

# RED SALUTE COMRADE SHIBDAS GHOSH



“...My heart is with that worker who has the sense of dignity, has self-respect. Who would court death than surrender self-respect. Who would fight to win his demands, and who is conscious of his obligations as the worker. But the worker who is a typical agent of the capitalist owner, I have no love and affection for him just because he is a worker...”

*Proletarian  
Era*

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# Significance of labour policy of the United Front Govt. of 1967 in West Bengal

*Comrade President, Brother Engineering Workers and Friends,*

I have been invited to say a few words at this annual conference of the West Bengal Engineering Workers' Union today. I will try to briefly explain to you, in the background of the existing socio-economic system, the true significance of the progressive labour policy adopted by the United Front government in West Bengal after it came to power and also the task it enjoins on the common people and the working masses in particular in this situation.

First of all, previously also conferences were held with similar pomp and splendour, some on bigger scales even, and many a resolution adopted. You had so often greeted the leaders' speeches with applause. You showed your emotion, a desire to do something for the organization, and so often and in so many ways you affirmed your resolve to build up struggles. In fact, you are long organizing conferences of this type and conducting struggles to realize your demands. You have no less demonstrated your power of sacrifice and spirit of struggle. But the fact remains after all this that you find yourselves in the same condition basically as before. It has hardly changed. Wage-slaves that you were, condemned to groan under the exploitative capitalist system prior to the formation of the United Front government, you remain the same exploited and oppressed lot despite the United Front being in government with its progressive labour policy and all that. Since the Front government is here, is it then that the owner class has ceased to exist, and exploitation and oppression have disappeared, and there is no persecution, no retrenchment, no lay-off and job insecurity? Have things really changed that way with the Front's accession to governmental power? Or, is such change really possible?

Till now you have been reconciled to thinking, better say you have been fed the idea and are still being fed that since adult franchise or the right to vote has been granted in this country what use is revolution any way. The Congressites, the ruling capitalist class and its henchmen, and also a group of people who are swayed by the fanfare about parliamentary

politics advance the idea, from their heinous motive to mislead you in your judgement, that since people have got the right of voting and by exercising that right they can elect a government of their own choice, and the govern-

and mass struggles. These capitalist agents are constantly at it to feed you all this. They carry on a propaganda that those who preach the revolutionary struggle despite adult franchise deliberately want to plunge the country in a civil war

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*[ Comrade Shibdas Ghosh, our most beloved departed leader, teacher, guide and founder General Secretary of the party, was invited to address the Open Session of Conference of the West Bengal Engineering Workers' Union held in Calcutta on 14th May, 1967, as Chief Guest. The historical perspective of his speech, when recalled in conjunction with today's, reveals the great message and revolutionary teaching it conveys, especially in today's situation in India.*

*A few months before this conference, the first United Front government had taken over, bringing end to the uninterrupted misrule of the Congress for two decades. Our party the SUCI was a constituent of this government and it was entirely at our party's initiative and insistence that the UF government's historic declaration on its labour policy that 'police shall not interfere in legitimate democratic mass movements' was made. This declaration epitomized the attitude a pro-people government should adopt to conduct itself within the framework of a capitalist order. Immediately, the ruling capitalist class and vested interests raised a hue and cry all over the country and machinations had started to bring this government down. Whereas, the working class movement in West Bengal received a momentum unprecedented in kind and measure. Mass and class struggles in the whole country were poised to take a new turn. Some political parties, who failed to comprehend the true significance of the declaration, or from any other motive misused this policy for petty and sectarian gains, giving the capitalist owners the opportunity to confuse the public by calling the workers' legitimate movement a 'Gherao' movement. It only helped to undermine the workers' cause.*

*Comrade Ghosh explained the revolutionary significance of this pro-working class labour policy which no other non-Congress government in the country, including the present Left Front government of West Bengal, has ever adopted to advance the cause of the working masses. He also pointed out how they should avail themselves of this breathing space from police repression to build the class and mass battles and also their organization towards their ultimate goal of emancipation from capitalist exploitation and oppression. If they failed, Comrade Ghosh cautioned, to correctly realize this significance and speedily build up revolutionary organization imbued with revolutionary political consciousness and proletarian culture and instead confined themselves to day-to-day economic demands and used this declaration as an opportunity to secure petty personal gains and sectarian trade union and party advantages, they would not only not be able to safeguard their United Front government but would be swamped by economism-opportunism of the worst kind. As a result, the cause of the working masses would be undermined.*

*In today's situation, when the whole cause of the working masses has been surrendered by the self-styled Left Front government of West Bengal to the interest of the ruling capitalist class and red carpet is being spread out to welcome the multinational corporations and other imperialist financial agencies as further opportunity to exploit labour and raw materials in collusion with the native capitalist class, this speech will serve as the guideline for the working masses on building their organization and conducting their struggles from the correct outlook and attitude. Today, the 5th of August, on the nineteenth anniversary of the demise of our most beloved departed leader, we publish this English translation of his speech and redeem our pledge to carry out his behest.*

*Any errors or misrepresentations are the sole responsibility of the board of editors. — Editor, Proletarian Era ]*

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ment has power vested in it to enact and amend laws in the public interest, and also since the police, military, bureaucracy, etc., that is the permanent organs of the state, are under governmental control, there is neither the need of a revolutionary ideology nor is there any justification for continuously developing the revolutionary class

and want to undermine the national unity and disrupt the unhindered development of the country to create anarchy with borrowed, alien ideology and slogans. They try to impress upon you that it is those people preaching revolutionary struggle who are behind all this.

