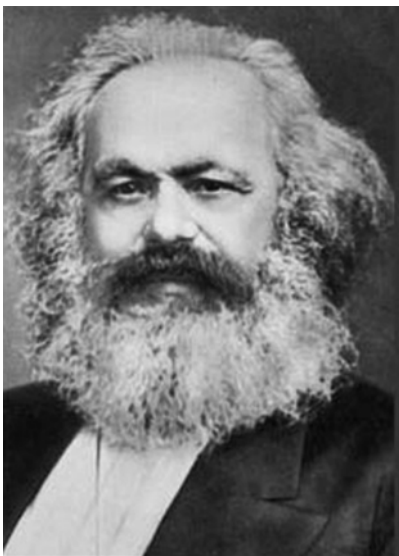


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The peculiar character of the social-democracy is epitomized in the fact that democratic-republican institutions are demanded as a means, not of doing away with the two extremes, capital and wage labour, but of weakening their antagonism and transforming it into harmony. However different the means proposed for the attainment of this end may be, however much it may be trimmed with more or less revolutionary notions, the content remains the same.

— Karl Marx

(The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte)

President Bush to India

Dangerous portent of the visit and UPA-CPI(M) orchestration on it

The US President George W. Bush is due to visit India in the first week of March and the CPI(M)-supported Congress-led UPA government is busy preparing a red carpet welcome. But the whole affair, every detail of the coming visit is shrouded in top secrecy – such as the security concerns surrounding Bush who is the most hated man today in the world. Naturally in the Indian people with a long tradition of fighting against imperialism, the coming visit could only generate strong resentment and misgivings. After all, they can see through all the measures, the dangerous portent that lies behind.

US imperialism – the greatest enemy of freedom and sovereignty

With the end of the second world war, while traditional imperialist powers like Britain, France, Germany and others were shattered, the US imperialism came out largely unscathed, as the leader of the imperialist camp. The world capitalist-imperialist system, was, however, mortally weakened with emergence of a mighty socialist camp under the leadership of the Soviet Union, covering about one-third of the globe and enjoying great prestige for its sacrifice, courage and ultimate victory over the fascist military forces. Added to this, there was continued success of anti-imperialist national liberation struggles in one former colony after another to give way to emergence of a score of resurgent nationalist states in Asia, Africa and Latin America. The world capitalist-imperialist market was thus tremendously squeezed; economic crisis instead of receding, deepened further. In frantic effort, the US imperialism took to every means at their disposal, every dirty trick, intrigue, intervention, aggression, subversion and power of money as well as psychological warfare to thwart advance of socialism and reestablish the hegemony of imperialism. On one hand, they let loose, the venomous tirade against socialism and the USSR as the cause of war; they made a

series of military pacts and treaties, such as the NATO, SEATO or SENTO, first with a view to containing the USSR and then also the Peoples' Republic of China. On the other hand, finding it difficult to continue their economic and political exploitation through holding colonies and semicolonies, the US imperialism set on with neocolonial exploitation of the countries across the globe, particularly the newly resurgent, yet small and weak national states. At the same time, the world witnessed their nefarious war-monger character through the series of events like their war in Korea, intervention in Greece-Cyprus issue, two-decade long imperialist bloodbath in IndoChina, particularly Vietnam, to mention a few among many. In fact, assassination of political leaders, conspiracy, blackmail, money power in elections, military coup, installation of puppet regimes by toppling popular governments, all hatched, sponsored and engineered by the much-hated CIA and the US imperialist rulers became the order of the day in countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. Continuous hate campaign, ugly machination and unceasing subversive activities, the US imperialism carried on against socialism and the socialist camp, did definitely have their effects; added however to it as a major cause, were the contributions made by the modern revisionism to weaken the socialist camp from within. Debacle engulfed the socialist camp, counter revolution swamped one socialist country after another. With this, was also abolished the mighty deterrent in the socialist camp that had existed as a ray of hope before the toiling people of the world in face of the neocolonial exploitation as well as war manoeuvres of the imperialists. This only caused a manifold increase in economic onslaught and belligerence of the imperialists, more particularly the US imperialists. Unable to avert the ever-deepening economic crisis in spite of the debacle of the socialist camp, the imperialists took to the drive at globalization, with a view to bringing the whole world firmly

Contd. on page 2

US imperialism is the biggest enemy of mankind

Butcher Bush — its barbaric face

Contd. from page 1

in the grip of their exploitation. Taking advantage of the phenomenal growth of information technology, they unleashed a vicious campaign of rotten imperialist culture that was directed towards destroying all norms, values and ethics, and thus dehumanizing mankind so as to rob them of any power to resist and revolt. Using their brute military force, US imperialism also set in for limitless aggression on weaker and smaller countries of the world. In the long list came Palestine, Somalia, Kosovo-Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and finally Iraq, as mark of blood-thirst, power-craze, cruelty and inhuman barbarism of US imperialism. Towering through this black episode of human civilization, the ferocious surge of exploitation-oppression-deception, President George W. Bush, whom the UPA government is now set to welcome, stood as the chief architect of playing on falsehood, killing,

monitored mockery of trial of a President of a sovereign country, Saddam Hussein. It was under Bush that the butchery of the Palestinian people by Zionist Israel continue with active US support. Bush's Presidency has made renewed efforts for economic exploitation of the poor African countries. While commiserating for the misery of the African people, the debt relief and aid the World Bank and other funding agencies have announced at the behest of the imperialists only, is a paltry total of 88 billion dollars, that too with the conditionality of good governance. This good governance in their parlance is nothing but creating the appropriate conditions for the multinationals to reap profits: privatization of public enterprises, water supply, power generation, abolishing subsidies in agriculture, education health care, which means further aggravation of the plight and destitution of the African people. US imperialists with Bush at the helm of their

