

Money, media, muscle power decide everything

THE RECENT ELECTIONS EXPOSE HOLLOWNESS OF 'LARGEST DEMOCRACY'

The elections to the Tenth Lok Sabha and several state Assemblies have ended and it is seen from the results that though the Congress(I), the most trusted party of the Indian capitalist class, has emerged as a single largest party in the Lok Sabha, it has failed to have an absolute majority in the House including even its parochial, regional and communal partners like the AIADMK, JD(G) and the Muslim League together totalling 240. The Congress(I) so far bagged 225 seats with 8 results yet to be declared. The BJP emerged as a second largest party with a tally of 121 seats by taking recourse to rabid Hindu communalism. The Janata Dal which became the ruling party in a hung Parliament after the 9th Lok Sabha polls was in the third position with just 55 seats. The National Front Left Parties Combine, however, got 130 seats in total.

In the Assembly elections the Congress(I)-led United Democratic Front (UDF) in Kerala has unseated the CPI(M)-led Left Democratic Front (LDF), the Congress(I)-AIADMK alliance routed the DMK in Tamil Nadu and the Congress(I) has attained an absolute majority in Assam, Haryana and Pondicherry. The BJP won an absolute majority in UP while the CPI(M)-led Left Front maintained its hold over West Bengal with a slightly reduced margin.

The President invited the Congress(I), the largest party in the Lok Sabha, to form its ministry and prove its majority in the House within four weeks. We are sure that the Congress(I) will seek support of the Leftists in proving its majority apart from its all-out attempt to emerge with absolute majority by all nefarious means, horse-trading not excluded. But from the very beginning the crisis in the Congress(I) is quite apparent. Right from the selection of the Congress(I) President after the ghastly assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, the selection of the Prime Minister and now the formation of the Council of Ministers and distribution of portfolios, the internal squabbles and intense group fighting including the influence exerted by the old coterie are openly coming out. But it is an irony that the Congress(I) fought the last elections on the plank of stability.

Never before the country witnessed such tortuous and gory elections. Some of the grim features of the last elections were record number of killings in pre-poll, during-poll, and after-poll violence including the ghastly assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, the former Prime Minister, record number of cases of countermanding of elections and repolling in entire constituencies, record number of repolling in booths, record

number of mafia dons fielded by the major bourgeois parties to contest the elections and the unheard of incident of the Central Minister and two State Chief Ministers themselves resorting to booth-capturing and forcibly snatching ballot papers for getting them stamped.

At least 287 persons were killed upto 15th June last, i.e., the last day of the polls as against 125 killed in poll violence during Ninth Lok Sabha polls. Reports of killing in after-poll violence are pouring in and no one knows what will be the ultimate toll. In the last elections the Election Commission had to take the most unprecedented decision of countermanding 5 Lok Sabha and 15 Assembly constituencies on the first day of poll and besides these ordered repoll in about 1000 booths across the country. The Election Commission even nullified the declaration of results for two Lok Sabha constituencies as this was done in violation of the instructions of the Commission. All these happenings laid bare how farcical the elections in our country had been reduced to. This is the picture of the 'largest democracy' of the world!

Never before the country witnessed such frenzied outbursts of communalism and casteism as during the last elections. Communal violence

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Comrade Nihar Mukherjee condemns violation of poll promise by Cong.(I)

Calcutta, 26. 6. 91 : Strongly criticising the comment of the Central Finance Minister, which appeared in today's daily Press that it was not possible to check and bring down the spiralling up of prices of essential commodities, Comrade Nihar Mukherjee, General Secretary, SUCI has issued the following statement to the Press :

"The comment has only revealed the naked truth as to how the bourgeois parliamentary and social democratic parties try to hoodwink the people by making tall promises before the poll to win the elections and fall back on their promises as soon as the poll is over.

"We call upon the exploited people in general and the Left and democratic parties and forces in particular to build up mighty mass movement from the grassroots level to force the government to bring down the prices of essential commodities."

erupted in Orissa, UP and Gujarat. In Meerut the elections had to be postponed because of communal riots in which 27 persons were officially reported to be killed and scores of others injured. Communal riots flared up in Kanpur, Varanasi and three major towns of Gujarat as the poll day approached. The social fabric of the entire country is in a shambles because of the whipping-up of communal passion to a frenzied pitch by the major parties for anyhow winning the ugly and unhealthy race in the parliamentary battles.

Another ominous feature of the last elections was the fielding of a

(Contd. on page 2)

1991 elections surpassed all records of violence, rigging

(Contd. from page 1)

record number of candidates with criminal antecedents. These parliamentary parties not only used the mafias as the muscular support of the candidates but they were fielded as candidates themselves, thus criminalising the electioneering. It is reported that the BJP, for example, which claims itself to be a principled party, fielded a known dacoit as a candidate among their various other candidates set up from the ranks of filmstars, ex-military officers, former top bureaucrats etc., some of whom have the record of suppressing nationalist movement. Again some of those who were accused of instigating and leading murderous mobs in and around Delhi after Mrs. Indira Gandhi's assassination, triggering off anti-Sikh riots in the country, were the Congress(I) candidates.