This is a deliberate lie. You ought to tear apart this false pro-

paganda and bring to light the truth which these reactionaries try to conceal behind a smokescreen of verbiage. Now that the United Front government has been installed, the objective situation will show how false and deceitful is their propaganda. Today's new and changed political situation is the test of whether this propaganda is true or false.

My point is that as you desired, here is the United Front government. Are the basic problems of your life solved by that? Or, is it possible for this government to solve these basic problems merely by reforming laws if it so wishes? You should realize, it is just not possible. One may ask then: Is there no justification for forming the United Front government in the interest of the workers? I think, there is. If the United Front government resolutely pursues its declared policy of strengthening democratic mass movements in the case of working class struggle against the exploitation and oppression relentlessly perpetrated by the capitalist owners who are under protection of the bourgeois Constitution and laws, then although it cannot win you emancipation from exploitation but in the interest of conducting the struggle to win emancipation the Front government has its significance. I am coming to this point later on.

Let us now review the situation as it stands after installation of the United Front government. Workers do not have security of job, they don't get legitimate wages in return for the wealth they produce and the labour they put in. Parasites are reigning over their produce. These parasites wield the power; they are the influential, the honourable in society. Even displeasure voiced by one individual among them is given wide coverage in the media. But the heart-rending cry of thousands of those who produce this wealth creates no stir in the same media. A single utterance by any of these parasites who lead a voluptuous life in rather uncivilized vulgarity, appropriating the wealth produced by the workers, is sufficient to create an uproar throughout the length and breadth of the country. But no media in the country voice the agony of the millions of the masses, their genuine needs, demands and grievances. It is natural on the part

of the capitalist owners and their lackeys to deny attention to the agony and the needs of workers. But as can be seen, there is no reflection of obligation to the genuine needs of the working masses in the outlook of the intelligentsia and the intermediary vast masses, nor any recognition of the dignity of labour or its social importance. These intellectuals read a lot, but all their reading seems to increase the burden of their false ego. Their attitude to the legitimate struggles of the workers against oppression and exploitation by the capitalist class only shows how ignorant they are of the history of exploitation, robbery and oppression leading to emergence of individual ownership and individual property.

The outlook of this society is yet to take shape on the realization that it is these people, millions of working men and women, whose labour has created all this wealth and the civilization we boast of, the production which we claim makes the country prosperous is also the contribution of the workers, not of the capitalist owners. All this today is due to the workers, and if production increases tomorrow, that will be again due to them. It is not the capital of the owners which produces the wealth; capital generates profits which are amassed in the owners' coffers, depriving the workers of the wealth created out of production due to their labour. It is, therefore, essential that, for the sake of progress and development of the whole society, every conscious individual should understand the basic problems of the working masses and feel their agony. But as yet there is no instrument, no countrywide organizational machinery to voice the pains and problems of workers. The capitalist owners simply take advantage of this situation and now and then they raise a hue and cry on most trivial issues. The outlook of these handful owners does in no way correspond with the outlook and attitude of millions of working people whose approach to problems of life is from an altogether different angle. But the fact is that the voice of these millions is given no importance, whereas the outburst of the handful capi-

alist owners is given loud publicity in the media.

You find all this happening, because the social psychology has been created that way. It has been patterned like that. But why? Because, this present society has been made to subservise the capitalist class, it has no other way than to capitulate to the capitalist owners. Everything in this society is designed to serve them, it cannot be otherwise. You have either to revolt against every aspect of this society and courageously fight it out, or have to subservise in whatever way. Take the instance of those in the profession of journalism. Their problem is that unless they oblige the owners their papers will starve of circulation. Because, they will be denied advertisements. So, they have to publicize the owners' viewpoints. The employees of the newspapers have to sell themselves out to the owners lest they lost their job. Then again many who are elected to ministerial *gaddi* confide that they cannot retain their power for long unless they capitulate to the capitalist class. It is for this that the Congress government so long conducted itself to serve this capitalist order with the attitude, approach, plans and programmes, ideas and all else you found in them. But as they do it, they claim their service to the ruling capitalist class to be service to the country; they claim measures they took for the sake of the capitalist class to be measures for the uplift of the country. They claim the abject surrender of the interest of the working class to the interest of the capitalist class to be sacrifice of the workers' interest or individual interest in the greater interest of the country. I say, before anything, this lie must be put to rest.

Now consider what should be the main object of your struggle in the present context of the country. Whom shall you fight, why shall you and how? What shall be the guiding ideology and objective of your struggle? You must be clear about what you want for the solution of your basic or fundamental problems. Shall it be just recourse to day-to-day movements to realize some economic and democratic demands? Of course,

this day-to-day movement has to be there, but that should by no means be the main object of your class struggle. For the past four decades the working class in India is conducting its

struggle for wage increase, reform of laws and extension of rights. You have no doubt won some rights. I don't say it has no significance. Of course there is some significance, but that significance concerns only one aspect. The rights you have earned are to be used to strengthen your day-to-day democratic mass movement and through it you are to give birth to an invincible revolutionary organization towards the ultimate overthrow of this capitalist order and establish in its place the working class rule free from exploitation.

