



# *Janashakti*

ORGAN OF CC OF CPI (M-L) – JANASHAKTI

## Reaffirm our basic principles and rectify errors

**Document of the 10th Plenum of the C.C. of the  
Communist Party of Philippines**



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Editor-in-chief : K. Ramachandran

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**P. Jaswantha Rao**

*Editor*

Andhra Bank Building,

Krishna Lanka,

Vijayawada - A.P.

Pin. -- 520 010.

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## Perpetuating the communal divide

The coming elections in the four states, all ruled by the BJP until the dismissal of the state governments in the wake of the demolition of the Babri Masjid, will be a pointer as to who will eventually come to power at the Centre. The electorate of four states holds one-thirds of the total seats in Parliament. A decisive verdict in favour of any one ruling class party means that it has a good chance of capturing power in New Delhi. Aware of the implications of such a verdict, all the ruling class parties are drawing their battle-lines.

All these years, from the *shilanyas* in Ayodhya, to the repeated attacks on Babri Masjid, to its final demolition and the aftermath of the communal holocaust, the ruling classes and their representatives have been fanning aggressive Hindu communalism. While the BJP is of the most blatant variety of these communal peddlers, the Congress(I) is of the most insidious variety, apart from being the main peddler. While their sectional interests are aimed at gaining political power, their class interests demand the continuation of their class rule. Dividing people on communal lines to divert their attention and dissipate their energy from fighting against the bankrupt economic and political policies of the big bourgeois-landlord rule, is their common interest.

Viewed against this background, the scramble among various ruling class parties to woo the Muslim voters is yet another disguised form of dividing people on communal lines. Their tactics are aimed at the perpetuation of communal division forced upon people by them.

P.V. Narasimha Rao, who allowed the demolition of the Babri Masjid, is in the forefront of such activity. He is using all the resources at his call, both party and government, to win back the Muslim voters. He assured the Muslims from the ramparts of the Red Fort that the Masjid would be reconstructed; he announced the setting up of a National Minorities' Finance and Development Corporation, with a capital outlay of Rs. 500 crores; he promised to honour the recommendations of the Minorities' Commission, which had been given statutory powers, and changes in the Waqf laws to reduce legal wrangling over properties. On September 2, while addressing a Muslim congregation at Talkatora stadium, he said the authorities would charge sheet within the next three weeks those responsible for the destruction of the mosque. In a bid to woo the Imams, he convened a meeting of State Waqf ministers and State Waqf board chairmen and asked them to formulate a scheme to ensure payment of

wages to Imams. Given the fact that there are three lakh Imams in the country, this gesture will go a long way in wooing them. During his trip to Iran, he met the religious leader Ayatollah Khamanei. This trip is being placated as a vindication of his government's secular credentials.

Why in the first place was the mosque allowed to be pulled down? Why are the culprits left to freely roam all over the country even nine months after they committed the crime? What is seen regularly is that 'suspects' are first arrested and then accused of their 'crime'. Why has the government then not taken any action against L.K. Advani, Murlī Manohar Joshi and the likes of them after the CBI has already chargesheeted them? All this clearly shows that the ruling Congress(I) does not consider the religious minority as Indians, but as aliens who should be wooed into their trap.

It is again the BJP that is using blatant methods to woo Muslim votes. The line that it has adopted is that in the states in which it has been in power, there have been no or very few communal clashes. In other words, "it is the BJP which can assure Muslims physical security". It is advising Muslims to take part in the action now by unfolding power to the BJP. In other words, if Muslims do not support BJP, they will not get their share in power in the BJP-ruled State. The RSS has also changed its tune. It has raised the bogey of disinformation campaign and asked the Muslims not to see the RSS through tainted prisms, assuring that the RSS is not anti-Muslim and anti-Islam.

The game of the BJP is clear. Since it perceives itself so close to gaining power at the Centre, it wants the last hurdle -- the wrath of Muslims it has earned -- to be removed from its way to power.

On the other side, V.P. Singh and his erstwhile colleagues heading the different fractions of Janata Dal are also throwing their hats into the arena of wooing the Muslim voters. After having parleys with Syed Bukhari, Imam of Jama Masjid, they have decided to merge into one party to ostensibly provide a non-BJP non-Congress(I) option to Muslims. And V.P. Singh has gone a step ahead and demanded reservations for upper castes, which until now, he was judiciously avoiding. Emboldened by the thought that no one dares to question his credit for implementing Mandal Commission recommendations, he has chosen to play down his Mandal hero image so as to woo the upper castes.

For the ruling classes, the outcome of such a scramble to woo the people on a communal basis is a well calculated one, it is the perpetuation of the communal divide that they have forced upon the people.

If you are a Muslim, you must either submit to the demands of the BJP to buy your peace or sell yourself to the Congress(I) for paltry doles. If you are a Hindu, you must either assert yourself along with the BJP that this country belongs to 'you' and not to 'them' or provide a little breathing space under the continuous threat for 'them' of being massacred in 'your' country by towing the line of the Congress(I). These are the distorted options that are forced upon the people. They are not allowed to think as 'we, the Indians'. They are eternally divided into 'us' and 'them'. Whether it is in the form of merciless attacks alternating with merciful doles, people's minds should be poisoned with the communal virus. Obviously, communalisation of body politic has reached its nadir.

The implementation of Fund-Bank sponsored reforms had led to 'food riots' and 'revolts' in that distant 'dark continent' called Africa. But the 'oldest civilisation' does not need such a 'barbarity'. The 'largest democracy in the world' has many safety valves to vent the pent up anger of its subjects. Communalism, casteism, regional chauvinism, etc. will only further defuse such a crisis.

The ease with which the ruling classes are playing the card of 'divide and rule', is their weakest point -- their political isolation from the people. It is the duty of the Communist Revolutionaries to strike at this weak point and intensify their efforts to build class struggles.

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**Janashakti**

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Vijayawada A. P. Pin -- 520 010

Document:

## Reaffirm our basic principles and rectify errors

*Adopted by the 10th Plenum of the C.C. of the Communist Party of  
Philippines in July 1992*

We are reproducing here certain parts of the document of the Communist Party of Philippines from its theoretical and political journal, 'REBOLUSYON', special issue January 1993, for critical study by the revolutionary ranks. These parts clearly show that the Party and the revolutionary movement have immensely suffered from Left and Right opportunism, as well as from the violation of the democratic centralism in the context of differences of opinions. -- Editor.

The most outstanding achievement of the Party and the Filipino people has been the resumption and advance of the Philippine revolution at a new and higher historical level since 1968. The new democratic revolution surpasses the old democratic revolution of 1896. It is led by the proletariat through the Party and it has a socialist perspective. The party is at the centre of the stage in the struggle between revolution and counter-revolution.

The Marxist-Leninist analysis of Philippine history and current circumstances by the Party has raised the level of theoretical and political knowledge as well as revolutionary activity far above that established during the 1930-38 period of the old Communist Party of the Philippines and the subsequent period of the old merger party of the Communist and Socialist parties, including the series of Lava opportunists and their pseudocommunist successors.