Another intriguing feature of the last elections was the shroud of uncertainty hanging over the questions of holding elections in Assam and Punjab from the very beginning. Because of controversies and confusing stand of different political parties no one was sure as to when the elections in Assam and Punjab will be held. Though the elections in Assam were held, the elections in Punjab have ultimately been postponed till September 25 next after so many killings. Though it is not desirable that a state should be under President's rule for a long period, yet at the same time unless necessary congenial atmosphere is created for holding the elections, any attempt towards the holding of the poll is bound to be a farce. When so many people were killed there, the decision of postponing Punjab poll should have been taken much earlier, but it is seen that when the electioneering had ended the Election Commission took this unusual decision unilaterally without consulting the political parties contesting the election. This is also a kind of development never happened before.

The last elections were originally scheduled to be held in three phases beginning from May 20 and ending on May 26. But after the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi the elections were further staggered, without consulting the political parties, upto June 15 resulting

in a totally uncertain situation before the people. The ballot boxes with polled ballot papers of May 20 were kept in the strongrooms for nearly a month—an unusual delay. Reports such as accumulation of ankle-deep water, a mad man within the strongroom and the like, appearing in the daily Press show how 'strong' are those strongrooms.

The Election Commission is vested with enormous power and it is expected that this will not be misused in the narrow partisan interest and the Chief Election Commissioner must take a strictly neutral stand. But it is to be noted that many think, some of the decisions of the Chief Election Commissioner including the decision of staggering the elections upto June 15 were not above board.

Now the country had to pass through this costly poll exercise and the entire cost will have to be borne by the common people when they are groaning under the impact of ruthless capitalist exploitation. Even after 44 years of independence the people are denied the elementary needs, i. e., food, clothing, shelter, drinking water, education and medical care. The huge unemployment, skyhigh inflation and unprecedented tax and price increase are causing havoc in the life of the common people. In such a situation all these parliamentary political parties went to the people with tall promises of flooding the country with milk and honey. But the past records of performance of these contending parties prove that they feel least concerned for the people and all these promises are nothing but a hoax and are only meant to hoodwink the people so as to get the largest number of MPs and MLAs, throwing to the wind all democratic norms and values.

Again, after the election results are out and when it becomes clear that the phenomenon of the hung Parliament has been repeated, those parties which were once at loggerheads before the election changed their tenor and on the plea of 'national interest', 'national crisis' and the 'country's stability', they reversed their pre-election stance to their adversaries.

The BJP, for example, has said that it will act as an 'effective' and 'responsible' Opposition and on impor-

tant national questions stand by the Congress (I) government. Similarly, the Left parties and the National Front have announced that they will adopt a positive approach to the Congress (I) government in finding solutions to the grave crisis confronting the country. These parliamentary parties are trying to project the severe economic crisis of the country by completely hiding its root cause. They fail to show that the present crisis is the inevitable outcome of the crisis of the capitalist system, in which it has been plunged in this period of the third intense crisis of the worldwide capitalist economy. They do not expose that the interest of the ruling class and the interest of the people are not the same; the interest of the ruling class stands just the opposite to the interest of the people. But being partners of the establishment all these parliamentary parties are tied with apron string of the capitalist class and so on the question of defending the basic interest of this class all these parties are united; the nature of contradiction among them is not of confrontation but of competition to serve in the best way the vested class. These parties are crying hoarse over 'national crisis', 'economic crisis', etc. as if they are eager to resolve the crisis. The crisis, no doubt, is there and nobody can deny its existence. As a matter of fact there is an all-pervading crisis engulfing the entire society. But without pointing to the root cause of the crisis it is meaningless to simply talk about the crisis.

Our party has shown that all these crises stem from the all-out crisis of capitalism which has become out and out reactionary, moribund and corrupt both nationally and internationally. Our society is a capitalist one and here capitalism has not only grown in the era of imperialism or moribund capitalism but being part and parcel of world capitalism, it has entered into the third phase of general and intense crisis of world capitalism. Comrade Shibdas Ghosh, our beloved departed leader and an outstanding Marxist philosopher, showed that Indian capitalism was born and grew under a shadow of crisis. With everyday passing this shadow is growing larger and darker. At

as also communalisation and criminalisation of politics

present, the crisis of capitalism has become so acute that it has developed a total uncertainty not only in the field of economy but also in the political superstructure resulting in instability of the parliamentary system and a total uncertainty in social life. The rapid degeneration of the cultural standard is also another manifestation of the same crisis.

Keeping this analysis of our party in view we have to judge these questions: Why this hung Parliament? Why has this been repeated in our country? What are the reasons behind this uncertainty in our parliamentary setup? Why the ruling class is failing to bring the situation under control which the class needs very much?