If, instead, the main object of your struggle becomes anyhow to get increased your wages, say by two, or four or five rupees, opportunism of a kind is sure to creep in the working class movement. Examine closely and you will notice that opportunism has already largely swamped the revolutionary essence of the working class movement in India. This infiltration of opportunism has fostered an outlook in the workers which prompts them to run after those leaders who can arrange these benefits from the owners. But, friends, if you go about this way, no one can remove your misery. Even God cannot, he hasn't the power to remove your misery. The revolutionary political organizational strength of the working class cannot grow in this way and the proletariat can never win emancipation from capitalist exploitation.

You must come out of this course. So miseries can be removed only if you will realize that the fundamental question of your emancipation is inalienably linked with the question of the revolutionary transformation of the present social system of India. This transformation will not come true if you just go about shouting slogans here and there for this and that. To fight to realize some economic demands and win and extend some democratic rights without a clearly defined and conscious political objective means only to try to secure some benefits within the very exploitative capitalist social system, **keeping it intact. Conducting struggles to amend laws and to realize some economic demands, but without an objective and comprehensive strategy for the ultimate overthrow of the exploitative capitalist order means it just does not concern you whether capitalist exploitation or wage slavery and this exploitative system based on injustice and exploitation gets perpetuated or not thereby.** Which is to say that you really don't oppose capitalism and the exploitative system based on injustice and exploi-

tation doesn't hurt your dignity. Also, you really don't want emancipation from this capitalist exploitation. Allaying somewhat the sufferings due to exploitation and making it a little more bearable is the main object of your struggle. Which in reality means that the capitalist owner remains the owner as before and you too remain the wage-slaves as before — they fully enjoy their rights to exploit you. Right of the owner to individual ownership is retained and the object of production also remains as before, that is earning maximum profit. With the condition of the wage-slaves thus remaining basically the same, their emancipation from capitalist exploitation, too, remains as elusive.

Another point is to be clearly understood here. You produce for society. But you are made to believe that you labour to earn your own bread and the capitalists have set up industries together with a production system to provide you with means of livelihood and the country with prosperity. This is a piece of unadulterated lie. You should realize that your labour in the main is not for providing a means for your individual consumption, although meeting the personal needs is a factor behind everyone's labour. Today, the character of your labour has become social. Your labour is for society and what you produce with it has a social character. It serves society and for that society advances and the country prospers. It means, all your labour is for the welfare of the country. The wage you get to support you in exchange of your labour actually should have been paid by society. But because it is a capitalist society so it is the capitalist owner and not society who pays you your wage. Inevitably, the capitalist owner pays you about as little without which you cannot survive and be used as a tool for capitalist exploitation and appropriation. The capitalist owner is paying you the minimum wage needed to somehow keep your body and soul together, especially your muscles fit, so that the owner can make use of you as his instrument to reap profits. **He himself is appropriating as profit the other and the major part of the wealth created out of your labour. No class conscious worker should expect social justice in this system.** What is the owners' concept here of the workers' barest needs? On the question of justice about the workers' wage it is argued that workers be paid a wage which is at its minimum, 'just and humane'. But what is this concept of 'just and humane' in this social system ruled by the capitalist class? To

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the capitalist owners 'just and humane' means that amount of wage, that minimum, less than which makes it impossible for the worker to survive physically and move his muscle to operate the machines of the owner's factory and ensure profit for him.

In the present situation, where the capitalist owner denies the worker even this minimum, let alone pay him his legitimate due, the worker has no option than to organize democratic struggle to realize his legitimate due. An uproar has been created now over *gherao*. But it must be understood, *gherao* is just one among different forms of democratic mass movements, one that has emerged in course of twists and turns in the present objective condition of the country as one current of mass movement. Tata says: *Gherao* is a law of the jungle. I like to say in reply: Your law, under which you, the capitalist owners, are administering the production system better suits an even deeper jungle. Workers resort to *gherao* to secure social justice, not to exploit others. Whereas, the capitalist owners arrogate to themselves the right to trample people and the ideal of humanity, to sap them of their spirit and use the same in their own interest. They claim it to be civilization, while they denounce *gherao* as the jungle law. Should *gherao* be called the law of the jungle, then the law which entitles the owner to unfettered right of retrenchment without giving least protection to the right to work is the law of the deepest jungle. It is uncivilized, savage and torturous in nature. This law has to be abrogated before they denounce the workers' *gherao* movement. The workers do not resort to it out of fancy. They sweat hard day and night, they do it for the whole country and whole society. But you will not find those people who advocate action against *gherao* paying any attention to the question of protection of the workers' minimum interest. If proper measures are taken for protection of workers' interest, they will have no need to resort to *gherao*. Until their interest will be protected, they will have no option than to fight for and win their right. If the law stands against it, instead of providing support to their cause, they will have to uphold the cause of humane justice, even if that entails going against the law. They will have to compel the government to reform the law as needed.