By virtue of its clear definition of the character and current stage of the Philippine revolution, its motive forces and its enemies, its tasks and socialist perspective, the Party has been able to build itself and wield effectively the revolutionary armed struggle and the united front against US imperialism and the local exploiting classes and put forward the national democratic revolution of the Filipino people.

Due to the leadership provided by the Party, the level of revolutionary consciousness and struggle of the Filipino people has risen as never before. The organisations of the basic toiling masses of workers and peasants and the urban petty bourgeoisie have risen as never before along the national democratic line. Red political power has emerged in extensive areas of the countryside, defended by New People's

Army(NPA) and the masses even while the cities are still under control of the reactionary forces.

As a result of the adoption and implementation of the correct political line by the Party, the masses under organs of political power and in mass organisations number in millions in both urban and rural areas. The party, the NPA, the National Democratic Front and other revolutionary forces are in substantial portions of 65 out of 73 provinces in hundreds of towns and thousands of villages and exercise influence throughout the archipelago.

The revolutionary political nature of the armed struggle (taking the form of a people's war) is determined by the general line of national democratic revolution. Our armed struggle is pointless, if it is off this line. The NPA is itself a mass organisation and a mass movement. Its armed struggle in the countryside is integral with genuine land reform and the building of the mass base (organs of political power and mass organisations).

But there have been deviations from our analysis of Philippine society, the general line of new democratic revolution and the strategic line of people's war under guise of questioning "anti-quoted" ideas, "innovating on", "refining" and "adjusting" them.

In the long period of the Marcos regime and subsequently during the Aquino regime, the semi-colonial and semi-feudal status of Philippine society has remained unchanged. In fact, it has been deepened and aggravated. The Philippine social economy has become even more backward, agrarian, preindustrial and semi-feudal and more wracked by an insoluble crisis than at the time of the Party's re-establishment. The Philippines remains without basic industries. Even import-dependent manufacturing has deteriorated. The bureaucratic big comprador operations of the Marcos regime sank the economy into indebtedness and deeper underdevelopment.

The political system has been increasingly characterised by violence among political and military formations of the exploiting classes. The economic ground for mutual accomodation among the various political factions of the exploiting classes has shrunk. Thus, the reactionary military establishment itself as well as factions of it are moving into the forefront of political affairs.

But there are elements who are wittingly or unwittingly influenced by the imperialist propaganda that the Philippines has been industrialising, developing and urbanizing, especially during the Marcos period of expanded big comprador operations' financed by huge amounts of foreign loans. Among the reasons given by the Lavaite group for

collaborating with the Marcos regime was that the latter was industrialising the country and that it only needed to be swayed from the neocolonialist to a nationalist path of industrialisation.

Somehow, a few elements in the party seem to have been contaminated by this kind of ideas and question the proposition that Philippine society is semi-colonial and semi-feudal, especially before a throughgoing explanation of the Philippine mode of production was made in 1983. In 1981, in combination with the concept of the "three strategic coordinations", a proposal was submitted to the Politburo to characterise the Philippine economy as semi-colonial, semi-feudal and "semi-capitalist", with the last adjective intended to suggest that the Philippines was becoming industrial-capitalist. The proposal was rejected by the Politburo but some of its proponents continued to propagate the characterisation even after its formal rejection by the central leadership.

The proposal asserted that the "urbanisation" of Philippine society had reached a level far higher than what was previously maintained in Party analysis and writings. It echoed the statisticians who arrive at the figure on urban population by adding to the population of Metro Manila (including the great number of transients who are seasonal oddjobbers, students and the like from the rural areas of Luzon) that of the provincial cities and capitals (which have small commercial cores) and the poblaciones (centres) of municipalities.

The statistical manipulation of the term "urban" would be used by some elements to deviate from the Party's class analysis of Philippine society, the general line of new democratic revolution and the strategic line of encircling the cities from the countryside. They claim that the Philippines is 40 per cent urban and is far more urban than China or Vietnam ever was.

They also claim that the Philippine society and economy is no longer predominately agrarian by adding up the manpower distribution or output share of the industry and service sectors against the agricultural sector of the economy. They fail to take into account the import dependence of the industry and service sectors, their dependence on agriculture and the share of agriculture that does not formally appear in the market.

They further claim that the rural population consists of more than 55 per cent farm workers. In this regard, they fail to distinguish the modern machine-operating farm workers from the overwhelming majority of traditional farm workers (more than 95 per cent) who are still poor peasants or who are their direct outgrowth.

On the basis of misleading statistics, a straw figure is set up that the



Party has overemphasised rural work to the neglect of urban work. The erroneous line of combining armed urban insurrection and premature building of unsustainable military formations is pushed to replace the theory of people's war and building the people's army in stages. This involved "regularization", drawing party cadres away from mass work, especially rural mass work, for urban based as well as military staff assignment. Party cadres were also drawn away from the countryside under the guise of making a 40-60 urban-rural redeployment.

From 1980 onward, various proposals were made to enlarge the scope of the urban movement and redirect large portions of population concentrations in the countryside to an urban orientation. The changes sought were not an issue involving the temporary advantages or the necessity of having to divide the work but an issue involving strategic orientation, in consonance - directly or indirectly and intended or unintended - with the pushing of various ideas of increasing strategic weight of urban work and urban insurrections.

There were proposals to incorporate large portions of Central and Southern Luzon into the Manila-Rizal region; to shift the overall stress in Central Luzon from armed struggle to the open mass movement and insurrection or to the "red area - white area" dichotomization of Mindanao assigning to the later (white area) the plains and the well-populated areas around the small cities and provincial capitals and putting this within the scope of the urban-based movement; to adopt a "mountain-plain" division with an orientation of mass-base building for mountainous areas and of insurrection or uprising for the plains; and - struggle - to put the main stress on the open mass movement in the plains with an orientation towards mass uprisings.

In 1987 a small group of splittists in Negros would even insist that Philippine society had become "capitalist" and with this as one reason among others, would promote a line of capitulation to the Aquino regime, abandonment of armed struggle and shift to parliamentary struggle. This group failed to recognise that in sugar plantations the machine-operating regular farm workers are a small minority, compared to the huge mass of traditional farm workers and that wage relations are not the determining factor in industrial capitalism and can exist in slave and feudal societies.

### **Urban insurrection and military adventurism :**

There is a gross lack of understanding of the theory of people's war and the strategic line of encircling the cities from the countryside. It simply means that when the people's army cannot as yet seize the cities, the revolutionary forces have to accumulate armed strength first in the

countryside where reactionary power and control is relatively weaker and where there is wide area of maneuver for the people's army to launch tactical offensives, accumulate armed strength and engage in mass work.