sovereignty of nations and over and above, for worldwide indignation and protest from peace-loving people, including a vast population of his own land, USA itself. Bush is the US leader who presented to the human civilization the heinous doctrine of pre-emptive strike, thus assuming unbridled power to attack, overrun and smash any country, which, he, as the henchman of the US imperialists may simply think, could turn into a danger to them. Bush's blood-thirst and head-hunt-craze have not yet been quenched; unflinching testimony to that comes from the evidence of US umbrella extended to the King of Nepal, on the strength of which the King is butchering his countrymen who are fighting for freedom and democracy there; the testimony comes from Bush's constant drumming of war beats through his latest arrogant threats to Iran and Syria, while pacifying other Arab countries, with the help of a carrot and stick policy; it is further evident from the ghastly photographs of continuing torture of Iraqi prisoners. By virtue of these, he has definitely earned the distinction of deserving to be treated as one of the most hated and dreaded war criminals in the history of mankind, not excluding the Nazis and fascists! While he should have been put to open trial, it is a shame on us, the Indians, that our government offers him the red carpet. In face of the dreadful situation into which the US imperialism has pushed the whole world, the need of the hour is to develop people's militant peace movement, mighty anti-imperialist struggle in one and all countries of the globe, forging the widest unity of peace-loving democratic-minded people of all sections of life with communist forces at the core of those united struggles, with a view to directing them unwaveringly to the cherished goal of peace and progress, where exploitation of man by man will be ended with. As a part of that struggle, it was the need of the hour in our country of glorious tradition of anti-imperialist struggle, to develop a mighty anti-imperialist movement against the US design of gaining world hegemony through war, aggression and exploitation.

Under such circumstances, it is a pity to see that the Union government which survives only

with the support of the party like CPI(M), dares to ignore the will of people. It may be recalled that a minimal neutrality, apparent non-aligned outlook and approach, the Indian government of the same very Congress party showed immediately after the independence, albeit in legacy to the countrywide anti-British imperialist freedom struggle and under the pressure of popular opinion within the country, as also around the world. It is really shocking to find that even that semblance of non-alignment is being hurriedly cast aside. We must confront the questions : Why is it so ? Is the visit a mere visit of a head of state or does it portend greater danger? Does it not stand out as a reflection of the Indian government's attitude towards definitely seeking for alignment with the hated enemy of the world? Can anybody deny that more there is the alignment, the greater will be the danger of US intervention and influence increasing in the country? Where will it lead to, in regard to the freedom and sovereignty of the country then? How could the UPA government that requires support from CPI(M) for its survival, take such moves utterly detrimental to the interests of the country and its people?

UPA government makes definite move towards seeking alignment with US imperialism

To get at the answers, we must first be clear in our understanding that the Congress which heads the present UPA government at the centre, or, as a matter of fact, also the BJP which led the former NDA government, are both bourgeois parties that sustain themselves, rise to power and craves for more only with the support of and working at the behest of the Indian monopoly capitalism. It is also a reality that the latter, Indian capitalism, as a part and parcel of the crisis-ridden world capitalist system, is itself tottering from unassailable market crisis; unbridled exploitation of the internal market by the Indian monopolists has robbed the majority of the common poor masses of people of the purchasing power. On the other hand, Indian capitalism has not just



American soldier sets ferocious dog on Iraqi prisoner in Abu Ghraib prison

haughty adventurism, all manifested amply in the Iraq war, as also in countless incidents across the globe. It was under him as the President that defying all canons of international law USA and its lackeys, the other imperialist powers, invaded Iraq and slaughtering thousands of innocent people, including women, children, and hospital patients with limitless brutality, brought the country under the control of an army of occupation, foisted a puppet regime to work at its bidding and help the imperialists plunder the country's resources and arranged a tutored and

government tried to impose the Free Trade Area Agreement (FTAA) upon the Latin American people, which the latter, largely inspired by Cuba's resistance struggle against US aggression and machinations, could ultimately foil in the end, sending Bush empty-handed back from the negotiations in Argentina. All this only proved how severe economic exploitation US imperialism is bringing down upon people, how shamelessly imperialists carry on uncivilized onslaught on innocent people, entirely on false pretexts and caring the least for international law,

Contd. on page 5

RAIL BUDGET 2006-07

Paeans for Globalization under cover of deception unparalleled

While presenting the railway budget for 2006-07, Laloo Prasad Yadav, the incumbent minister in the UPA cabinet tried to lose some of his trademark swagger and instead made an all-out endeavour to inveigle himself to the people by calling his budget a *chamatkar*, meaning a weird formulation. And immediately the pliant media swung into action and a well-calibrated waffle ensued.

Budget talks

Laloo has been clamouring since long that he is opposed to any hike in either passenger fare or freight charges and is instead determined to follow a strategy based on the "increase volume – reduce unit cost" policy. So he proudly claimed that in the last year, following this strategy, there has been a turnaround in the railways and with a staggering balance of Rs.11, 280 crores in the kitty, it is truly back on the fast tracks. Buoyed by 'healthy finance', Laloo has preened feathers over a slew of achievements and once again declared a status quo in the second class passenger fare and freight tariff though, in order to woo the well-healed away from the airlines, the fares of AC-I class and AC-II have been made cheaper by 18% and 10% respectively. Laloo has also flaunted his success in bringing down the operating ratio, i.e., the proportion of receipts used up for working expenses, from 91.2% to 83.7%. Laloo has also claimed that "In 2001, the Indian Railways were in such a bad shape that people were scared of travelling by train. ... Still this miracle happened as we were committed to the people" (Laloo Prasad's exclusive interview with CNBC – TV-18, published in *the Statesman*, 25.2.06). Laloo Prasad has also declared 2006 as the "year of Passenger Service with a smile". Calling the passengers as "*rail ka raja*", (the king of railways), he talked of emphasizing on restructuring fare, "raising quality of service and sharing resultant gains with consumers."