This is the outlook with which one should consider the working class movement. What the authority will do from their seat of power

## Correct approach of a pro-people govt. in a bourgeois set-up

is their business. But the attitude of the patriotic and democratic people should be like this. They should develop the correct understanding about the present phase of democratic mass movement.

Workers, on their part, should realize that taking advantage of the United Front government cannot be the method of struggle. If they depend only on the government's patronage for their struggle, it cannot last long. If the government resorts to repression, the struggle will fizzle out. Right now, the government is not coming down upon them, so the movement is consolidating. But if the government starts the onslaught tomorrow, the struggle will break up. For this reason, it should be the major objective of each and every struggle to acquire political consciousness and to build a steel-strong organization.

Workers must concern themselves with the root cause of their sufferings and the main political issue of the country. They should realize that even change of government all over the country and reform of laws, or just taking a decision that police shall not intervene in *gheraos* cannot deliver the goods. All these will have importance, temporary at that, only when the working class can correctly integrate these struggles with the main struggle of winning emancipation from capitalist exploitation. It was with this objective, and since long before the elections, that the SUCI, the only genuine revolutionary working class party on this soil, has been fighting for keeping legitimate democratic mass movements free from police interference in case a Leftist government came to be installed.

People should also think over yet another point. 'All are equal in the eye of the law'—it is there on paper, all right, but in reality the law is used in the interest of owners as an instrument of oppression against the working masses. We, the students of Marxism-Leninism, the revolutionaries, know that in parliamentary democracy at this present stage of capitalist system it sounds indeed very sweet to hear that 'law is equal for all'. But that is a blatant lie. In this society law pretends to be equal, but in reality it is not equal for all people. It safeguards the interest of the capitalists. In a class-divided society law is obliged to safeguard the interests of the ruling class. Therefore, the claim that 'law is equal for all' is in reality a bourgeois trick to

hoax people by concealing the class character of law. People who refuse to admit it only try to conceal the class character of the judiciary in the capitalist society, and it is they who carry on the propaganda from their heinous object of confusing the public that judiciary is the custodian of justice and public conscience. It is also important to keep in mind in this connection that in a class-divided society even public conscience cannot be supra-class or independent of class base. Inevitably, it reflects one or another of the class thoughts in society.

Similarly, it is also claimed that the police, too, are neutral. But you all know that if someone who is moneyed goes to a police station, he receives a cordial treatment and his 'weight' begins immediately to tell. Even a false charge lodged by him is obliged with quick action. Whereas, common people like you are harassed on every occasion. If you don't have an influential connection to plead for you, or you have not the money power, nobody will heed to what you have to say. The entire system is like that. Common people learn it the hard way from their everyday experience. As I said, if a capitalist owner goes to the police station and lodges a complaint which is false, the police officials get overenthusiastic to take action to suit his interest. But if it is a worker who has come to the police station to file a case against an unlawful action of his employer, the police may remand him in the lock-up, charging him with attempt to file a false case against the owner. Such instances are quite frequent in this land.

I wish to point out one thing to our journalists. They discuss 'big' problems of the country when they write articles, but all these problems of the masses do not catch their attention. Every now and then they raise a hue and cry over democracy, democratic movements and such matters. But what is the essence of democracy? Does it mean articles on democracy printed in newspapers, or speeches of MPs which they publish? No. The real strength of democracy lies in the political consciousness of people as reflected in democratic mass movements and democratic organizations. So, if mass movements cannot be safeguarded and democratic organizations consolidated to create an atmosphere in

which people are able to imbibe democratic consciousness, democracy will die automatically. It will die despite all the loud cry of the journalists. They will fail to save democracy, even in its bourgeois sense. So, the votaries of the rule of law, who equate democracy with that, should understand that it is impossible to save democracy by just writing articles on it. They must come out with courage and stand by legitimate democratic mass movements. They do not seem to realize that if democratic movements are not strengthened then the military will step in one day and disband the elected bodies to seize power, using law and order situation as pretext, specially if support comes from parties like the Jana Sangh and Swatantra. Our journalist friends cannot save parliamentary rule then. But the organized democratic consciousness of millions of common people can save the country from that eventuality. This is the real implication of the United Front government's declaration on democratic mass movements.

The Front government's declaration that police shall not interfere in democratic mass movements is meant to provide people with a scope to consolidate their organization as instrument of struggles and to imbibe the democratic spirit. If they correctly apply it, it will be easier to develop the mass movements and mass organizations speedily. Police repression, of the way the police conducted itself as servitor of the capitalist class interest, stood in the way of achieving it earlier. There was no scope for it, strictly no breathing space to organize it that way. Because it was common, for instance, whenever workers in a factory made a move to form their union, a case was filed against them. Those who took the initiative were forthwith retrenched, action being taken on some secret reports. There was no way to save them. There are no laws to protect them, in fact no kind of remedy. If you report the matter to the police, you are inviting just another trouble. If a worker wanted to lodge with the police a complaint against unlawful oppression, the police would tell him, 'So you dare to complain against your master', and instead of recording his complaint would remand him on any charge whatsoever. Such was the reality. In this situation, in the par-



liamentary system, what is expected of a progressive government? I am not meaning a Leftist government. I am meaning a government that is just a little progressive, one that is endowed with a little humane attitude, which is not altogether blind and at least does not capitulate to the capitalist class. The first and the foremost duty of such a government should be to protect movements, if they are legitimate and democratic, from police interference on the plea of 'law and order'.

