationalism as well as the moral degradation of the country. Has the disease been diagnosed? In the case of moral degeneration, the disease is an ideological crisis. In the era of Kshudiram, at the time of freedom movement in the country, we heard the youth of Bengal being hailed as the “flowers of Bengal”. Students in large numbers took to the streets leaving homes, coming out of schools and colleges, sacrificing their career to fight for the cause of freedom. They were dauntless to embrace the gallows, they did not fear to go to jail, to suffer tortures. In culture, in poetic works, in literature, in all these spheres we witnessed the forward march of the people. But today in every field of culture, literature or poetic works, we witness a blatant appeasement of the capitalist class, the class in power or in other words bootlicking of the capitalists — a trouble-free progressivism! That progressivism is to be cultivated, which is totally risk-free ! Such progressivism is to be cultivated which excludes the danger of the noose around one’s neck, excludes the danger of the gallows, excludes the fear of imprisonment, the fear of the bludgeon of the capitalist class! We shall have to cultivate that type of risk-free progressivism, of course, taking adequate guard and remaining on the safe side! This crisis is thus one of ideology, of culture. And its root cause, its basis lies in the economic crisis which I have already discussed. The same holds true for America, too. All this furore over teenagers’ crisis — it is a problem — the root cause of this problem lies in the foundation of their society. This shows that the American society is lost in a mess. It has lost its ideology. The nationalism of Jefferson and Lincoln, their ideals of patriotism and democracy which once inspired the American nation as a liberty-seeking people and which attracted the entire world — that same liberty turning into a privilege, personal liberty in the American society has degenerated into mere personal privilege.

So when something, some ideology turns into a privilege, it loses its revolutionary and progressive character. An ideology emerges in history through conflict and contradiction between the main antagonistic forces in the society in order to establish a new social order by demolishing the old ideology. But that ideology, too, in its course, with changing social conditions transforms into the ideology of the vested interest. Then it becomes the privilege of the vested interest. And when it becomes a privilege it can no longer inspire any nation or

people. It then breeds only slaves — some servants, paid servants. That is why, today, in the world of literature, education, drama, among the students, everywhere, the meaning of discipline has become reduced to obeying rules and regulations of the offices, and to somewhat act like mercenaries in army parade and drill exercises. Education has come to connote winning lucrative government jobs; education means the acquiring of technical education from within this educational system — how highly paid a mechanic I can become, how highly paid an engineer I can become. What human values I possess, how much knowledge I have about history and how far I understand the significance of history, how much of social values I reflect, what kind of a person I am as a human being — there is no need to go into all this. I am an engineer, I can skillfully screw nuts and fix bolts, so I am a highly enlightened man. For, I earn four thousand rupees! This is the mental make-up of the society. This mental mindset is shattering the backbone of the nation.

So, I was saying, the ideals of the freedom movement, patriotism, love for the motherland to profess which the youth of this country had to go to jail, had to die at the gallows — the ideal of patriotism, nationalism of those days was a progressive revolutionary ideal. That is why this ideology could once imbue the whole nation, instill vitality into the people. Today, that same bourgeois nationalism has been transformed into an instrument of privilege in the hands of the capitalist class. Hence those who speak of nationalism today are in reality simply chewing the cud of privilege and opportunism; and to the people of the country the meaning of nationalism, service to the country has come to exemplify a job, indulging oneself in slavish servitude, flattering to please the masters, acting as they like. There is nothing like voluntary service over here. And the word ‘discipline’ is meaningless if it is not voluntary. You are a paid servant, I am paying you wage, so you must abide by the dictates of office — if you do not follow these, you will lose your job. You are obeying discipline simply from the fear of losing your job. Is this discipline? No, this is not called discipline. The word ‘discipline’ has only one meaning and that is, it is voluntary — it is self-imposed. This sense of voluntary discipline is almost absent in the character of the nation today. But where will it come from? For, the ideology which once instilled discipline in the people has been transformed today into a practice of opportunism in the hands of the capitalist class, the ruling class. We need a new ideology. This society is pregnant with the possibility of emergence of a new ideology. What is that ideology which can smash this crushing mill-stone, shatter these fetters? It is the ideology of socialism, the ideology of

proletarian internationalism, of proletarian revolution, anti-capitalist revolution. If we can inspire and instil the people of the country with this ideology and develop struggle on the basis of this ideology, then we shall once again witness the kindling of the spark of vitality among the people. That valour of Kshudiram will fire people once again, that daring fearlessness will again rekindle the students — but not before that. Hence we have to keep this, too, in mind.

Finally, I shall tell you only one more thing. Do not applaud any and every struggle just. Once the movement commences, it is to be fought unitedly. Maybe right, maybe sometimes it will be wrong, yet the people will have to be on the path of struggle. Everyone has to be in the struggle. But one has to keep one's eyes and ears open. Try to understand who is going to reap dividends out of this struggle. It is us who are fighting, we the common people who are fighting. But dividends are being reaped by some political touts — the career seekers at the elections, yet it is we who are making the sacrifice. So, if we consider movements as a prelude to the development of a mighty struggle for emancipation of the masses, if we consider it to be the altar of the liberation struggle of the people, if we believe that through these the struggle for emancipation will gradually develop, we have to give deep thought to the question of organization of these struggles as also the ideology to guide these struggles. With these words I end my discussion today.

Long Live Revolution!

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