Before the populist puffery of the media and pumped feel-good factor drowns out reason and in the resulting smokescreen of propaganda the broader masses are further confounded as to the essence of the budgetary proposals, let us see if there is indeed larding out of largesse to the common people or behind the prudery, it is a crafty exercise to stultify people.

Hoax of no fare hike

We take the very budget proposals one by one and put it under the scanner. First is the issue of not increasing the passenger fare of II class. Last year also, Laloo had played the same trick but did not display his sleight of hand. That was revealed subsequently when the various devices to squeeze out more money without hiking the fare structure per se began to be effected.

After the *Tatkal* (instant) reservation was introduced in the railway service a few years back, only one coach was earmarked for this. About 72 seats of this coach used to be allotted to the passengers against an extra payment of Rs.50/- over and above the usual cost of each ticket. But during 2005-06 the railway department by a notification increased the number of seats in this *Tatkal* system by ear marking 10% of the seats of each of the reserved compartments under the system. Not only this, additional charge was also phenomenally hiked to Rs.200/-, three times more than the original Rs.50/- at one stroke. In this way, as high as 115 berths in a 16-boggey long distance train were straightway being sold at an augmented price of Rs. 23,000/-. Thus the railway department extracted several hundreds of crores of rupees from the public. Secondly, on many occasions people after reserving ticket for some destination are compelled to cancel the same on emergency. Earlier, the cancellation charge was Rs.10/- per ticket, but since last year the charge has been doubled to Rs.20/- per ticket. This also doubled the inflow to the coffer of the Railway on this account. This time also, Laloo Prasad has announced upgradation of 200 trains into super-fast category meaning thereby a slapping of super-fast surcharge on the passengers boarding such trains. People have their own experience of travelling in the superfast trains with extra fare. There is neither any guarantee of punctuality nor is any other facility

including preservation of reserved seats assured. Even the maintenance of the bogies is no better than those operating in the non-superfast category. Yet there is an additional load on the purse just because railway authorities preferred to change the status of the train. It may be recalled that earlier, there were three classifications in train travel – first, second and third classes. Later on a sleeping facility was provided in the third class with additional charge. Finally, the second class was abolished and the third class sleeper, renamed as sleeper class, replaced them with almost equivalent fare. Quietly, there was a plunder on the common people particularly the poorer segment as they now needed to pay substantially higher price for a travel in a lowest class. Then came AC III tier with substantial premium over sleeper class fare and gradually the numbers of such bogies are being augmented to phase out sleeper classes. This time also, when Laloo spoke of increasing the number of bogies in the passenger trains to enhance capacity, his reference has broadly been to such air-conditioned coaches only.

Laloo has made a big show in announcing introduction of four fully air-conditioned *Garib rath* (chariot of the poor) trains (entirely AC III tier) with fares 25% lower than AC III tier. When it is chore for the poor making both ends meet, Laloo is offering them air-conditioned rath, a luxury they could not even dream to afford. This is disingenuousness at its best. But it is not just that. One cannot rule out the possibility that in future, ordinary sleepers will gradually be substituted by these air-conditioned bogies to make a mockery of all the emotive pitches the minister makes today for the poor. Laloo has offered off-season discount for the passengers between January 15 and April 15 and then from July 15 to September 15. But there is a flip side to this. One might end up paying more than the normal fare during peak season and for "premium services." Incidentally, one should not forget that there has also been galloping increase in the price of platform tickets. Just a few

days back, there was a proposal to double the rate. But impending state elections forced the power brokers like Laloo Prasad and his aides to postpone it for the time being.

Deterioration of service

Next is the question of appalling deterioration of service. Those travelling by train today have in fact given up any hope of receiving minimal comfort or care even after paying hefty fare for reservation of seats/berths. The compartments are in shambles, toilets are in horrible conditions. Often, there is no water, no fan and even no light. There is no maintenance, no system of inspection of the bogies that carry maximum number of passengers. All resources are diverted to ensure upkeep of superfast VIP trains like Shatabdi Expresses with premium fares which, in fact, run at a loss because of paucity of passengers.

Equally worst is the condition of the daily passengers travelling in local trains. It is better to call this an ordeal or travail, not travel. Shortage of trains, broken seats, removed handles displaced floors, abundance of dirt and filth are what these passengers have to tolerate, day in and day out. This is the "efficiency" Laloo Prasad and the committed media are so boastful of. To them, the indicators of efficiency are financial numbers, profit margins, introduction of luxury trains and electronic gadgets in ticketing not the passengers' care or comfort.

Horrible state of infrastructure

Laloo is also making hype about increase in the speed of the trains and tagging extra bogies. But are the tracks and bridges capable to withstand these extra loads? What is the condition of signalling system? Is it geared up to monitor such operations? As everyone knows, the numbers of train accidents are galore these days. Only the other day Rupali-Secunderabad Delta fast passenger met with a serious accident in Guntur division of Andhra Pradesh where several hundreds died. Prior to that Sabarmati Express and Ahmedabad bound passenger collided near Vadodara to take out several lives. In the newly laid Konkan broad-gauge, trains fell from the newly constructed bridges showing the quality of the work undertaken by the railways and utter callousness on the part of the

Contd. on page 4

Passengers bleed white, lack safety, denied service — minister boasts of performance

Contd. from page 3

railway authorities to ensure safety requirements in operation.