The working class should also correctly grasp the significance of this declaration to protect legitimate democratic mass movements from police interference. What is this significance? It enjoins on you to devote yourself wholeheartedly, in the breathing space which now you have got, to the task of imbuing workers and organizing them in the spirit of higher mass movements, that is democratic mass movements conducive to the anti-capitalist socialist revolution. This right is not meant to be misused in anyway. In that event, its very purpose would be defeated. Your object will be foiled. If you resort to *gherao* on trifles, on each and every issue, its very political objective will be undermined. Hence, in my opinion, the working class has to carry on a two-fold movement. One is to build up a conscious, well-organized, powerful political resistance movement against all reactionary machinations. The other is to exercise utmost control while conducting these legitimate democratic mass movements in the present situation. They must not forget even momentarily that the government at the Centre, the capitalist class, a powerful section of bureaucracy and even some forces within the Front are in collusion to mount pressure.

Because it is United Front government, the truth should be known to you. It is not a single

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party government, nor it is a Leftist government consisting of Left parties alone. Moreover, this government is conducting itself within the constitutional limitations imposed by the capitalist state. It has,

therefore, a lot of obstacles to overcome. Whereas you may be expecting too many. But if your expectation is without cognizance of the obstacles, without any consideration, and you are unaware even, you will only harm your cause. How come that? On the one hand, from your political inaction in the face of the reactionary machinations to undermine the United Front government and its progressive declaration, and, on the other, from your failure to comprehend the real significance of these policies and principal objective you will look upon the policy of the non-interference by police as an advantage. You will start conducting yourselves with adventurism, giving full play to all your grievances and personal animus, however trivial, which so long accumulated in you. In the process you will allow yourselves to be used as an instrument to fulfil petty interests of those political parties who are taking full advantage of this situation from their narrow, sectarian outlook to anyhow expand their organizational base, even though temporarily, either because of failure to understand its political significance or from any other motive. All this will have the result that you will objectively give the capitalist class and other reactionary forces an opportunity to discredit this United Front government. If you go on just blindly acting like that, handing the capitalist owners one opportunity after another for launching attacks, it may in the end lead to a situation when this government may fail to cope with it. Because, it has its limitations and cannot do anything and everything.

In the beginning I have touched upon this question but could not proceed, because I had to pass on to other issues, considering them more urgent. Only remember, this government is not very powerful or all-powerful today. It will be a travesty of truth to say that if a party is returned at an election with mandate to form government, that vests in it enough power to change laws at will and solve everything. Take the present case. This government has taken a definite measure. You now see what hurdles it is up to. What a furore has been created by the reactionary clique! I would sound a note of caution for you. You will see, this is not the end of it. It is just

the beginning, a straw in the wind. Old hands in politics know, it is nothing, only some moves of pawns in the opening game of chess. The knights and bishops are yet to take the field, but they will enter the game in due course. Whether this government can survive then, will depend solely on democratic mass movement, political consciousness of the masses and their revolutionary organization. But if the working class stays politically inactive and thinks that the all-powerful government is on the throne and for that they can go on behaving as it pleases them, unaware of the political machinations around and they do not alert the people against the conspiracies of the Congress and the capitalist class, they will discover one fine morning that the Front government has collapsed. They will not be able to resist it. Because, this government has really no power of its own, the real power is the state. The real power is in the hands of those who control the economy, who control the banking system, the mills and factories and all industries, the real power is in the permanent staff of the state, that is in the state structure, in a word.

The state and the government are two different entities. There are two different names for them, both in English and in Bengali — in any language for that matter, unless a language has its limitations for that. There are two different names because the entities are different. The state denotes a system, a concept of law and order, a concept of principles, a concept of some fundamental rights, and on this base a structure made up of the bureaucracy, administration, judiciary, and the military to protect all these. Whereas, the government is, as I like to put it, a caretaker who looks after the state. For instance, consider a loom. It is a machine which works on a specific principle. It cannot have a different working principle. This device has a specific construct which allows the yarn to be woven in a specific way and the woven cloths to be delivered also in a specific way. Any deviation in this will lead to breakdown, and the device will need repair. As long as the loom is in order, the yarn will be woven in the same specific way, the cloth too will come out in its same specific way and get folded. The state is somewhat like that weaving machine, with the government as its weaver. Whoever may sit on the weaver's stool, so long as it is a weaving machine, the weaver can only weave cloths. What difference does it make by changing the weaver? A weaver who is bad at