Conditions in the future will arise to allow the people's army and the people in mass uprisings led by the Party to finally seize the centers of municipalities, provincial capitals, minor cities and major cities, in that probable order. But it would be foolhardy to believe that Metro Manila could fall in an uprising led by the Party earlier than the time that the backbone of the enemy forces is broken in the countryside or before they go into a process of final disintegration.

The EDSA uprising in 1986 involved both the military mutiny and an anti-Marcos or anti-fascist uprising but the United States the reactionary classes, the Armed Forces of Philippines and the Catholic Church were still in a position to determine the outcome of the uprising. They understood the balance of forces in their favour. They were out only to change one reactionary ruling clique with another, notwithstanding the popular uprising.

Building the people's army in stages is ridiculed by certain elements who have not really studied the theory of people's war and who obviously do not believe that it is necessary for the NPA to smash the reactionary armed forces and replace it in the end. We have seen how the NPA started from scratch in 1969 and grew. The people's war will certainly have to go through a middle stage of development before it can totally and finally defeat the enemy forces and replace them.

The initial, middle and final stages of the people's war cannot be dismissed as useless concepts by those who hold the opportunist notion that urban armed insurrection and imported heavy weapons can replace the full development of people's war. When the term probability (closer to realization than the term possibility) instead of certainty is used to refer to the stages of people's war, it is to give allowance for nonrealization or defeat due to deviations and errors like those committed by the Mindanao Commission against the line of people's war or due to a forced retreat in the face of foreign aggression.

The expression Left opportunism is apt when it refers to demagogically taking advantage of the natural desire for quick and easy victory but leading the revolutionary forces to defeat and self-destruction. Urban insurrection and military adventurism have so far been the gravest form of Left opportunism in the history of the Party since 1968. These are retrogressions to the line of urban guerrilla warfare (Carlos Marighela) and the foco theory (promoted by Regis Debray),

which some elements tried to promote within the Party in the early 1970s but which were effectively combatted by the Party.

Before the Party could be re-established in 1968, there had been almost a full decade of mainly urban work among the workers and the youth undertaken by the new proletarian cadres together with a few veterans in the revolutionary movement. Upon the re-establishment of the Party, there were more proletarian cadres in the cities than in the countryside. They emerged from the resurgent anti-imperialist and anti-feudal mass movement that was based in Metro Manila. The claim that the Party neglected revolutionary work in urban areas and overemphasised work in the rural areas is untrue.

Soon after the Party re-establishment, with hardly 200 members concentrated in Metro Manila, the Party was able to carry out the First Quarter Storm of 1970 and other mass actions in the 1970-72 period. From these mass actions would emerge a few thousands of mass activists who would become party members. Among the regions, the highest concentration would be Metro Manila for a considerable period of time.

It is to the credit of the Party that it has pushed the general line of the new democratic revolution through people's war since its re-establishment. Thus, the proletarian cadres from Metro Manila were aroused and motivated to join up with the good remnants of the old people's army to form a NPA in 1969 and to build the armed revolutionary movement in the countryside on a nationwide scale. And when martial rule and fascist dictatorship were imposed, Party members and activists in the cities had been ideologically prepared, so that in droves they went to the countryside from 1972 onward and there subsequently participated in the painstaking work of laying and building the revolutionary armed strength and the revolutionary mass movement that served as the firm basis and the backbone of rapid advance of the revolutionary movement in the 1980s.

The pattern has been for the cadres produced by the urban-based mass movement to go from the cities to the countryside. Without such a pattern inspired and directed by the Party, there would be no or few cadres to the people's army, the mass organisations and the organs of political power in the countryside. This pattern has promoted the people's war. Without the theory and strategic line of people's war, Party members would have preferred to stay in the urban areas. It is so much easier to stick to the relative comfort and convenience of the city than to break new grounds in the countryside.

But since the early 1980s, there had been an increasing movement

away from such a pattern. This was initiated by the central leadership under the concept of 60-40 balance between countryside political movement and broad alliance work based in the cities, on the basis of tactical priority set on making urban work and broad alliance work catch up with the more advanced work in the countryside and on the basic alliance, as well as on some views that such is the appropriate balance at the given level of urbanisation in the country. From 1981 onward, there had been a stop to the development of significant numbers of cadres and activists from the cities to the countryside. The trend towards city-basing involving the central leadership and national organs and, subsequently, even many regional committees and staff organs, also started and worsened.

The concept of the "strategic counteroffensive" within the strategic defensive that was adopted by the central leadership (PB) in 1981, affirmed by the 9th CC Plenum in 1985 and formally withdrawn in 1990, promoted the "three strategic coordinations", the nationally coordinated political and military offensives, regular mobile warfare as the main form of warfare to advance the people's war from the strategic defensive to the strategic stalemate, and the possibility of such offensives leading directly to the realization of the decisive victory of the revolution. As such, it tended to encourage urban insurrection and had an even bigger and more direct role in fostering "regularization" and military adventurism.

Leading party committees and cadres became drawn increasingly to urban-centered questions and tasks and farther and further away from urgent questions and tasks in the all-round development of the people's army, mass base and Party organisation, legal mass organisations and institutions or join the armed city partisans rather than go to the countryside. They failed to recognise that the peasant masses do not by themselves produce the kind of cadres and other personnel that the urban areas produce and which the rural areas need.

Under the guidance of the so-called "three strategic coordinations" (which had been converted into the "three strategic combinations") and the mechanical 60-40 balance between countryside and urban work, key cadres of the Mindanao Commission, positioned themselves in the small cities of Mindanao (urban centres and adjacent rural areas), pursued a line of intensifying "political-military" struggle in the white areas and developed this into a full-blown of armed urban insurrection under the influence of sandinista victory. They combined this line with the adventurist line of the Jose Lava leadership in forming companies and battalions in 1949 and 1950, without giving due attention to the Party and mass base building ie. the organs of political power and the mass

organizations, when the overall task was shifted from expanding the guerilla warfare to "intensifying" it and later to "raising" its level. The erroneous line would eventually result in the exact opposite of what it sought to accomplish.

Inherent to the line seeking to seize power through urban uprisings, with the aid of a few prematurely enlarged NPA units that lacked extensive and deepgoing mass base was undermining and lessening of the interest of Party members and activists in going to the countryside to do revolutionary work. In the long run, especially from 1983 to the fall of Marcos, the deployment when large number of cadres in the countryside did not only stop but was reversed when large numbers of cadres deployed in the countryside were drawn towards cities.

In conjunction with the line of urban insurrection, the line of intensifying and raising the level of warfare virtually became a line of quick military victory. Layers of army commands and staff were increased and companies built without minding the necessary balance and interaction of military formation and the mass base and vice versa. The larger military formation and increased layers of staff were formed and took cadres and material resources away from the already thinly-spread, undermanned, ill-trained and ill-armed units in charge of the various forms of mass work, military work and Party work in the localities.