Complete absence of passenger safety

Denied any rudimentary comfort or facility, the passengers do not even feel least secured while undertaking train journey. In the reserved compartments, unauthorized passengers even ticketless travellers have free entry. In fact, anyone can board such compartments anytime. There is no machinery to check such unauthorized travel. Rampant corruption has penetrated so deep that occupying berths without ticket is no bar. Often, anti-socials, goons, burglars camouflaged as passengers enter these compartments, harass bona fide passengers, tease even molest ladies and loot their belongings. Recently, a young lady passenger was gangraped and then murdered inside a railway compartment by anti-socials. This once again showed how unsafe it is for the women to travel by train. Such hooliganism, molestation, loot, dacoity take place even during daytime. The Railway minister is saying that he would be increasing the number of policemen to provide security to the passengers. What a joke! Who does not know that such anti-social and criminal activities take place in front of and in connivance with the police? One would recall that immediately after Laloo Prasad had taken over as railway minister, such incidents assumed alarming proportion in his own state, Bihar, which became a nightmare for the train travellers.

But Laloo Prasad is unfazed. When asked to comment on passenger safety, he nonchalantly replied, "we are investing on the maintenance of tracks, bridges and lines. ... We are going to invest about Rs. 4,000 crores in the next six years to enhance the safety of the railways". (Interview with CNBC-TV 18). There ends his obligation to the people. He smartly quibbled over the questions about cleanliness and punctuality of trains.

The freight scenario

Equally awful an atrocious extortion has been on the freight side. In the name of rationalization the railway authorities have introduced restructuring of the

freight system. This was introduced in the budget for 2005-06. The budget for 2006-07, too has extended the system by proposing reduction of number of freight classifications from 80 to 28. Actually, by this restructuring almost all the lower rated category of goods has been shifted to higher rated category of freight. Not only this. So long all the essential commodities attracted less freight charge. But the UPA government railway minister by including most of these essential commodities in higher rated category of freight has paved the way for obvious shot up in the prices of these commodities as the incidence of such incremental cost is passed on to the people. The government has thus swelled up its coffers by netting hundreds of crores of rupees no matter whether people has to shoulder the burden of price escalation of essential commodities. The budget for 2006-07 will add further dimension to this pauperization process. Laloo Prasad proudly declares 8% reduction in freight rates for petrol-diesel. This will not have any impact on the retail oil tariff as the oil companies build in a freight component in their retail price structure. So this proposed reduction in fact would allow the oil companies to save about Rs.160 crores thus improving their bottom line.

Arithmetical jugglery

So these are all indeed juggleries of words, surfeit of counterfeit arguments and propped up arithmetical compulsion of incremental numbers. While claiming considerable reduction in the operating expenses, Laloo Prasad has been extremely careful not to divulge the fact that there has been a change in the accounting practices where lease charges are not included in the working of the ratio.

Privatization initiatives

We now turn towards another serious aspect, that is privatization of the railways that had already begun earlier and is now poised to take a big leap. Earlier, the staffs of the pantry cars were railway employees. Since last year, the process of handing over the catering service of even of pantry cars to private companies against a fixed amount had begun. In this budget,

there is open announcement of such privatization. Thus not only there will be quantum jump in the prices of food and beverages but even quality is bound to go down significantly. Moreover, with such privatization, a huge number of employees will lose jobs and a potential employment in the government sector will cease to be in existence. Once again, the railway authorities will boast of having markedly reduced the burden on its expenditure as there will no more be any need to provide for salary and other benefits including superannuation. Not only this, jobs of many departments of the railways have been outsourced, that is, jobs so long done by the employees have been given to private firms. This has also resulted in huge number of surplus staff. These posts are finally surrendered and sealed off causing more loss of jobs. In the budget for 2006-07 job of carrying commodities in the railway containers has been proposed to be handed over to the private business houses. The railway employees working in this goods carrying operation would be thus rendered out of job and have to undergo forced retrenchment in the name of VRS. With this, there will be further abolition of huge number of posts over and above the existing 3,00,000 vacancies on the verge of being extinguished. It is to be noted that the railway department has since long been following the formula of recruiting 1% against 3% retirement vacancies every year. This drastic curtailment of railway workforce coupled with privatization and outsourcing is what has contributed to improved bottom line. This is how the department harvested the staggering surplus of Rs.11,680 crores over the previous 2004-05. In this budget for 2006-07 the privatization process would be extended to even ticket selling and maintenance, finally abolishing these departments, an ominous sight to ultimately pave way for the private capital to take over the railways as a whole. And it is this way that the railway hope to show improved earning figure in the year 2006-07.

The budget has also proposed to run all the long distance trains with 5-8 extra coaches to be tagged to the existing 16-coach trains. But for this no extra employee would be

deployed. Notably, the number of coaches would be increased not for the ordinary second class but for the A.C three tier service the cost of which is almost four times more than the ordinary tickets. This way the railway intend to generate additional income to the tune of Rs.1650 crores. In the current budget year the proposed transformation of 200 Mail/Express trains into Super Fast will exact Rs.200 crores more. So while the people bleed white, employees are forced out of job, made to suffer distressingly, the railway authorities boast of profit increase and decreased operating ratio. This is where the capitalist globalization lays bare its ugly face in governance of Indian railways.

Now, the UPA railway minister, so anxious to keep the BJP, the aggressive pursuants of privatization, at bay, has openly proposed to privatize essential services maintenance and cleaning of stations as well as ticket counters. Camouflaged behind the slogan of public-private partnership, a coinage the CPI (M), his closest ally is so fond of, Laloo Prasad has also been liberally going to outsource modernization of many areas in the Railways despite the fact that the PSUs of the railways are well equipped to handle these jobs. Private owners will also run food plazas in the stations. So the railways will "save cost" by curtailing substantial manpower and at the same time generate guaranteed revenue. Moreover, allowing private tour operators to book railway tickets will further squeeze the chances of the common people to obtain tickets through normal route, whether from counter or through electronic mode, and enhance several times the scope of racketing in railway tickets. This is the invisible legerdemain behind improvement of financial health of the railways.