work, or who is a shirker will neglect his work, which means he will take longer and weave less. Whereas, a good weaver weaves more in less time, and he weaves fine. Also, you can add the point of manners, as one factor. But, anyway, change of government is like change of a weaver. Against this, change of the state structure or transformation of the social order can be likened to replacing the weaving machine itself by an altogether different machine. Imagine the loom to be the state machine, out of which exploitation flows, and also imagine the cloth to be this exploitation. Then it comes to this that all oppression and repression on you are coming from this machine of exploitation. Capitalism or the capitalist state is a machine much like this imaginary weaving machine which continuously gives rise to exploitation, creates unemployment, generates speculation, anarchy, crisis in production, crisis of the market, recession, crisis in science, etc., and ensures higher and still higher profits for the capitalist class. The state is the structure which operates on a given constitution, a jurisprudence, a set of ethical principles and organs like the police, bureaucracy, administration, judiciary and the military, all needed to control a given social system. I compared it with the loom; in such case, as I said, the state is the loom and the government is the weaver. I wanted to show you how limited is the power of the weaver. Can the weaver at his pleasure smash sugarcane in his loom? Similarly, can a government at its pleasure set up socialism in the framework of capitalist economic system and state structure? Can it win people's liberation? Can it win them emancipation from capitalist exploitation? It cannot. Just because that the working class will have to give birth to appropriate political leadership on the basis of correct revolutionary theory in order to smash this exploitative capitalist state machine with the force of revolutionary upsurge and establish in its place socialist social system free from exploitation. When they will be able to give birth to this political leadership on the one hand and invincible revolutionary organization on the other, through revolutionary class and mass struggles their dream of revolution will come true.

This is the prime task — to organize these struggles and to build the revolutionary organization. It is to this end, to help you speedily develop the movements and the organizations, this policy that the police shall not interfere in demo-

cratic mass movements' has been framed. It has not been framed for personal advantages of the workers, and to fulfil petty and sectarian interest of any political party. If you deviate from this objective and misuse this policy declaration with its revolutionary significance for the sake of your petty personal interests, you are going to cut the root of the branch on which you are sitting. You are simply going to undermine your cause.

You should also critically examine every development in this light. Never forget that so long as the capitalist class of India will remain in state power, entitled to freely carrying on trade, commerce, business, industry and its exploitation and oppression, till then no minister and no government can win the working class its emancipation, no matter how many pro-labour laws may it have enacted or how much right may it have granted to the workers. The working class can win emancipation only by building its own revolutionary organization and overthrowing the capitalist order.

The significance of the progressive labour policy of this government can be understood in this light alone. I said, workers have now to organize themselves speedily till this government and this labour policy are there. They have to imbibe political consciousness and expand their organizational base as far as possible all over the country. Remember, a golden opportunity has arrived. If we fail to get organized by availing of it in the proper way and at the same time fail to imbue people with clearly defined political consciousness we will fall into disarray when capitalists will again mount attack upon us. We shall not have the power and ability then to offer strong organized resistance against the same. But what I see now, in the name of movement just the opposite is taking place, as some people are taking advantage of the situation without understanding this significance. They are shirking their responsibility of building proper organization and political consciousness of the masses. How strange ! However, even if others do it, you should take it on as an essential task to explain to the working masses that they should by no means misuse this policy. Nobody shall use it in petty interest of the party or the trade union, nor use it to secure personal gains.

You may recall, even before the United Front came to power, there

were many *gherao* movements, some even more intense than at present. But the capitalists did not raise a hue and cry at that time. They started it after the United Front declaration came that 'police shall not interfere in legitimate democratic trade union movements'. Whatever their outburst against *gherao*, it cannot be doubted that their real object is to undermine this declaration of the Front government.

Could this policy decision with its overwhelming significance, which has shaken the foundation of this capitalist regime, be formulated to serve petty and sectarian interests ? No. It has been formulated, as I have already told you, with the object of availing of this breathing space to organize the working people in entire West Bengal with revolutionary consciousness, elevate and build up a steel-strong organization as speedily as possible. If anytime in future, attempts are made to bring this government down through machinations, it may be possible to resist the conspiracy with the strength of this organization. But consider what is going on. If an attack comes to topple it, say, tomorrow, can people do anything to resist ? At best they will gather at street corners and start throwing brickbats, showing their indignation for a couple of days. Do they have the power to do anything more? Can the working people, for whom this labour policy has been framed, safeguard their present position if this government topples under attack from the capitalist class, the central government, organized vested interests, or whoever it be ? Do they really have the strength for it ? They don't have it. Maybe, as I said, for a couple of days they will throw brickbats. But the ruling class is least afraid of brickbats or crackers for that matter. They wield the organised state power, they are not bothered about brickbats. Rather they invite it, they want that brickbats and crackers be thrown by unorganized people. It gives them a bigger handle. They would simply make a plea to run ruthlessly the steamroller of oppression and repression in the name of restoring law and order. They would seize it as an opportunity to further strengthen their repressive machinery. Moreover, using this action as a pretext, it would be advantageous to draw into the fold of reaction the intermediary masses of common people who stand between workers and

owners. By that they may succeed in isolating the workers from the vast masses of the common people.