Let us in this connection try [to look at some aspects of the political scenario of our country from sometime past and the various changes that have taken place and try to trace the factors that are responsible for this change. It is known to all that upto 1977 the Congress (including the Indira Congress or the Congress-I) ruled at the Centre without any break—although at the state level it could not hold sway all through in some of the states. Our party had shown long back that the Indian bourgeoisie might try to introduce a two-party parliamentary system in our country, just to misdirect the people's wrath which was bound to snowball in the face of growing problems in their life. With this end in view the ruling class wants to channelise the public anger in the blind alley of legalism, reformism and parliamentarism. This resentment of the people assumes a serious proportion against the ruling party, particularly when a single party rules the country unabatedly for a long time, ignorant as they are, about the root cause of their misery—that is, the exploitative capitalist system of the country. They are made to think that with the change of government there may be a change for the better in the conditions of their life. The ruling class created this psychology of the people which worked as a fertile soil for the emergence of a two-party system. This analysis which our party made long back came true

in 1977 when the Janata Party came to power at the Centre dislodging the Congress(I), although the Janata rule did not last long.

We have, on earlier occasions, discussed in detail how the ruling class, in order to shape out this two-party parliamentary system played a significant role in bringing the party of its choice to power by creating a sort of artificial polarisation with the help of monopoly Press, the official media, money bag and all that, apart from rigging of all sorts—both violent and silent. The ruling class in order to perpetuate its rule has been resorting to criminalisation of politics, individual assassination and state terrorism. In this game, the vital role is played by the industrial-bureaucratic-military complex, developing as an extra-constitutional seat of power, which exercised its authority, acting from behind the screen and beyond the reach of the public visibility. Although, the scheme had been working more or less well at the state level, some constraints were developing to materialise it at the national level due to various reasons pushing the situation more or less out of the control of that invisible seat of power. Even the seemingly all-powerful industrial-bureaucratic-military complex cannot at present bring to fruition any scheme they like to foist on the people in the best interest of the ruling class. This is a new development which needs to be explained clearly.

but we should also recall, in this context, how our party warned the people about the all-pervading crisis of capitalism not only internationally but also in the national sphere. As already shown, this crisis is getting deeper and deeper with every day passing and having its reflection on every sphere. Surely in the economic sphere the capitalist crisis has been entrenched deeply so much so that it is impossible to get rid of the crisis keeping the system intact. But this is not all. The instability of the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois and social democratic parties—splitting now and uniting the next moment only to split again—but all serving crisis-ridden capitalism, menacingly increasing lust for power of the self-seeking, power-greedy politicians

leading to a mad race for power endangering even the stability of their party rule, the impact of the crisis on the various monopoly houses leading to the division of the FICCI, the growing contention and collusion between monopoly and regional capital or between the urban and rural bourgeoisie—apart from the horrifying cultural depravity—are all but various manifestations of this all-pervading capitalist crisis. It is known to all that it is the monopoly houses which finance the big parliamentary parties—although it is these parties again which oblige these monopoly houses by granting huge subsidies and subventions as per their choice for petty political interest, in return, after coming to power. So a serious competition ensues over the share of power and pelf, which a monopoly house would enjoy if a party of its choice comes to power. Not only this, the increasing conflict and clash of interest among the monopoly houses are getting more and more vindicated through the national dailies which again are controlled by this or that monopoly house, influencing the opinion of the people. Besides, the phenomenal increase in and spread of the menacing virus of communalism, casteism, separatism, parochialism etc. is nothing but the result of the ruling class pampering these forces in its bid to widen the cleavage among the people. Moreover, at the state level regional parties are carving out their spheres of influence, being backed by the regional capital which also moves sometimes in collusions, some other times in contention, with the national monopolists both economically and politically. So regionally the political map of the country reflects such a heterogeneity as never witnessed before. Naturally, in such a situation when so many varieties of factors, push and pulls, are working at a time at cross purposes like a tug-of-war, it has become more or less impossible for the class to streamline all the forces with an eye on attaining any singular object they desire. Even the most powerful industrial-bureaucratic-military complex which wields tremendous power has failed to ensure absolute majority of the Congress(I) in this election even using the electronic media at will to create

INDUSTRIAL-BUREAUCRATIC-MILITARY COMPLEX

(Contd. from page 3)

a sympathy wave after the ghastly assassination of the former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. There is no doubt that if this hung Parliament does not work well—the ruling class will try to search after other alternatives, mouthing the slogan of people's interest but in point of fact practising just the opposite. Even during the period when the election was going on, the idea of national government or the presidential form of government or the talk of even imposition of Emergency was mooted from various quarters. These are very ominous signs, and whatever the form, it will tend to arrogate more and more power at the hands of the executive posing a far greater threat of fascism. It is, however, to be noted that the President of the country was involved in this manoeuvre.