In 1984 and 1985, when the full scale building of company formations and the intensification of company-size operations were being undertaken, only then were there efforts to catch up in building the Party section committees from among the fresh recruits of Party cadres and members who were extremely lacking in political and military knowledge and capability. On the top of this was the insistence of some leading cadres in the Mindanao Commission to reduce attention on anti-feudal education, propaganda and struggles in favour of the expansion of the mass movement in the countryside along an almost purely anti-fascist line. The quality of the mass base, Party work and military work in many localities either stagnated at a very low level or even deteriorated.

For a very short period, from 1984, the military offensives of companies, oversized companies and coordinated companies were effective in Mindanao. Fighters were recruited rapidly and hundreds of high-powered rifles were confiscated from the enemy. but when the enemy military forces increased and paramilitary forces and anti-communist fanatic sects were formed in ever widening areas, the mass work units and local guerrilla units could no longer sustain mass work and military work in increasing number of *barrios*. The mass base dwindled and deteriorated. Also in that period, the mass bases, which

were either still new, had stopped to develop or had started to decline as a result of shortcomings, were further forced into more intense military situations and thus declined and deteriorated at an even faster rate. From 1985 to 1987 large chunks of the mass base and guerrilla fronts were entirely lost in the face of the repeated onslaughts of the large-scale enemy military offensive, the damage and demoralization as result of Kampanyang AHOS (Anti-informer Hysteria in Mindanao), and the disorientation in the immediate post-Marcos situation, and the lack of guidance and support from higher Party committees.

The enemy objective was clear : to destroy the revolutionary mass base, for the companies and oversized companies of the NPA into a purely military situation where the enemy forces could use to their advantage their superior forces. A people's army can use most effectively the principle of concentration of offensives if it has an extensive and deepgoing mass base. But in a purely military situation, it is, of course, the truly larger military force that gains an upper hand and wins.

Because of extensive loss of mass base resulting from the wrong line and the destruction wrought by Kampanyang AHOS, as well as from the impact of the enemy offensives, many of the small and weak units deployed to do mass work and guerrilla units in the localities became extremely vulnerable and were destroyed by the enemy. Eventually, the companies in Mindanao were pushed into passive and vulnerable position and could no longer launch nor win tactical offensives. There was a build up of problem in recruitment, morale, maneuver, coordination, intelligence-gathering and supply. As a result of these problems and in response to the glaring need to attend first to the mass base in many areas, the regional committees either took the initiative to reduce the companies into or simply allowed these to dwindle into platoon and over-sized platoon formulations. By 1987, the number of companies in the island stood at five.

In the small and easily surveilled cities of Mindanao (Davao City for one is not really the biggest city in the world; beyond its commercial core of a square kilometer, it is rural), cadres who were on the manhunt list of the enemy were carried away by their "insurrectionary" mentality and displayed themselves in public places during mass actions and became preoccupied with contact work among allies and the coordination of mass actions rather than attending to and guiding solid organisational work. "Broadness"; fast confrontational action and intensification became the rule and norm above all else.

The *welgang bayans* were regarded as "a process of buliding up towards popular uprisings" serving to hasten political polarisation, to

expose government ineffectuality, to train the masses and to make the entire situation explode. In practice, these were more of transport paralysis rather than mammoth rallies of the people. On such occasions, armed units set up "check points" to block the highways and at the same time, the armed city partisans heated up these small cities beyond the capacity of the "wanted" cadres to conceal themselves. In 1984, the principal leaders of the Mindanao Commission obviously had extreme difficulties staying in Mindanao and were forced to shift to Cebu city, which was beyond the commission's jurisdiction. As the enemy saturated the identified partisan bases and fronts, intensified intelligence operations against the urban underground, tightened the checkpoints, carried out frequent zoning raids and militarised the target communities and cities, the casualties among the white area forces began to mount and work could no longer be pursued in an increasing number of these areas.

Under conditions of gross setbacks in the urban areas and growing difficulties in the guerrilla fronts due to intensifying enemy attacks, and the alert from the central leadership against the enemy infiltrators, leading cadres at the regional, front and Mindanao levels were prone to over suspiciousness and panic about the possibility that there were enemy agents in their midst who were tipping them off. Believing that their line was correct victorious and not realising the error and its effects, they were inclined to look for external forces and reasons behind setbacks and problems.

Based on the report of a former political detainee and some unverified confessions - extracted through torture - of some suspected infiltrators who had been initially arrested in one guerrilla front during the early part of 1985, these leading cadres easily believed that there were enemy deep penetration agents who had infiltrated the Party, the people's army, the mass organisations and the legal institutions. They began arresting suspected saboteurs and infiltrators and subjected them to torture to extract self-incriminating confessions about their alleged crimes and co-conspirators. They became convinced that large numbers of enemy deep penetration agents had infiltrated the Party over a long period of time through the white area organisations and were already being mobilised to bring down and destroy the revolutionary movement in late 1985 or early 1986. The Party organisations which had overexpanded and neglected ideological, political and organisational consolidation proved to be extremely susceptible to mutual suspicion among its cadres and members. Thus, from late 1985 onward, the anti-infiltrator hysteria started and raged in Mindanao.

The resultant devastation was unprecedented in the entire history of

the Philippine revolution. Never has the enemy inflicted as much damage as this to the revolutionary forces in so short a period of time. The wrong political line resulted in setbacks and problems that started to be felt in 1984. Under such a situation, the anti-infiltration hysteria easily took effect and resulted in self-destruction from 1983 onward. On the basis of mere suspicion, close to a thousand people (including party cadres and members and mass activists) became victims of civil rights' violations and severe punishment. Due process was completely disregarded as panic and hysteria took over. The Party membership fell abruptly from 9000 to 3000. The mass base which was shallow shrank by 50 per cent. The 15 companies and 30 platoons were reduced to 2 companies and 17 platoons.

The leading cadres of Mindanao Commission refer to a "first draft of Bicol" as their guide and for some time declared a revolutionary success in eliminating enemy agents at the expense of so many times more innocent comrades and individuals in the Party and the revolutionary movement. In terms of rate and absolute numbers, the destruction wrought had never before been achieved by the enemy frontally in so short a time. Basic civil rights granted by the Bill of the Guide for Establishing the People's Democratic Government issued in 1972 and by the Party Constitution and the Rules of the New People's Army were grossly violated.

Many of those responsible for the devastation and the victimization of comrades and people in Mindanao have expressed remorse for the hysteria and tried to account their part. But at the most the accounting has been merely partial. Some of those who have not accounted for nor been taken into account for their political and criminal responsibility have been promoted to national positions in the Party and allowed to spread their wrong line at the further and bigger expense of the Party and the revolutionary movement.

#### **The propagation of erroneous line on a nationwide scale :**

Uncriticised, unrepudiated and unrectified, the combined lines of armed urban insurrection and quick military victory have spread on a nationwide scale and have resulted in unprecedented nationwide damage and setbacks to the revolutionary movement.