This type of sporadic action, therefore, does not frighten the rulers. But they fear most the politically conscious, strong and disciplined organization which will fight to the last inch. It is a battle different from the sporadic outbursts of unorganized people. It may begin on a low key, with anything, even with brickbats, but it grows as organized resistance. What begins with brickbats may in the end turn into a fullscale trial of strength. The significance of this labour policy is that it exhorts you to build through your day-to-day struggles this type of organization which is imbued with political consciousness. But I don't find our working class at all conscious of this task. Leaving aside the working class, do the trade union leaders, or leaders and cadres of different parties who guide the trade unions, and the political parties themselves who are so loudly hailing this labour policy as progressive and greeting it with applause, realize the inner meaning, the significance, the tremendous revolutionary importance of this declaration ? I don't think so. Their response confirms, they have not understood its significance by a whit. All they have understood is how to use it to fulfil their petty party or individual interests. But there is an unprecedented opportunity before you, a great opportunity, which even the so-called communist government of Kerala could not provide. Hardly could one imagine that the police will not be allowed to interfere in legitimate democratic movements of people. Those who are running this government will not allow it so long as they are in government.

But it does not, however, mean that workers will resort to *gherao* on flimsy grounds without consideration. Say, it reached workers in a factory that a manager had said something disagreeable. Immediately he was *gheraoed*. Day and night *gherao* goes on for even the slightest of lapses. Or, some such kind is happening for which the working class movement is deviating from the fundamental course it was expected to pursue, avail-

ing of the present breathing space. That is, workers' conference, political classes, and disciplined, organized and powerful movements over legitimate demands to explain to the workers the significance of this policy are not being organized. There are not attempts to build legitimate struggles free from adventurism, with no advantage given to the capitalist owners to avail of an opportunity to confuse the public and undermine government's progressive policy on the pretext of protecting the law and order situation. Nor are their attempts, on the other, to draw workers into cultivation of politics and speedily make them conscious of the conspiracy of the capitalist owners and the reactionary forces, to rally them to get equipped for long-drawn battles, to organize them in people's committees on a firm footing, and to inspire them to take resolve that they will fight and resist the impending attacks. Now is the opportunity before you to do all this — to carry on campaigns, build organizations, conduct trade union activities, rallies, meetings, processions and organize strikes if needed. The advantage is that if you now engage in trade union activities police will

... Workers do not have security of job, they don't get legitimate wages in return for the wealth they produce and the labour they put in. Parasites are reigning over their produce...

not be allowed to come down upon you. When the situation calls for, you will resort to *gherao* even. When there is no other way to compel the owners concede your legitimate demands or to protect the main struggle, you have to resort to *gherao*, whether or not it is legal in the eye of law in force. Even in such cases, workers will get this government's protection — this is the declaration in clear terms. But where adventurism marks the conduct of workers, and if they lack in political wisdom and patience to detect adventurism and misuse it for personal or petty interests, if there is no effort on their part to follow the political significance, they may greet this policy declaration with applause but that will do no good. Nobody can save you then, not even the Almighty. Today, you applaud this declaration, maybe tomorrow you will start decrying it out of resentment.

Maybe, the present will prove no exception to what has always happened in this country.

I do not like patting at all. I hate to pat on others' back. I am speaking what I consider to be true. If you think it correct, accept it. If you do not follow or agree to it, do not accept it. What I am saying is truth. What goes on in this country? When it pleases you, you applaud. But you don't take trouble

"You are the workers, creators of this civilization. This civilization is on the pains of deliverance, it begs of you its deliverance. Not only your own emancipation, on your hand depends emancipation of the entire mankind."

to use your brain. It is admitted that only muscle power does not win. Getting excited over something doesn't do good. We require intelligence and brain power. And, this brain is the leadership. That is why, workers are to think, study, re-think. They are to cultivate politics day and night during all their work. People who say that workers must not engage in politics and that entry of politics in trade union must be stopped are cheats and swindlers. They are a band of parasites who make pelf and power from trade union works. They love to overlord and leadership is both profession and obsession with them. It is they who spread the lie that politics must not come into trade unions. But in the language of Marx — Marx and Engels, whose portraits are hung by workers and all Red Flag holders — trade union is school of politics to imbue the workers with revolutionary consciousness. In a sentence, without employing words like 'instrument', 'struggle' and such others, which are all implied, they explained that trade union is the school of communism, a big school of politics for education in communism. Such is the character of trade union. If trade unions are not looked upon as schools of communism and consequently they do not develop as living centres of political studies, then the trade union movement will inevitably degenerate into an instrument in the hands of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois classes to disrupt and confuse the working class movement. In that case, instead of increasing the revolutionary political consciousness of the working class, the trade union movement

engenders economism or opportunism in working class movement.

Economism in working class movement, which in a word is called opportunism, is a blessing for the capitalist class and bane for the working class. You should remember, starvation which is often the workers' lot cannot be justification for recourse to opportunism in any way. The owners loot wealth of society; so, their opportunism is worse still. But it is wrong to argue that since the workers have to starve so their opportunism is humane and rational. The worker, too, must fight against economism-opportunism in their own class interest.

Workers must have their demands fulfilled in order for survival, and they must fight to realize their demands. But that cannot be the ultimate goal. If they make it the main objective of their struggle and unions are led to this end, then these unions are going to produce workers opportunist in kind. They will not produce conscious and truly patriotic workers imbued with the truly revolutionary ideal, who are capable of leading the struggle for emancipation. Working class movement will have to be conducted in this direction and workers' conferences should be held with this objective in view.