Be that as it may, a word or two about the BJP. The way the BJP attempted for installing itself in the Central government by confusing the people by mixing religion with politics, thereby creating a frenzied communal passion has a great impact on the body politic of the country. Whatever might be the claim of the BJP, one cannot overlook the fact that the main plank of the BJP is the fanatic Hindu revivalism. The BJP had increased its strength from 2 to 86 in the Ninth Lok Sabha and this gave it a tremendous boosting. The result was possible because the BJP with the help of Bajrang Dal, RSS and the VHP could fully exploit the communally surcharged situation created by the Congress(I) which had reopened and fanned up the Ram-janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid issue. During the spell of V P Singh government, the BJP created a highly inflammable situation in Kashmir with an ulterior political motive, even going to the extent of creating a sense of alienation and extreme anti-Indian feeling among the Kashmiri people. Again to get quick dividend in election politics the BJP whipped up communal frenzy to an unprecedented scale leading to fratricidal bloodbath by the Shilapujan, Ram Rath Yatra and Kar Seva. These highly dangerous moves of the BJP helped spread an undercurrent of communal frenzy across the country, taking advantage of the absence of democratic

mass movement and inadequate democratic consciousness of the people on the one hand and misusing the innocent feeling of the common people about religion. It is because of this undercurrent of Hindu communalism that the BJP could field so many candidates in the Lok Sabha as well as in state Assemblies which it could not dream of ever since its inception. But when the elections were declared it dawned on the BJP that the slogan of Ram alone could not suffice and so the slogans of 'Roti' and subsequently 'Insaf' were added to make the base of the vote bank wider. Again the BJP issued a different manifesto in South India followed by the slogan of 'stability' after the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi. This constantly shifting position of the BJP betrays sheer opportunism of swimming in favour of the current, relegating principle to the background. In order to win the trust of the ruling class the BJP attempted a grand national projection by inducting, apart from criminals and antisocials, a number of former military generals, some former top brass of the bureaucracy and matinee idols and in doing so the party has become a loose and amorphous one, replacing its previous cadre-based character as claimed by the party.

The BJP's self-styled projection of its capability of providing a clean government, for which it claims that it should get a chance, should be examined on the basis of the performance of the BJP governments in MP, Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan. In these three states the BJP-run governments are pursuing out and out anti-people policies to serve the interest of the vested class and also within such a short spell of time the BJP is involved in corrupt practices. The people of these three states have got no relief; on the contrary, the BJP governments increased the taxes, prices and fares exorbitantly causing extreme hardship to the people. People should remember that those who make tall promises and utter sweet-to-ear words cannot do any good when they are engaged in serving the interest of the exploitative and oppressive capitalist system. This is the reason why the myth of the CPI(M)-led Left Front which, true to its social

democratic character, engaged itself in serving the vested class more efficiently than others by adopting non-Left and anti-people policies, is rapidly eroding. Similarly, whatever might be the myth about the BJP it is far from reality, and the BJP, like the other bourgeois parties, is also engaged in extending the lease of life of this moribund capitalism as a result of which the sufferings of the people will further intensify and so the BJP's promise of providing relief to the people has no leg to stand upon.

On the question of puffed-up strength of the BJP some political parties like the Congress (I), the CPI (M) and its allies as also the Janata Dal have been expressing concern over the increasing threat from the forces of communalism and pledging now to undertake some common programme against this menace. Our perception about the degree, intensity and dimension of this danger and concern for the people is, no doubt, very deep. But a question cannot but arise how could the BJP come to this position. The big parliamentary parties like the Congress (I) or the Janata Dal and even the social democratic parties like the CPI(M) and the CPI in particular, cannot be absolved of the responsibility in this matter, which the people cannot forget for a moment.

Apart from the hectic move on the part of the BJP since the time it extended support to the NF Government from outside, which means that the question of survival of the NF Government depended also on the BJP, it cannot be denied that the politics of the Congress (I), JD and the CPI(M) contributed much to the present inflated position of the BJP.

Nobody can afford to forget the brand of politics pursued by the Congress(I), much tilted in favour of pandering to Hindu fanaticism during the later part of Indira regime, which went on more bluntly during the Rajiv regime—actually prepared a fertile soil on which the BJP along with RSS, VHP, Bajrang Dal, Shiv Sena and others cultivated and had a very good harvest steeped in communal politics. It was particularly since the period of Mrs. Indira Gandhi that the administration became

WORKS AS INVISIBLE SEAT OF POWER IN INDIA TODAY

highly communalised. The track record of the Rajiv Gandhi government on temple-mosque issue including shilanyas episode has not been forgotten by the people. In this connection, it may be recalled that our party characterised the role of the Congress(I) as the main architect of communalism, casteism, parochialism, separatism, etc., although there are so many other branded parties and organisations which defend these forces openly and nakedly.