The 9th CC Plenum in 1985 rejected the Red area (military struggle) white area (political struggle) scheme but did not call it insurrectionist, thoroughly criticised it, nor direct the Mindanao party organisation to make a rectification. In fact the plenum got carried away or impressed by the seemingly resounding but, now proven, very temporary victories in Mindanao despite what had been reported regarding the disturbing



size of the casualties and the problems of ammunition even as the enemy had not yet undertaken a full-scale counterattack.

The entirety and parts of such impression of success were held and drummed up by many Mindanao cadres or by cadres whom they influenced, as "advanced experience" or as a "superior" way of conducting the struggle. Moreover, key elements of the erroneous line and its practice, like the magnified partisan warfare in the urban areas and 'regularization' of the people's army, were endorsed and integrated into the programme for the "strategic counteroffensive(SCO). The tactical programme aiming for the decisive victory against the US-Marcos dictatorship through the SCO also induced for further infatuation and toying with the notion of armed urban insurrection.

Since 1986, the proponents of the line of armed urban insurrection have capitalised on the rejection by the Party of the boycott error in 1986 by overstating this error even after rectification while obscuring the incomparably far bigger error and earlier devastation of revolutionary forces in Mindanao and by interpreting the rejection of the boycott error as a vindication of the line of armed urban insurrection. At the beginning of the Aquino regime, various views emerged overstating the "democratic space", the patriotic and democratic possibilities of Aquino, the depth of the destruction inflicted by the EDSA uprising on the reactionary rule and the state machinery and spurred on the attitude of "seriously considering the possibility of and preparations for insurrection".

Various insurrectionist proposals were put forward, like the plan for a "fast track" victory of the revolution and using the race for the constitutional Commission, the peace talks etc in order to hasten a repolarisation and a giant confrontation on the basis of national and democratic issues. Considering the intensified violence and factional strife among the reactionaries, "seizing opportunities" has become the favorite posture and catchphrase of those who yearn for urban insurrection. Thus, there was the phenomenon of heightened insurrectionary fever among certain urban based Party cadres and units after every coup attempt.

By itself, the line of armed urban insurrection is isolated and impotent. However, it can be damaging to the Party and the revolutionary movement because it encourages Party cadres and members who are needed in the countryside to stick to the cities, it promotes overreaching in the urban revolutionary movement and the duplication of the Davao City "political-military" combines with the line of military "regularisation" because it gives rise to bureaucratization, isolation from the masses, setbacks and eventually self-destruction.

The line of rapidly organising armed city partisan units, building companies and battalions, with top heavy military staffing and drawing cadres away from extension and consolidation work among the people was first pushed by the National Military conference in late 1984, and afterwards by the central leadership's programme of fulfilling the requisites for SCO, and eventually by the military conferences of the national military staff of the NPA.

In the latter half of 1986 and in 1987, the conscious effort in Mindanao to control and overcome the disastrous results of Kampanyang AHOS, to rectify the errors and rebuild the revolutionary forces was underway. But it was also in 1987 that the NPA general command was able to push most vigorously the line of "reorganisation" on a nationwide scale.

The NPA general command vigorously pushed the building of larger formations and the formation of military staff. They continued to carry the view that "the enemy's strategic reserves were already deployed" and conditions obtained for "local strategic counter offensive". The general command ordered a "nationally coordinated offensive", which was heavily subsidized from above, overstrained the units and the logistics, wasted the ammunition stocks, created conditions and frictions between the army command and the territorial Party organs, launched politically counterproductive military actions and exposed to the enemy the GC staff personnel and radio equipment based in Metro Manila in exchange for a sizeable number of casualty inflicted on the enemy and a number of arms confiscated from the enemy.

The central leadership of the party shares the responsibility for the imbalances and the programme of "regularisation" that primarily caused them. Apart from responsibility for the entire programme of SCO, the central leadership affirmed and approved many of the initiatives and views from lower units pushing for "regularization". However from year to year, it stressed the need to rely on an expanding and deepening mass base. And since the Party anniversary statement in 1988, there has been the call for waging extensive and intensive guerrilla warfare founded on a wide and deepgoing mass base without prejudice to building sustainable guerrilla companies that are dispersed for mass work when not fighting or not on training exercise.

In addition, many regional Party committees raised questions, expressed doubts and asked for reconsideration in connection with the extremely strong pressure and unrealistic targets for "regularization". Thus, at certain points, downward adjustments have been made in the number of companies to be formed or else existing companies were redeployed in accordance with the strategy and tactics of guerrilla warfare. And in early 1989, a new emphasis and new priorities on mass

work and local guerrilla forces and a clear shift away from the programme of increasing the number of companies was decided upon. And in 1990, the programme for the SCO was dropped. However, the NPA general command, despite lip service to the absolute leadership of the Party, continued to argue for and push its own line of "regularization" in contravention of the party leadership's criticism of it.

The consequences have been destructive to the revolutionary movement. From 1987 to 1990, the membership of the mass base was reduced by almost 60 percent from the base year of 1986 and the number of *barrios* covered by guerrilla fronts, by 16 percent and the Party membership, by 15 percent. While the number of rifles of the people's army continued to grow every year, the rate of increase fell to the level of 1976-78. Furthermore, the number of officers and fighters of the people's army fell by 28 percent or below the level of 1985. Large number of cadres at the provincial, front and district levels have been lost and many of them have not yet been replaced.

For twenty years since the re-establishment, it had been a matter of pride for the re-established Party to declare annually that there was an all-round increase of strength of the revolutionary movement. The enemy could concentrate against certain areas or regions and inflict damage but the movement would increase in strength elsewhere and on a nationwide scale.

Only in 1988 would the Party start to register a nationwide reduction of the rural mass base. We comforted ourselves by saying that that was not much in view of the escalation of the enemy onslaughts and that in fact we grew in strength because we became even more pointed out, we failed to take into full account errors within our own ranks and instead tended to adduce the reduction entirely to the assaults of the enemy.

From 1990, in answer to the call of the central leadership, the Party committees and many commands in the regions have been putting the stress on mass work, putting a stop to the reduction of the mass base and strengthening forces in the localities. Many of the companies have been deployed to mass work, expansion, recovery and consolidation of the mass base and positive results have been rapidly felt in the gradual reversal of the trend towards reduction in earlier years. However, we have just started and a great deal has yet to be done to overcome the adverse effects of the wrong line and recovery towards a steady, continuous and comprehensive advance. First of all, we must thoroughly criticise, repudiate and rectify the erroneous line and persevere in extensive and intensive guerrilla warfare while expanding and consolidating the mass base through the proper deployment of our cadres and guerrilla forces.

Among the many cadres, especially those in the regions and organs familiar with the day-to-day work among the masses and the activities of the army units, there was a strong recognition of the fact that the premature formation of unsustainable companies and battalions does not result in quick military victory but in preoccupation with logistic needs, isolation from the masses and passivity, defeats and other forms of disaster.