Serving the rich, fleecing the poor

So it is evident that Laloo Prasad, as a part of the Congress led CPI (M) backed UPA government totally dedicated to serve the interest of the ruling monopolists, is bent upon implementing the recommendations of Rakesh Mohan Committee to virtually privatize the entire railways and thus comply with

Contd. on page 8

Pro-US imperialism tilt of BJP government is further cemented by Congress-led UPA

Contd. from page 2

reached monopoly; giving rise to financial oligarchy it has tremendously increased the strength of its capital. In face of the internal market crisis, it has already started to export substantially this capital to weaker countries of Asia and Africa to exploit their labour and raw material, to capture their markets. By that it has assumed the character of nascent imperialism and has emerged as a junior partner of the world capitalist-imperialist system. It even aspires to emerge as a superpower, to begin with a regional superpower in South Asia with a view to exerting unchallenged control on the market of this region. By that it is causing no little alarm to the neighbouring

countries that already feel the pinch of Indian big-brotherly hegemonism and expansionism. But the market crisis of the world capitalism naturally affects Indian capitalism too. Acute competition for capturing global market has not been reduced at all, in spite of all rhetorics of globalization, liberalization and privatization. This competition, as history reveals, is reflected by the contradiction among the imperialists as well as their bid to form alignments and combinations with a view to coming to an understanding towards mutually sharing available markets. The Indian monopolists now strive to fulfill their dream with support and sanction of the US imperialism. The latter, in its turn, is eager to grant them concessions

and indulgence with a view to furthering inroad of US imperialist capital into the Indian market. At the same time, through these concessions and indulgences, the US imperialist rulers also intend to gain Indian support to their global politics and diplomacy, as well as to their military strategy, which are now being looked at by more and more countries with grave suspicion and indignation and in result, the USA is facing more and more isolation in the field of international politics. This coincidence of economic interests, mutual bartering of those interests of the ruling capitalist classes of the two countries, this convergence of political interests lies at the root of

Contd. on page 6



A victim of depleted-uranium bomb used by US army

HAROLD PINTER'S NOBEL SPEECH

'Bush & Blair are war criminals'

British playwright Harold Pinter used the platform of accepting his Nobel prize for literature on Dec. 7 to call for putting George Bush and Tony Blair on trial as war criminals. He was too ill to travel from his home in London to Stockholm but recorded his 45-minute talk on video. Below are excerpts.

What has happened to our moral sensibility?

... Look at Guantanamo Bay.

Hundreds of people detained without charge for over three years, with no legal representation or due process, technically detained forever. This totally illegitimate structure is maintained in defiance of the Geneva Convention. It is not only tolerated but hardly thought about by what's called the "international community." This criminal outrage is being committed by a country, which declares itself to be "the leader of the free world." Do we think about the inhabitants of Guantanamo Bay? What does the media say about them? They pop up occasionally—a small item on page six. They have been consigned to a no man's land from which indeed they may never return.

At present many are on hunger strike, being force-fed, including British residents.

No niceties in these force-feeding procedures. No sedative or anaesthetic.

Just a tube stuck up your nose and into your throat. You vomit blood. This is torture.

What has the British Foreign Secretary said about this? Nothing. What has the British Prime Minister said about this?

Nothing. Why not? Because the United States has said: to criticise our conduct in Guantanamo Bay constitutes an unfriendly act. You're either with us or against us.

So Blair shuts up.

The invasion of Iraq was a bandit act, an act of blatant state terrorism, demonstrating absolute contempt for the concept of international law. The invasion was an arbitrary military action inspired by a series of lies upon lies and gross manipulation of the media and therefore of the public; an act intended to consolidate American military and economic control of the Middle East masquerading—as a last resort—all other justifications having failed to justify themselves—as liberation.

A formidable assertion of military force responsible for the death and mutilation of thousands and thousands of innocent people.

We have brought torture, cluster bombs, depleted uranium, innumerable acts of random murder, misery, degradation and death to the Iraqi people and call it "bringing

freedom and democracy to the Middle East." How many people do you have to kill before you qualify to be described as a mass murderer and a war criminal? One hundred thousand? More than enough, I would have thought. Therefore it is just that Bush and Blair be arraigned before the International Criminal Court of Justice. But Bush has been clever. He has not ratified the International Criminal Court of Justice. Therefore, if any American soldier or for that matter politician finds himself in the dock, Bush has warned that he will send in the Marines. But Tony Blair has ratified the Court and is therefore available for prosecution.

We can let the Court have his address if they're interested. It is Number 10, Downing Street, London.

Death in this context is irrelevant. Both Bush and Blair place death well away on the back burner. At least 100,000 Iraqis were killed by American bombs and missiles before the Iraq insurgency began.

These people are of no moment. Their deaths don't exist. They are blank. They are not even recorded as being dead. "We don't do body counts," said the American general Tommy Franks.

Early in the invasion there was a photograph published on the front

page of British newspapers of Tony Blair kissing the cheek of a little Iraqi boy. "A grateful child," said the caption. A few days later there was a story and photograph, on an inside page, of another four-year-old boy with no arms. His family had been blown up by a missile. He was the only survivor.

"When do I get my arms back?" he asked. The story was dropped. Well, Tony Blair wasn't holding him in his arms, nor the body of any other mutilated child, nor the body of any bloody corpse. Blood is dirty. It dirties your shirt and tie when you're making a sincere speech on television.