Regarding the role played by the CPI(M) there is no denying the fact that many people consider this party as truly secular, being misled by their constant shouting of slogans against communalism. But nobody can deny that this party made alliance with the Muslim League in Kerala in the past, the same thing it did in Tamil Nadu just the other day—and they also formed an alliance with the BJP in Haryana when Devi Lal was in power. This CPI(M) again allowed Ram Rathayatra of Advani to pass through Jhalda in Purulia district of West Bengal and this left in its trail a scar of communal riot taking a great toll of lives. Although the BJP's interpretation of secularism is absolutely distorted and ahistorical, even then the BJP has been given ample opportunity by the Congress(I), Janata Dal and the CPI(M) to justify its claim that other parties practise minority communalism by appeasement in the name of secularism. But the BJP which is so much vociferous against practice of minority communalism is itself guilty of nakedly practising, in the name of real secularism majority communalism which is a far greater danger and to shield this heinous crime it is pointing its accusing finger towards others. The main point is the CPI(M)'s absolute failure to build up a countrywide mass movement against authoritarianism on the one hand and communalism, casteism, separatism, parochialism on the other, along with the burning problems in the life of the people—such a mass movement alone could deter the growth of the forces of communalism on which the parties like the BJP are thriving. So while not underestimating the importance of fighting the forces of communalism—both majority and minority communalism

—one should not overlook the importance of people's struggle which alone can act as a deterrent.

Again, at the initial stage of the elections there were three contending forces, viz, the Congress (I), the BJP and the N F—Left combine. The N F tried to consolidate its position by the Mandal card and casteism and in its frantic bid to woo the Muslim voters went to the extent of having the Imam of Jama Masjid issue a 'fatwah' to the Muslims for casting their votes in favour of N F. No one can forget how Mr. V. P. Singh used the Mandal card leading to a number of self-immolations in various parts of the country and intensifying caste hatred among the different castes leading to caste riots in some places. Without any concern of how this move would vitiate the entire social atmosphere, Mr. Singh did it only with the ulterior motive of creating a vote bank among the so-called backward community. But despite all these attempts the N F has been reduced to a third force in the Parliament. Even before the election results were out the CPI(M) hinted at going along with the Congress (I) and Mr. E M S Namboodiripad's letter to the Congress (I) President after the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi giving sufficient indication of its possible support to the Congress (I) in case of a hung Parliament made the situation fluid for the N F and this contributed to a great extent to the erosion of strength of the N F.

Now a word on some aspects of rigging. Violence has been the keynote of this election. It is now public knowledge that in U P and Bihar the bullets and not ballots decided the results. Intimidations, booth capturing, forcible stamping on ballot papers have been widespread in Bihar where Mr. Laloo Prasad Yadav, the Chief Minister, declared that in Bihar his decree would run and freely admitted that the caste groups would indulge in bulk stamping of ballot papers in their respective areas of influence. It has been reported in the Press that in Bihar while the actual turnout of voters was only 25 per cent, the official records show 55% polling. But as the political map of India has assumed a varied form so also the methods of rigging varied from state to state. In West Bengal the

CPI(M)-led Left Front aided by the police and administration not only resorted to most violent method against the opponents to prevent them from campaigning and the voters of other parties from casting their votes but it also made use of a very sophisticated and invisible method of rigging. For example, in the Kultali constituency in 24-Parganas (South) district, the CPI(M) resorted to the most savage and barbarous attacks on our party, which included murders, looting, burning, rape and physical assaults on our workers, supporters and sympathisers. This is one aspect and we can see it and the people also can know a little from the reports in newspapers, if at all published. But the other aspect in West Bengal is that rigging there has been done in a very sophisticated and invisible way in most cases.

The rigging process starts here from the preparation of the voters list where thousands of ghost voters are enrolled together with deletion of equal number of genuine voters of opposition parties and ends in counting of votes where again various manipulations are made for ensuring the victory of the chosen candidates. Those who are not acquainted with all these malpractices are acclaiming the elections in West Bengal as free and fair. The misdeeds of the CPI(M) are not known to the people of other states just as the anti-people policies of the BJP-run governments in MP, Rajasthan and H.P. are not known to the people of the remaining states of India. This is a bourgeois design so that all the parties are not exposed and hated at a time. The anti-people policies pursued by the CPI(M) in West Bengal exposed this party to the people there to a large extent and so without the help of allout and most sophisticated rigging machinery it cannot win the elections. This is the hard reality.

Now this election revealed the real character of Indian 'democracy'. The crisis of the capitalist system has reduced the elections to a farce and the party in power, whatever may be its hue, is shifting the burden of crisis on to the shoulders of the people. Mr. P. V. Narashima Rao, the new Congress(I) Prime Minister, has said in his speech to

(Contd. on page 6)

Cong.(I), BJP, JD & CPI(M)-CPI are in a mad race for serving the bourgeoisie

(Continued from Page 5)

the nation that his government is going to present a 'tough' budget because of the severe economic condition and he asked the countrymen to keep themselves prepared to tighten their belt still further and get ready for further sacrifices. It may be noted in this connection that there is no appeal by the new Prime Minister to the monopolists to make any sacrifice. This measure, according to him, has become necessary to maintain the 'economic independence' of the country apart from facing the impending economic crisis. This brings us directly to the question as to what should be the attitude of the new government towards different multinationals, the IMF and the World Bank, mostly influenced by the US imperialists. In today's perspective, after the counter-revolution in Russia and East Europe, the US imperialists are being more and more rabid and setting up stringent and humiliating terms and conditions in providing loans and financial aids to different countries. It is for the freedom loving people of India to mount pressure on the new government not to accept loans on any humiliating terms or to yield to the pressure of overlordship of the imperialists.