The premature formation of unsustainable companies and battalions has also spawned other military adventurist tendencies and acts such as the inclination to hit the enemy hard points; ill-planned tactical offensives that last long, consume too much ammunition and result in many casualties; and military actions that do not take into full account the probable and possible negative effects on mass base building, the welfare of the masses and other political implications.

### **The current of right opportunism :**

So far, "left" opportunism, especially in the form of militarism, in combination with insurrectionist wishful thinking, has done the worst damage to the Party, the NPA and the entire revolutionary mass movement.

However, from, 1990 onwards, right opportunism has become unprecedentedly conspicuous and strident in opposing the proletarian revolutionary line. It has had a course of development since the early 1980s, when right opportunists (including some anti-fascists recruited in the late 1970s without sufficient ideological checkup and remoulding) proposed among other things the downgrading and even liquidation of the Party in favour of a "vanguard" broad front and the "separate dynamism" of mass organisations.

The aftermath of the fall of the Marcos dictatorship, the 1986 boycott policy was criticised as a major tactical error. Indeed, it was an ultra-left and sectarian error, confusing the legal and illegal forces and forms of struggle. But there were those who went so far as to make bourgeois reformist criticism of the error, describe the US-directed comprador-landlord Aquino regime as a liberal democratic regime and presume that the newly installed regime had gotten the middle forces and was itself at the middle of the political spectrum and that the Party and the revolutionary armed struggle had been pushed to a "politically defensive position" and therefore needed the ceasefire talks and the 1986 60-day ceasefire agreement.

All the loyal and honest Party members who tended to fall into a right opportunism view of the new situation in 1986 corrected themselves in 1987 upon the Party's clarification of the ever-worsening social crisis

and the continuing need for armed revolution and upon the further unfolding of the anti-national and anti-democratic character of the US-Aquino regime.

But to this day, the most consistent and the worst elements among the right opportunists have persisted in their bourgeois reformist critique of the 1986 boycott error and consider this the covering up and condoning military adventurism and Kampanyang AHOS which are by far the worst disaster.

Practically bringing themselves out of the Party these elements have promoted bourgeois populism, liberalism, pacifism and capitulationism and have overrated electoral struggle within the ruling system as the principal way to "legitimation" of the patriotic and progressive forces. They have drummed up the idea of a super class third force that seeks to alienate the people from the Party and have sought to monopolise foreign funding for NGO projects in order to advance their own interests.

The most subtle, most elaborated and most corrosive concept attacking the proletarian revolutionary line have been generated by the worst right opportunist elements on the question of the united front and the leadership of the working class (through the Party). These elements contend that the leadership of the working class must be laid aside or liquidated in order supposedly to attract more people to the united front in general and the National Democratic Front in particular.

Thus, the concept of federation in the building of the NDF made a headway. Under this concept, the Party is reduced to being a member organisation subordinate to a majority of nonproletarian organisations and to the National Council of the federation. The concept does not immediately appear to be wrong because there are Party groups within the nonproletarian member-organisations. But the basis is established for liquidating the class leadership of the proletariat and its Party and for negating the independence and initiative of the Party and the new democratic character of the Revolution. As a matter of fact, certain anti-party elements have started to attack the Party by using the name of the NDF.

The 1990 draft constitution does not make any reference to the working class leadership and the basic worker-peasant alliance in the new democratic revolution. It adopts simultaneously the concepts of confederation, federation and unitary organisation. The concept of the NDF as a unitary organisation, claiming as its direct individual members all the members of the "member-organisations" is one more way by which the Party's independence and initiative is negated.

The 1990 draft NDF Programme avoids any clear reference to the

working class leadership, the basic worker-peasant alliance and the new democratic character of the revolution. It adopts such key terms as "nationalism", "pluralism" and "mixed economy" and clearly puts these within the framework of the 1st bourgeois democratic revolution by suspending or eliminating the working class leadership and the socialist perspective. The 1990 draft NDF programme clearly proposes that upon the basic completion of the national democratic revolution through the seizure of political power, a "national democratic society" shall be built indefinitely and the socialist revolution and construction shall not commence.

Upholding the revolutionary class line in the united front and acting to prevent the collision between the Party and the NDF, in a formal alliance (not a federation or a unitary organisation) representatives enjoy equal footing with those of other organisations on the basis of consensus and consultations in conferences and councils, without prejudice to the absolute leadership of the Party over the NPA and to bilateral relations of the Party with any of the allied organisations in the NDF. Thus the Party proposed a new draft constitution and this is already being processed by the appropriate NDF organ. The new draft NDF programme is also under preparation.

Certain dubious elements use the wrong concepts about the united front in order to attack from a petty bourgeois viewpoint the basic principle and the reality of working class leadership through the party in the national democratic revolution. Echoing the chorus of the imperialist ideological offensive and the Gorbachovite anti-communist prattle, they go about prating that the Marxist-Leninist principles of the Party are outdated and authoritarian and that class struggle has lost its centrality in the revolution. They deck out their antiquated petty bourgeois ideas as new and fashionable and use these to attack the Marxist-Leninist stand, viewpoint and method.

The worst element of the right opportunists pushed a "medium-term" plan from late 1989 to early 1992, combining bourgeois reformism with wishful thinking for an armed urban insurrection. The intention was to build at the legal level a new broad front consisting of the left, middle and anti-Aquino right by making a clamour for multilateral peace negotiations and then proceed at the "level of the revolutionary front" to build a still bigger alliance to include the NDF, MNLF, RAM, SFP and YOU. The idea was to have a common tactical programme (the alternative agenda) that could unite various political forces and "foster the linkages" between the legal broad front and the revolutionary (illegal) front until such time that the two levels could merge into an upsurge and finally lead to an uprising.

By aiming for an armed urban insurrection within this framework, this worst element of the right opportunists succeeded in sabotaging the growth and potential upsurge of the legal mass movement under the extremely favorable conditions in the latter half of 1990 upto 1991. He subsequently denied the fluid and volatile character of the objective situation and pushed the line that the conditions were not ripe for sustained mass actions if these did not lead to the realization of the wish for an armed insurrection contained in a "medium term" plan. The attempt to create the conditions for an upsurge leading to an insurrection (broad front for multilateral peace talks up to the bus burning actions) had the opposite effect of sabotaging the mass movement and actually helping the US-Aquino regime to coast along until the next elections.

While there are the various counter-revolutionary rightists who must be dealt with politically and organizationally, there are also the honest Party members who have unwittingly provided a base for the former because they have not fully remoulded themselves into proletarian revolutionaries and are therefore susceptible to subjectivist and opportunist currents. The Party offers them further ideological and political education and further revolutionary practice. Since 1989, the few unhealthy and dubious elements of the rightist kind have increasingly exposed their anti-Party activities.