The 2,000 American dead are an embarrassment. They are transported to their graves in the dark. Funerals are unobtrusive, out of harm's way. The mutilated rot in their beds, some for the rest of their lives. So the dead and the mutilated both rot, in different kinds of graves....

Many thousands, if not millions, of people in the United States itself are demonstrably sickened, shamed and angered by their government's actions, but as things stand they are not a coherent political force—yet. But the anxiety, uncertainty and fear which we can see growing daily in the United States is unlikely to diminish.

[Source : *Workers World*, Dec 22, 2005]

Congress exalts over killer Bush's visit

Contd. from page 5

increasing pro-US imperialist stand of the Indian government. In reality, this pro-US swerve was perceptibly reflected in the days of the former BJP-led NDA government. Not only did they not come out in active support of the freedom of the Iraqi people but were covertly aligning with the US imperialists. Be it on the question of sending troops to Iraq in support of the nexus of US-UK imperialism, or of condemning US aggression in Afghanistan, BJP as a faithful bourgeois party tried its utmost to uphold the US interests, the pro-US aspirations of the Indian monopolists. However, adverse international opinion, as also strong opposition of people from within the country, prevented the government to a great extent from implementing their design. Now, the Congress, another trusted representative of the ruling class is out in the arena, to fast make up the delay and forge a total alignment with the greatest enemy of mankind on the earth today. The dangerous portent of this alignment is already giving way to rapidly rising US influence on the political, economic and cultural, even military spheres of our country. US capital is

draining down the streets of the country; the Indian government, through its measures of disinvestments is allowing imperialist capital to make deep inroad, amounting to even gain control, in vital sectors of trade, industry and finance, including insurance, aviation and such others. The government nakedly supported the US and EU sponsored resolution of International Atomic Energy Agency impose restrictions on the nuclear energy programme of Iran. They signed the 10-year defence agreement between USA and India, another clear signal of the pro-US stance of the Indian ruling class. The Indian government is staging joint military exercises, including the joint air exercises of the IAF and USAF, is allowing the US army to use its bases for that purpose; it permitted the US warplanes to refuel from Indian ports during the Iraq war. All this presages a great threat to the country's sovereignty and future democratic movements. It cannot but help increase the scope for US interference in the political affairs of the country, particularly in the sensitive and vital area of defence and national sovereignty. Filthy imperialist culture hinged on



Barbaric torture on Iraqi prisoners in Abu Ghraib prison by US soldiers. Can President Bush deny his role and responsibility?

sex, violence, consumerism, self-centrism with complete rejection of any social responsibility is pervading people's life through a well orchestrated machinery of improved information technology and electronics, totally under the grip of imperialist powers. Over and above, the recent remarks of the US ambassador to India, or even, Bush's own speech in Washington on February 22, dictating terms to separate Indian civilian and military nuclear plants and to place all civilian nuclear installations under international supervision of the IAEA, clearly smack of US intervention even in internal politics of the country. The dreaded enemy of the modern world thus threatens to drive its tentacles into the life and society of Indian people. The visit of President Bush, the icon of falsehood, killing and cruelty, thus conceals behind it the dangerous portent to the toiling masses of India. It is not just a visit of a state head. It threatens to stand as a grave danger to people's life, people's democratic movement, not to speak of revolutionary movement of the country.

It was thus necessary to develop a countrywide militant anti-US imperialist struggle on a strong footing of unity of all sections of democratic-minded people, standing firm on high ethical and moral values on the strength of correct ideology and politics. Face to face with such necessities, what role in organizing such a countrywide anti-US imperialist movement, was expected from parties like CPI(M) that claim themselves as leftist, even Marxist? Did they assume that role? Or, are they coming out otherwise? Had they taken the required firm stand, will not even schoolchildren admit that, the

UPA government which survives on CPI(M) support would have felt the real pressure of paying heed to people's opinion? These are the questions that are tormenting people. They find CPI(M) in a totally different shape. They cry hoarse against Bush's visit and plan a few protests. But what would these mean, is made clear in the words of the representative of the US imperialism, the spokesperson of their foreign department, when she submitted that they did not mind this protest game of the lefts. They knew these were prerogatives in parliamentary democracy, bindings for an opposition within the parliamentary system.

The point is what made CPI(M) take such a shameful stand. The party, since its inception has grown up with social democratic character though clamouring vociferously for revolution, Marxism and so on. Our party has repeatedly pointed this out, all through the long history of the existence of CPI(M). In course of that journey, CPI(M) has completed the full circle by now. It has submitted itself, its very political dreams and aspirations, its everything to the ruling Indian monopolists. It now enjoys governmental power in different states of the country with support and backing from the ruling class; it aspires to move ahead to more power, to a fuller dominating power on the strength of those supports and backing. So it is merging itself with the aggregate interest of the monopolists. For that, it is abandoning the path of movement, and is rather acting as brutal suppressor of democratic movements, wherever it is in power. In the name of development, it is inviting imperialist capital. And it is

Belafonte lashes out at Bush

Well-known singer and actor Harry Belafonte said on January 8 :

"No matter what the greatest tyrant in the world, the greatest terrorist in the world, George W. Bush says, we're here to tell you: Not hundreds, not thousands, but millions of the American people ... support your revolution."

On January 15, at Duke University in North Carolina he said, "I don't live by consensus. And when I talk about Bush, in the dictionary under terrorists there are many different subtitles and ... if people are coming to open your mail and tap your phones, and the people of Katrina are desperate for help and they are not getting it from the most powerful man in the world, he has brought terror in the hearts of people and in the dictionary anyone who brings fear is bringing terrorism and is a terrorist."