Coming to the point being discussed earlier, it is to be noted that the parties serving the ruling class can hoax the people because of the absence of democratic mass movement and of inadequate consciousness of the common men. The present setback of the international communist movement is also a contributing factor in giving a respite to the capitalists and imperialists, among others, by creating confusion in the minds of the people. The nobility of communism which is the only scientific path for the emancipation of the people from the savage exploitative and oppressive capitalist system has been maligned by the arch revisionists in the first instance and later by the counter-revolutionary onslaughts on the USSR and East Europe. The capitalist-imperialists and all varieties of reactionary forces propagated the absence of individual liberty and democracy in socialist states. But how

democratic is the world's 'largest democracy' needs no elucidation. In this 'democracy' one is free to starve, to sell one's chastity and dignity, to lead the life of a prostitute and beggar. Here, the state has no responsibility to ensure employment, medical care, education, shelter and other elementary needs of life, which a socialist state ensures. In the capitalist state democracy is for the five per cent of the people while the rest are ruthlessly exploited whereas in a socialist state democracy is for 95 percent people while 5 per cent bourgeoisie are subjugated. The new Prime Minister's warning about a tough budget and appeal to the people to tighten their belts are enough indication of how deep a crisis the Indian capitalist state has been enmeshed in and what disastrous consequences it would bring in the life of its people.

But it has to be remembered that all these parties feel least concerned for the people's cause and their sole object is to increase the lease of life of moribund capitalism. But the depth, intensity and dimension of the crisis are appearing in a deadly way and the entire burden will be shifted on to the people creating a suffocating situation for them. Given the correct political line, for a revolutionary party such a suffocating situation provides not only an ample opportunity to expose before the people the utter bankruptcy and utter hollowness of the capitalist system which is totally unable to give anything good to the people, but also the scope to organise the people more and more to build up legitimate democratic mass movements conducive to anti-capitalist socialist revolution, the only way out. In order to come out of this crisis the people have no other alternative but to launch democratic mass movement for restoration, protection and extension of democratic rights, norms and values and also on all burning issues in their life on the edifice of higher culture and ideology.

In this gloomy situation obtaining in the country it is indeed a ray of hope that the genuine revolutionary party of the proletariat could not be swept aside despite the conspiracy and onslaughts mounted by the bourgeoisie,

social democratic parties and the police-administration-vested interest combine. Our party not only retained its two seats in West Bengal Assembly but snatched two more seats in Assam Assembly by braving all odds and fighting the elections singlehanded on the correct base political line of the party. People will have to remember that the oppressive situation obtaining in a country can only be changed by the impact of progressive movement of the masses on the correct base political line. It is the duty of all to come forward to strengthen that party which launches movements on the edifice of higher culture and noble ideology against all the anti-people measures of the state and Central governments and on all burning issues confronting the life of the people. It is only through these movements the people's own instruments of struggle can develop ensuring the birth of alternative political power of the people, which alone can pave the way for emancipation of the people from the exploitation and oppression of capitalist system. Unless this alternative political power is developed the people will again be trapped whether they want it or not, as their apathy towards elections is not due to any conscious political understanding but is due to the frustrations at the behaviour of these parliamentary parties. So the building up of a countrywide mighty protracted mass movement can alone prepare the ground for freeing themselves from the clutches and tentacles of the capitalist system.

In this context, we appeal to the people that they must not turn their faces from communism by seeing the activities of the parties like CPI(M) and CPI which are communist parties in name only but social democratic and revisionist parties in deeds. These parties, with red flag in hands, are serving the vested class and going to the extent of inviting the multinationals and World Bank and allowing these organisations to exploit the people here.

We appeal to the rank and file members of these social democratic parties serving the vested class, who still consider them as genuine Marxist parties, to pause and ponder over the non-Left anti-people policies pursued by their leadership that have largely contributed to coming to power

(Contd. on Page 7)

Recent events in Ethiopia

Ethiopia, in the strategic Horn of Africa situated in its north-east, has just sent packing its autocratic ruler, Mengistu Haile Meriam, representing the ruling clique of DERG the highest policy making body. An interim government that followed has promised, among others, ceasefire and negotiations with the opposition camp, full restoration of democratic rights of the people including "election for a constituent Assembly to make sure that the Constitution of Ethiopia is adopted in a fully democratic manner and to hand over power to whoever wins in a free and fair election."

With international attention focussed on the aftermath of the Gulf War, vis-a-vis Bush's 'New World Order', the strategic Horn of Africa has undergone dramatic changes which could have a long standing impact on the geo-politics of the region.

The so-called Ethiopian revolutionary government ushered in through a military take-over with the blessings of the then Soviet revisionist clique in 1974 after the overthrow of King Haile Selassie, has now been practically overthrown by a united front of secessionists of Eritrea, rebels of Tigray and Oromo, all united under an umbrella organisation—Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). Observers of the African political scene are sure that this is the curtain call not only for Mengistu Haile Meriam, but for the ruling clique led by DERG as well which rode roughshod over the democratic aspirations of the Ethiopian people over one and a half decades.