In conjunction with the imperialists in their ideological offensive, this handful of elements have -- since the disintegration of the revisionist ruling parties and regimes -- become bolder in reviling Marxist-Leninist principles as "outdated" and "authoritarian" and in calling for "paradigms", "visions" and "programmes" alternative to the Party programme. The renegades are infact peddling antiquated anti-proletarian and anti-Marxist petty bourgeois ideas which they deck out as new and fashionable despite the fact that the foreign models that had earlier adopted these ideas have been totally discredited or have gone out of existence.

There are elements who misappropriate the issue of the environment by posing it as something supra-class. They deny the outstanding record of the Party in condemning and opposing the imperialist plunder of the human and natural resources of the Philippines, in making critical studies focussed on environmental issues and the great mass movements against imperialist re-establishment of the Party. The Party has already reiterated in definitive terms its stand on the issue of ecology.

The petty bourgeois populists, liberals and social democrats have promoted the phenomenon of NGO bureaucratism. They use the names

of progressive mass organisations to solicit money from foreign funding agencies, seek to monopolise the foreign funding and spread their bourgeois reformist ideas in the mass movement and in the ideologically weak portions of the Party.

Since 1989, this handful of elements have become emboldened enough to openly attack because they wrongly calculate that the time has come for them to lay claim to certain organisations and monopolise foreign funding. There is a natural petty bourgeois conjuncture of the small hodgepodge of populists, liberals, neo-liberals, social democrats and Gorbachovites. They have a false sense of superiority over the revolutionary proletariat and the CPP and they echo all the anti-Marxist notions and clichés of the imperialist ideologues and propagandists.

However they have a sense of their puny number and lack of mass support. Thus, notwithstanding all their slogans of openness, democratic process and reform calculated to undermine the Party, they are banding themselves and colluding with the worst "left" opportunists responsible for military adventurism, urban insurrection, gangsterism and Kampanyang AHOS bloody witch-hunt to oppose the Party and the revolutionary movement. They also seek to lure the Party cadres in the urban areas with paltry sums from foreign funding agencies.

#### **The boycott decisions of 1978 and 1986 :**

The boycott error of 1986 has been rectified but it deserves some attention in this discussion for the purpose of comparing or relating it to other errors. It has been so overstated and drummed up that it has overshadowed the incomparably far bigger and more destructive line of armed urban insurrection and military adventurism. Here is a clear case of subjectivism, a gross failure to see all the major errors and evaluate them properly.

Before and after the re-establishment of the Party, the proletarian revolutionary cadres have had an extensive experience in working within the reactionary institutions, organisations and processes. It is permissible and necessary for cadres and Party groups to be assigned to work within the reactionary trade unions, churches, the army of the enemy and so on.

And, of course, certain legal mass organisations even if patriotic and progressive can operate viably and conduct legal political struggle by complying with the requirements of legality. For instance, they cannot declare that they are for the armed revolution. But neither is it correct for them to gratuitously declare themselves against armed revolution. As a matter of fact they can always assert the sovereign right of the people to decide on what it takes to defend their freedom.



It is not unprincipled for a Party member to have a legal occupation and carry legal documents. Neither is it unprincipled for a Party member or a Red fighter under arrest to retain the services of a lawyer and wage a legal struggle in order to defend his rights and prevent the enemy from doing worse to him.

But the question about Party cadres and Party groups in legal political parties and alliances and in the reactionary electoral process aroused bitter debates in the past. Such debates were over the 1978 and 1986 elections called by the Marcos fascist regime. Each time one side was for boycott and another side for participation.

We are most concerned about the bitter internal debates over the 1978 and 1986 elections. An understanding of these leads to a general understanding of the reactionary electoral process and the correct stand and approach of the Party.

Whenever the issue in the debate is formulated as a choice between boycott and participation, those on the boycott side have the advantage of winning the debate on the simple ground that in the first place, the Party is banned and cannot participate and anyway the electoral process is reactionary on the whole, if not exclusively.

But should the issue always be formulated as a choice between boycott and participation? Cannot the issue be formulated within the Party as one of whether or not the Party deploys Party cadres and groups that are not known as such outside of the Party in order to operate in the reactionary electoral process, promote the national democratic line, attack the enemy and support the progressive side be it party, alliance or set of candidates? The party itself is not participating because it cannot as a matter of revolutionary principle and even if it wants to, it cannot due to the enemy ban on the Party. The Party's own line of armed revolution regards the reactionary elections as farcical. But the Party certainly can do something by way of revolutionary dual tactics through Party cadres and groups that are not publicly known as such.

Revolutionary dual tactics are employed by the Party to reach a greater number of the people and to counteract the enemy's counterrevolutionary dual tactics of misrepresenting the electoral exercise as a democratic one, even if it is actually monopolised by the reactionary ruling clique or by all the exploiting classes through a multiplicity of bourgeois reactionary parties and is intended to deceive the people into believing that they participate in a democratic process.

In the elections of 1969 and 1971, the Party kept to its anti-revisionist line of not considering these reactionary elections as the sole or principle

way of achieving revolutionary change or basic reforms and described these as farces on the whole and in essence. But the party could issue statements on what constitutes the substance of democracy and what makes a truly democratic exercise, promote the national democratic line and encourage the legal progressive forces and candidates to take the patriotic and progressive line.

The central leadership took the decision to boycott the 1978 elections. In the process of making the decision, the leadership of the Manila-Rizal party organisation argued for participation but was outvoted and was therefore bound to abide by the decision. But it did not carry out the instructions for implementing the boycott. And in the ensuing full-blown struggle with the Executive Committee of the CC, it resorted to secret meetings where committee members who did not agree with it were excluded, continuously refused to follow instructions about organisational arrangements, spread irresponsible talk to underline the central leadership's credibility and which violated the secrecy of the identities of the CC members, and threatened violence against certain CC members. Hence, disciplinary measures were meted out to the regional leadership.

The central leadership decided to reorganise the Manila-Rizal Party organisation. But only a provisional committee was formed which could not function effectively until 1982. In the absence of an effective regional leadership, the district party committees, local party branches and community-based mass organisations became neglected and fell into disarray. The disarray in the Party organisation in Metro Manila disabled the Party from bringing about the upsurge in the mass movement, participated in by a broad range of political force. This upsurge was well signalled by the "noise barrage", which was called on the eve of 1978 farcical elections and which alongside noise making was accompanied by various forms of street mass actions.

The Party had anticipated this upsurge on the basis of advances made among the workers and youth in 1974. Notwithstanding the tendency of some leading cadres of Manila-Rizal to overstress the anti-fascist struggle, there was an expectation that workers and urban masses would rise up in an unprecedented manner. These expectations could not be realised as a consequence of the boycott decision of 1978, the disciplinary actions in 1979 and the inability of the central leadership to build an effective regional leadership of the Party. The central staff organs would promote Metro Manila based national mass organisations which were then weak but they did not pay much attention to the growth of the community-based organisations and basic Party life at the grass roots' level. Their attention and efforts were increasingly devoted to

sweeping propaganda, building administrative structures related to the urban-based national mass organisations. This has laid the ground for bureaucratization.