But what do we actually find to be the daily routine of the trade union leaders? Workers come and daily ask the leaders questions like this: What about this demand? What about the other one? Are we getting or not this amount? Please manage it for us. And such like. In brief they ask the trade union leaders to manage all this for them. In other words, they plead with the leaders to grease the owners. They put it straight like this: You are so big, so influential. We beg, you please manage it with that man in management. The leaders manage it exactly that way. Because, the more a leader can manage this way the bigger and more popular he is. It goes round among the workers that it is no use approaching a particular leader, because he is not as effective at buttering the management as some other leader is. A leader with a hearty relation with

the management and greater skill to plead with the management is the one who is more adept at buttering. So if the workers approach such a leader then chances are greater that demands will be fulfilled. What kind of attitude is this? Isn't it opportunism? Does it keep up the workers' ethics? What does it reflect of dignity of labour? What's the use then of all these rhetorics and struggles? What becomes of this worker who has lost his sense of dignity of labour and is thus victim of opportunism? He has to suffer. Is he really worth the name of man? My heart is with that worker who has the sense of dignity, has self-respect. Who would court death than surrender self-respect. Who would fight to win his demands, and who is conscious of his obligations as the worker. But the worker who is a typical agent of the capitalist owner, I have no love and affection for him just because he is a worker. Bear this attitude and let you all be imbued with this consciousness.

Only this way can the workers rise above opportunism and petty personal gains and can grasp the true significance of this declaration on labour policy. It will help the workers organise struggles over their day-to-day demands. Its deeper significance is that it has brought the workers one great opportunity to cultivate politics, to be equipped with the correct revolutionary political consciousness. Avail yourselves of this opportunity and take steps steadfastly in that direction. Yes, you have your daily necessities — as there is necessity of responding to the call of nature, going to the market, and rushing to the medical shop if the child is ill. You have your day-to-day demands and struggles to conduct over them. As there are demands, there are struggles, too. But should it push politics out of trade union movement? Why should you have apathy towards the fundamental political outlook? Why this apathy and indifference? I notice one thing very often — drowsiness affects when the question of politics comes up. Eyes become sleepy when national or international questions are discussed. But workers become instantly alert when discussion turns to the issue of demands — about the different demands and about lobbying for some of them. Now you answer me: Am I right or wrong? If you cannot shake off this attitude, you are doomed to remain wage slaves; in future your son will be still worse a sufferer,

and his son, that is, your grandson, a jobless wretched creature. He will never be free from his shackles. Have you even thought for once what answer you owe to your successors? You are the workers, creators of this civilization. This civilization is on the pains of deliverance, it begs of you its deliverance. Not only your own emancipation, on your hand depends deliverance of emancipation of the entire mankind.

This is your responsibility — the responsibility of the worker. But the tragedy is that even now workers are not conscious of it. If this consciousness does not dawn on them yet, if it fails to inspire them, everything they do will end in failure. In that case this conference will have no relevance and all its resolutions will carry little sense.

My appeal to you, brother workers: Build the genuine revolutionary political party, and take part in its activities regularly. Not for once indulge apathy or indifference in this respect. Study even as you have to do a thousand other works, take part in debates and discussions, be regular in your attendance of party classes. Constantly pay attention to those who may show some indifference about all this. Workers must realize that in this present crisis they can save themselves and the country, too, the United Front government and its progressive labour policy only if they will acquire and get imbued with revolutionary political consciousness and will organize themselves under the genuine revolutionary party to stand granite-strong like the Himalayas. Do not forget even for a moment that the SUCI is the only revolutionary working class party on this soil. You are to protect it like the apple of your eye. Only then can you save yourselves, save this country, and the United Front government. Only then nobody will be able to bring it down. It will remain, so will its progressive labour policy, and movements will be growing with momentum. As these movements will intensify, a day will come when capitalism can be overthrown and the dream of the workers to establish the working class rule in place of capitalism will come true. And that day is not too far.

With my revolutionary greetings to brother engineering workers present at this conference, I conclude my speech here.

**Long Live Revolution!**

# SOME MOMENTS IN BRUSSELS

*The report of the May Day celebration and the Seminar held at Brussels on 1st May and from 2nd to 4th May respectively, under the auspices of Workers' Party of Belgium (PTB) was published in the Proletarian Era dated June 3, 1995. Related photographs are published here.*



*Celebration of May Day*

*Comrade Sukomal Dasgupta, member, Central Committee, SUCI, (with cap) being greeted by delegates at the Reception Dinner hosted by the Workers' Party of Belgium (PTB) on 30.4.95 at Brussels.*



*Comrade Zbigniew Wiktor, Chairman of Union of Polish Communists purchasing our party literature.*



*From right : Comrade Sukomal Dasgupta, Comrade Mobinul Hyder Chowdhury, member, Central Committee of Socialist Party of Bangladesh and Comrade Manik Mukherjee, in discussion outside the seminar hall in Brussels*



*Comrade Ludo Martens (standing) President, PTB, introducing (from right) Comrade Vladimir Assemov Spasov, Secretary General, Communist Party of Bulgaria, Comrade Jean Pestieau of PTB, Comrade Wiktor, Chairman, Union of Polish Communists, Comrade Manik Mukherjee of SUCI and other leaders at the dinner hosted by PTB welcoming foreign delegates.*

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF NIHAR MUKHERJEE