Though officially an interim government was formed on May 9, 1991 with Tesafaye Dinka as the Prime Minister after Mr. Mengistu resigned and fled to Harare on May 21 and though a ceasefire between the interim government and the

insurgencies agreed upon, in practice it was wrapping up of the interim government in quick haste. For as soon as the ceasefire and negotiations in London with all other rebel groups led by the EPRDF was signed, the EPRDF captured Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia, reportedly at the dictate of the US imperialists. It is corroborated by the facts appeared in the international Press that both in London, where the peace talks were due to be held and in Addis Ababa, Ethiopians demonstrated against the US manoeuvre.

Before tracing the fall of Monarchic regime of Haile Selassie and the developments thereafter, it is worth recalling historical evolution though, in nutshell, of Ethiopia dating back its civilization 3000 years hence.

Ethiopia, formerly known as Abyssinia was all along an independent empire in north-east Africa except for a brief spell of 5 years of Italian occupa-

tion. Its area comes to about 395,000 sq. miles with sparse population around five crores was comprised of Amharas, the ruling race of Semitic and Hamitic origin, Calas, Guraghi and Negro tribes in the west and south, Danakil and Somalis in the east, its capital remained to be Addis Ababa. A multilingual society with 80 spoken languages of which excepting Amharic and Tigray none had any alphabets till seventies. It was originally a group of kingdoms and later twelve land-locked provinces; as a result of UNO's resolutions in 1950, the provinces were federated in 1952 with the former Italian colony of Eritrea on the Red Sea which is the sole access to sea for Ethiopia.

Since 1930, Ethiopia had been ruled by Emperor Haile Selassie who exercised almost absolute power in spite of the limitations imposed on him by the 1955 Constitution, which provided for universal suffrage and a two-chamber Assembly. Despite this fact, it was he who for the first time introduced the country's written Constitution in 1931. His reform moves were halted when Ethiopia was invaded by Italy in 1935. After the defeat of the Italians in the hands of Ethiopian and British troops in 1941 Ethiopia could emerge with a semblance of urban look here and there with communications and schools started to be built up by the regime of Haile Sel-

assie. He even took measures towards modernizing its agriculture.

In the '70s a severe drought led to a widespread food shortage in which thousands of its people died of starvation. In 1974, widespread unrest engulfed the country including massive demonstrations, strikes and an army mutiny that followed soon after resulted finally in September 1974 overthrow of Haile Selassie. The so-called popular revolution created its organ, Workers Party of Ethiopia (WPE) and pledged to make Ethiopia a socialist state, with government control over agriculture and other economic activities. But year after year, it was being devastated by drought, a direct impact of rapacious exploitation and neglect of its hydro-ecology. Many political observers believe that the unbearable condition of life for Ethiopians was the concomitant evil effect of monocrop agriculture and thoughtless denudation of forests induced by the imperialists in this part of Africa.

For over thirty years—dating back to the regime of Emperor Haile Selassie to date—the Central government of Ethiopia had been fighting against the Eritrean secessionist movement now controlled by the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) and since the late '70s against the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) in the Tigray province surrounding the Eritrean region. Needless to say, during the last couple of years a variety of other insurgencies cropped up, viz. the Oromo Liberation Front

(OLF), the Afar Liberation Front (ALF) and the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF). Interestingly enough, the emergence of WSLF may be traced to the inopportune war design of Somalian Director Barre to annex the Ogaden province from Ethiopian control to make the concept of Greater Somalia a reality. But the Somali invasion of the Ogaden province coincided with the consolidation of power in the hands of Mengistu Meriam in Ethiopia now in exile and his assertion of 'socialism' as the state policy.

According to the ousted Ethiopian rulers as well as evidences put forward by the international Press, these secessionists had been receiving funds from Iraq, Libya and Sudan, on top of which the US influence and independent relations with each of them were firmly rooted. Naturally, with passage of time, while funds and arms flow to these rebel groups were on the increase, Ethiopia had been facing serious problems beyond redemption with progressive reduction of Soviet military aid and military training programmes so far provided with by the erstwhile GDR, the regime led by DERG is reportedly turning to befriend Israel, Europe and the USA, in particular more vigorously.

In order to come with the terms conducive to cooperation with Europe and the USA, Mengistu Government had liberalised its economy, permitting higher

(Contd. on page 8)

Mighty movement with common programme & code of conduct a must now

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of the Congress(I) at the Centre and the growing misery of the people. Our appeal to the serious rank and file members of these parties that

they should either come forward to compel their leadership to refrain from pursuing the anti-people policies or should better join hands with those forces who are engaged in a relentless battle against the ruling class.

In fine, we call upon all the Left, democratic, progressive and secular parties and forces who are also well aware of the impending menace

before the people of the country and are eager to combine with the forces of democratic mass movement against the vested interest and the establishment—that it is high time they forged unity on the basis of a minimum common programme and a code of conduct for launching a country-wide mighty and protracted democratic mass movement.