The next day, in New York City, Belafonte was at an event organized by the Children's Defense Fund, a mainstream advocacy group. Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton also attended the event. The Daily News reported that she shunned Belafonte. Despite the fact that earlier at a Black church in Harlem she called the U.S. Congress a "plantation" where dissent is not allowed, Clinton feared associating with someone who truly was dissenting.

Belafonte indeed represents the sentiment of tens of thousands in the United States who are organizing to stay the hand of U.S. imperialism in Venezuela and wholeheartedly support the Bolivarian process.

Belafonte has it right when he said millions in the U.S. support the Venezuelan Revolution. Why? Because when confronted with the truth about Venezuela—that its government is carrying out policies contrary to the U.S. that are improving healthcare, education and welfare for the people—millions in this country absolutely agree with that kind of society.

[Teresa Gutierrez in *Workers World*, January 26, 2006]

Contd. on page 8

The future of humanity lies in socialism — Nina Andreeva

[On October 27 West Bengal State Committee of All India Krishak-o-Khetmajoor Sangathan (AIKKMS) awarded a mass felicitation to the leaders of fraternal parties of different countries who had attended the 88th Anniversary of November Revolution held by SUCI in Calcutta on November 25, 2005. The felicitation was given at Joynagar in West Bengal at a gathering that was attended by tens of thousands of agricultural labourers and poor peasants from different parts of the state. For want of space we could not publish the speech earlier. Here we publish the full text of the speech by Comrade Nina Andreeva that was extremely inspiring to all. — Ed. Proletarian Era]

Nina Andreeva, General Secretary of All Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks), offering revolutionary greetings to all the people assembled at the meeting, said in her short but inspiring speech: I thank you all for inviting me at this meeting. Our party is engaged in a struggle to restore socialism in the erstwhile Soviet land. I have heard about the longstanding tradition borne by this area of have-nots fighting against the haves. Shibdas Ghosh, the leader of the Indian proletariat had himself organized revolutionary activities in this area. It is on this soil that the revolutionary party of India, the SUCI was born. I am indeed very happy to find here such a huge gathering of revolutionary cadres. You can recollect those lines from the Communist International – no one will hand over freedom to the poor masses, neither any valiant hero nor any king or even God himself. Freedom has to be won over through our own efforts. No

one can lead this battle all by oneself, it has to be led collectively by all of us. We have to wage a united struggle against the imperialists and the bourgeoisie for ushering in democracy, peace and socialism. The future of humanity lies in socialism itself.

People of India – enriched with experiences of long battles, are great. Coming to India, I have seen innumerable poor, destitute and hungry people, as also big cities, streets and palatial buildings also are found in Europe, Germany and France. The governments in these countries do not think of the common people. Under socialism alone people were granted rights to job, shelter, free education and medicare by law. Higher education as well as up-to-date medical treatment were given in socialism free of any charge – in reality only socialism can give it. We came by all these things in the socialist Soviet Union established through the October Revolution of 1917. Even with apparently lower wages, there was no dearth of any amenities since things were available free of costs. The future held no uncertainty for the people of the Soviet Union.

Those who have lived in the socialist society are all putting up resistance against the present system. Today, in the wake of the debacle of socialism, the common people are denied the scope of education. Even highly educated persons, including scientists go jobless, their hunger compelling them to peddle drugs – human talent being thus wasted. Ours was a multinational country, inhabited by Kajakhs, Tartars, Ukrainians, etc., yet there was no racial animosity. Such a country has been broken up into fragments based on racial differences. Present ruling clique have resorted to the tactics of divide and rule.

Lenin, the great leader had established socialism – the only way of emancipation of the people – to be successfully carried off by the great Stalin. Our economy today owes for its survival to the foundation laid down by Stalin.

Imperialism was ever hateful about socialism from its very inception. The socialist state, soon after being born, was encircled by the military of twenty imperialist countries. Again in 1941, imperialist-fascist marauders pounced upon the Soviet Union, but failed to destroy socialism there. The proverb goes – destruction is caused not by external blows but by those from within. Deviating from the correct path, the bureaucratic leadership of the party degraded the revolutionary party of the proletariat to a debased party of all people. Degenerated opportunist leadership drove the party towards destruction. The debacle of the Soviet socialism has stricken a blow upon the movement of the toiling people the world over. The duty of our party – All Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) as also of us all – is to



Comrade Nina Andreeva speaking at Joynagar, 24 Parganas (South)

restore socialism in the Soviet land.

Save Education March in Chandigarh

The Punjab and Chandigarh unit of All India Save Education Committee organized Save Education March against Commercialisation and Privatisation of Education at Parade Ground on 21st February, 2006. Many educationists like professors of universities, colleges, leaders of teachers organisations, students and representative of parent teacher organisation participated in the March and dharna.

Prof. Amrinder Singh, Convenor Punjab committee AISEC (All India Save education committee) said that the state govt. is making anti-education policies day-in and out under which we are witnessing fee hike and curtailing funds to aided colleges and schools and also privatization of education. Punjab government is at the top in the list of attackers on education. The grants to aided schools and colleges are being reduced gradually. More than 40,000 posts of teachers, professors are lying vacant, yet no recruitment is being done. The latest decision to appoint 12000 teachers through Panchayat System is also indirect way to get rid of financial responsibility of the Punjab Government. The last year's decision to privatize more than 2000 schools and also the fee hike in ITI and to sell them out along with the

decision to amend PSEB act are the direct onslaughts on education and ploys to make the education out of reach from the common man of Punjab. The politicians whether ruling or in opposition are turning education into a saleable commodity.

Pratap Samal, Incharge, Delhi unit of AISEC said that all the central and state governments are fighting shy of their constitutional responsibility to impart education to all. The need of the hour is to voice strong opposition to the commercialization and privatization of education not only by teachers and students but by people from every section of the society.