ETHIOPIA

(Contd. from page 7)

individual investments, foreign investments, etc. The leader of the ousted government, Mengistu, was even ready for a multi-party system. In line with this trend of thinking and to come out of the impasse embroiled by its own making, the US intervention was called into to hold talks with the rebel groups. Two rounds of talks were held under the chairmanship of the former US President, Jimmy Carter, but the opposition groups broke off the talks without finalizing the agenda and not even assigning any reason either. It was later followed up by Herman Cohen, holding the desk of African Affairs in Washington at the State Department, but with no tangible results accruing therefrom.

Thanks to the counter-revolutionary blueprint of 'Glasnost' and 'Perestroika' following which the renegade Gorbachev clique abandoned its erstwhile friends in Africa and elsewhere, the tremendous pinch on the Ethiopian Government was brought to bear upon it. This period saw the emergence of EPRDF, now holding the rein of the government at Addis Ababa, and the latter rallied the rebel forces, TPLF, OPDO along with Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement and Ethiopian Democratic Officers' Revolutionary Movement.

The EPRDF came in possession of sophisticated arms and techniques of warfare from its foreign mentors and began their activities as a support movement to the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) and went on expanding its bases along with the traditional anti-government Tigray and Oromo forces. Sooner than later

the increasing pinch of massive combined impact of guerrilla forces began to be felt as a result of which the Ethiopian army came on the verge of collapse.

While the Mengistu Government at Addis Ababa was on the verge of crumble and losing grounds in quick succession, pressures mounted from the IMF, World Bank and the EEC from whom it needed very much credit and relief supplies for its survival to fight one of the worst droughts and famines which ravaged country. While liberalisation of the economy and other prescriptions dictated by those agencies were accepted, the ground reality could hardly improve without the active participation of those rebel and secessionist groups holding sway in the country.

In such a critical situation the ousted Mengistu Government, taking a cue of a proposal put forth by the Addis Ababa University professors, called a meeting of their Parliament and State Council and endorsed, inter alia, pluralisation and with that end in view agreed to hold direct talks at a high level with the rebels and the secessionists paving thereby "ushering in an elected government of the majority party through a multi-party system under a transitional interim government of persons more acceptable to larger sections of the Ethiopian people".

As stated earlier, without waiting for the outcome of the peace talks the rebel groups captured Addis Ababa violating the ceasefire which had been declared to allow the peace negotiations in London between the rebels and the interim government of Ethiopia under the

Observe 5th August in a most solemn & dignified manner

The Central Committee of our party appeals all Comrades to observe 5th August, in a most solemn and dignified manner, which is not only the 15th death anniversary of our great departed leader Comrade Shibdas Ghosh but also the 96th death anniversary of Frederick Engels, who breathed his last on this day in the year 1895.

The Central Committee is of the opinion that it needs no mention that the main object of these observations—particularly in the background of counter-revolution in Russia and East European countries consequent upon the severest of onslaughts of revisionism from within—is to release an intense ideological-political and cultural movement in defence of communism making it conducive to the revolutionary movement of our country, for advancing the cause of World Proletarian Revolution and holding aloft the noble banner of Marxism-Leninism.

For this it is necessary to grasp the scientific and great teachings of all Marxist authorities including Engels anew and also to realise how the understanding of Marxism-Leninism has been concretised, developed and enriched and brought to a new height by Comrade Ghosh in the face of the later developments confronting Communist movement both Internationally and Nationally. Now correct grasping of Marxism-Leninism is possible only when one can integrate theory with practice correctly and concretely in the concrete situation of today and apply these teachings in one's life in a way accelerating the process of identification of one's own self with the cause of revolution, party and society.

The Central Committee has reminded the comrades how history bestowed on us a great responsibility and has requested the comrades to take pledge anew to be equal to the task.

chairmanship of Cohen, the chief mediator and US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs.

From the behaviour of their open violation of the declaration for ceasefire and walkout of the peace talks in London even, thanks to direct patronage and instigation of US imperialists, the capture of Addis Ababa, the Capital of the country, is quite obvious: to bury the rule of so-called socialism run by the appendage of erstwhile Soviet revisionist clique for ever.

Notwithstanding the US intrigues behind the un-called for move taken by the EPDRF now in the rein of Addis Ababa, the breakdown of talks also do not rule out intense rivalry among the rebel groups over their respective objectives now that they are on the threshold of tasting power. It, therefore, remains to be seen how the Eritreans who now control the country's major outlets to the Red Sea relent in their demand for total independence from Addis Ababa, again a stand reportedly juxtaposed by the Tigreans, who would rather favour autonomy, instead, for them. But Washington is not to relent to this demand of the rebel groups. Reportedly, it has promised the Eritreans a referendum on the demand of their independence. If the legacy of rapacious exploitation handed down by the ousted regime led by the former President Mr. Mengistu's 14-year dictatorial rule and fratricidal tension cannot be overcome in defence of democratic unity of the Ethiopian people as a whole, Ethiopia may have a prolonged perilous civil war with disastrous effect on the life of the people in this strategic Horn of Africa.

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