Later a delegation of Prof. Aminderpal Singh, Yahspal (Co-Convenor, AISEC Chandigarh unit), Principle G. S. Gill, Educationist Jagmohan Kaushal gave a memorandum to the Chief Minister.

The dharna was also addressed by Prof. R.S. Brar (President, Punjab and Chandigarh College Teacher Union, PCCTU), Prof. S.S. Hundal (Senator of Punjab University, Chandigarh), Educationist Jagmohan Kaushal, Master Joginder Azad (D.T.F.), and Ranjit bath of Unemployed E.T.T Teachers' Union.

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Killer Bush, Go Back!

Contd. from page 6

because of this, it has also to play as safe as possible vis-à-vis the US imperialists too; it has to take cautious steps. At the same time to conceal this surrender from people, it has to raise slogans of movement, make postures and gestures of anti-imperialist stand. And this is the pathetic, tragic part of the situation. The fake opposition it presents, stands out as all the more dangerous for the people, inasmuch as it stands as impediment to development of real movement.

Peace-loving Indian people with the genuine long tradition of anti-imperialist struggle must realize these truths. The danger, the Bush visit portends, the grave future it conceals to bring in its wake must be resisted with all might. The fake

opposition of the social democrats may stand in the way. Overcoming them people must come forward. We urge upon fighting people of India to prove once more their anti-imperialist fervour by offering Bush, the enemy of the world people, the strongest note of refusal and rejection. We assure them, as on earlier occasions of anti-imperialist movements, our party will come out with whatever might we have. We will give vent to our protest at any and every point Bush may dare to step on. In this act, we sincerely count on people's earnest support and active role.

Long live peace and justice!
Down with US imperialism! Down with betrayers of people's cause!

Killer Bush, Go Back!



Barbaric lathi-charge by police on SUCI demonstrators in front of US embassy in Calcutta

RAIL BUDGET

Contd. from page 4

the prescriptions of capitalist globalization in the railway sector. It is because of this reason that there is gushing appreciation and applaud from the Chambers of Commerce, Confederation of Indian Industries and other monopoly houses for such a "pragmatic and user friendly" budget which according to them, "will help sustained growth momentum and support the overall economic development". Hence it is clear that despite clamouring catholicity of outlook, turn around performance and all such 'altruistic streaks', it was just a saga of proffering the usual grab bag of stereotypes – fleece the poor, please the rich. It is therefore, incumbent on all the left and democratic forces to rise in protest against such a criminal deceit.

Despicable role of the pseudo-Marxists

But most disappointing is the fact that when such a deception is being dished out on a palatable saucy base, there is not even the customary bluster on the part of the CPI(M), CPI, committed to run this government for full five years and renewing the commitment every day, over this budget. The CPI (M) Polit Bureau in a statement issued on 24th February simply commented that privatization initiatives in the railways are

"unfortunate" and "not acceptable". After expressing satisfaction that in this budget "no further burden has been put on the people," it then called upon the railway minister "to assure the people and the parliament that such inadequacies will be corrected". The CPI(M) MPs even welcomed handing over container service to private houses. The CPI state organ of West Bengal also the hailed the budget as "pro-development". What could be a better damp squib on the poor railway passengers so severely reeling under fare hike in one form or the other, lack of minimal facilities and rudimentary safety as well as continued degeneration of service. This once again reveals how distanced these pseudo Marxists are from the cause of the people in their eagerness to satiate lust for pelf and power.

Rise up in protest

But people ought not to be misled by these treachery or perfidy. They must understand the dangerous import of such deceptive exercises in the name of people's budget and must come forward to develop intense democratic movement to resist such sinister moves under a radical cloak. We call upon all to join and strengthen such movements to assert their power against ruthless capitalist exploitation.

Education in Bush's America and in Socialist Cuba : UNESCO report exposes the reality

The United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), in a Global Monitoring Report indicated unambiguously that Cuba, a relatively underdeveloped country of 11.2 million people, spends 10 to 11 percent of its GDP on education, by far the highest ratio of any country in the world. Cuba's educational system is mandatory through the ninth grade, free to all at all levels including higher education and "promotes the whole individual (including physical education, sports, recreation and artistic education) while explicitly linking education with life, work and production." This is done through what Cubans call emulation, a form of competition where the group works together to win as a collective. Less than 10 years after the revolution, Cuba had reduced illiteracy by 40 percent, achieving a 96.9 percent literacy rate. Its pupils-to-teacher ratio is now 13.5 in primary school and 15 for all levels of education.

The report has also found that Cuban students achieve the highest scores in Language and Mathematics, and take less time to complete a grade (Advancement rate). This is the case in all of their schools. Differences in achievements for this country, in terms of gender and socio-cultural levels, are also reduced. President George W. Bush's programme titles the " No Child Left Behind Act" has had the opposite result. It has left not only children behind, but also teachers. The ratio of students per teacher has increased in many schools to over 40 students per instructor. Furthermore, this act exposed the discrepancy in the educational system there, where low-income children, especially from oppressed groups, will never receive the same quality of education as children in high-wealth districts. The discrepancy is up to \$ 2,000 per year per student.

The act has paved the way to the militarization of low-income schools, which were given two options: either have military recruiters on their grounds to obtain federal funding or risk school closure. Yet the federal government is stone walling any progress in improving and elevating the quality of education of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged by underfunding the act by \$7.5 billion, according to the American Federation of Teachers.

The excuse given is the cost of the Iraq war and the funding of Homeland Security, but in reality it is due to the inherent contradictions in class society. Unlike Socialist Cuba, where the revolution considers education and healthcare to be fundamental, the US government deems militarizing young minds more important than elevating the standards of education for all, especially nationally oppressed and low-income children. [Source : *Workers' World*, December 23, 2004] .

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