Basic Party life in communities, factories and other work places would be neglected for a long time. Party cadres and members are piled up in the administrative positions and in party groups at various levels of mass organisations and are lacking the basic party life at the grass-roots' level. So, to this day all-round Party life -- ideological, political and organisational -- remains weak at the basic level.

It was in the 1983-86 period that the Party and progressive urban mass organisations were able to recover significantly due to the powerful anti-fascist popular current that was let loose by the Aquino assassination. The mass movement in the cities developed in street actions, coordinated campaigns, sweeping propaganda and broad coalition and alliance-building. On the other hand, it had weaknesses in solid organising, solid work at basic levels, sustained and solid efforts at political education, propaganda and agitation among masses, and in building up strength in factories, schools and communities. Even at the height of the open movement and struggle in the 1983-86 period, Party activists and members reached only a few thousands among the workers and students and these were thinly spread in small secret Party groups and cells and branches within legal political mass organisations.

The boycott decision of 1978 had resulted in as much damage as, if not even more damage than, the 1986 boycott error. But the latter has been played up by honest elements who seek redress from what they perceive as unjust punishment for circumventing the 1978 boycott decision as well as by other elements who have seized upon the 1986 boycott error to obscure the far more devastating errors in Mindanao and who continue to promote the wrong line that caused the far bigger error -- the ultimate weakening of the revolutionary forces there as early as 1984 and the anti-informer hysteria in 1985-86.

The 1986 boycott was a major tactical error, as correctly described by the central leadership. During the short electoral campaign period, it separated and isolated the advanced section of the masses from the other sections which took the anti-fascist and anti-Marcos line. There was a failure to recognise that Marcos' cheating in the elections would incite the people to an unprecedented uprising as well as a grave split in the reactionary armed forces. The Party went into the vigorous effort and expense in order to impose its sectarian will on organisations and alliances with a mass and united front character for the duration of the snap presidential elections' campaign period.

However, the Party leadership regained its composure and initiative when it called for the nationwide popular resistance in alliance with all the anti-fascist and anti-Marcos forces immediately after the farcical election exercise.

Nevertheless, there are -- outside the Party -- critics of the boycott error of 1986 who to this day overstate it in order to push their own erroneous lines and agendas but are not being significantly rebuffed by the Party. There are those who claim -- against the incontrovertible facts -- that because of the 1986 boycott error the Party and progressive mass organisations and alliances were out of EDSA mass uprising that caused the downfall of Marcos and go so far as to negate the role of the Party and the revolutionary movement in the 1983-86 mass actions and the longer process of undermining and isolating the fascist regime.

In overemphasising the role of the spontaneous masses and the supposed lack of participation by the revolutionary and legal progressive forces, there are those who stress the role of their own small petty bourgeois organisations and obscure the role of the US and Catholic officialdom and the reactionary classes in the making of the mass uprising *cum* relatively bloodless military mutiny. The fact was that there was a convergence of organised contradictory forces and the spontaneous masses on the widely detested fascist regime.

However, the most fantastic claim is that made by some proponents of urban insurrectionism. They claim that were it not for the boycott error, the revolutionary forces could have brought down the ruling system together with Marcos by leading the spontaneous masses to victory as in Nicaragua in 1979 or at the least there could have been a sharing of power with the Aquino clique, the Reform the Armed Forces of Philippines Movements (RAM) and the like. They therefore consider the boycott of 1986 as the biggest error of the Party.

Infact the bigger ideological, political and organisational error had been the erroneous line and the anti-infiltrator hysteria that caused the devastation on the Party and the mass movement in Mindanao in 1985 and afterwards. How could the Party be expected to seize power when the year before the EDSA uprising the revolutionary forces and people in Mindanao were already being ravaged by the logical and real consequences of the erroneous line of urban insurrectionism *cum* military adventurism? Whether intentional or not, some who have been responsible for the disaster in Mindanao have promoted the wrong line and themselves within the Party by overstating the boycott error of 1986 and obscuring their own far bigger errors.

## **The rectification movement :**

It is a matter of life and death for the entire Party not to reaffirm its basic principles, assert its correct line and criticise, repudiate and rectify those major deviations and errors which have run for so long (overlapping with half of the existence of the Party and the armed revolution) and have brought about unprecedented setbacks to the Party, NPA and the entire revolutionary mass movement.

These major deviations and errors could have been more destructive were it not for the perseverance of the overwhelming majority of Party cadres and members who uphold the basic principles of the Party and are determined to carry the revolutionary personnel, the mass support and the all-round strength to check and overcome the dangerous trend brought about by the major deviations and errors.

In the light of our basic principles, we have identified and evaluated the major deviations and errors and the serious damage to the Party and the revolutionary movement. We must criticise, repudiate and rectify these. The rectification movement should raise the Party's level of theoretical knowledge, political consciousness and practical activity. The Party membership should be mobilised to join and support this movement. Only those who oppose this movement and who are incorrigible should come under disciplinary action, upto removal from the Party. There is a big and essential difference between the incorrigible and those who are willing to rectify their errors.

It is important for the appropriate organ to formulate the most pointed questions on facts and issues to be posed to those responsible for the most serious deviations, errors and adverse consequences and to be answered by them individually (if collectively, there will be difficulties that can delay the process either because it is objectively difficult to convene the pertinent collective responsible for some error or there is no desire on the part of certain individuals to make any collective assessment). Only after the inquiry from individuals concerned may their collective be convened, if necessary and possible.

We must anticipate that these will be elements who will oppose or deflect the rectification movement by using the following tactics :

1. Continuing to question and attack the Party's basic principles no less in order to dogmatically insist on the erroneous line;
2. Detaching the erroneous line from the serious adverse consequences;
3. Confusing the evaluation of the deviations and errors by playing down bigger errors and playing up lesser ones;

4. Confusing the evaluation of collective and individual responsibilities;
5. Generating new and old issues of lesser importance and relevance to the major problems and unprecedented setbacks that we now face;
6. Retaliating against well-founded criticism by making unfounded attacks; and
7. Attacking the many in order to conceal a few in error.

At every level of the Party, in any organ, the central leadership must not hesitate to remove from the Party any element who is responsible for any major deviation or error but who instead of accepting responsibility continues to systematically attack the Party's line or is incorrigible and resorts to any of the aforesaid tactics to deflect or defeat the purpose of the rectification process.

We must also serve serious warning to those elements who resort to ultrademocracy by campaigning outside of the appropriate Party channels or going beyond the bounds of the Party.

It is a fair estimate to make that only a few will be removed from the Party due to the gravity of the error for which they are responsible or due to a loss of conviction in the revolutionary cause and in the basic principles of the Party. In this regard, the slogan of the Party is "A bit fewer but a lot better", to paraphrase Lenin and Mao.

There may be those who are no longer fit to remain in the Party for ideological reasons, such as the loss of conviction in all or any of the basic principles of the Party. They can be considered allies if they can still cooperate with us on political issues, provided they do not become special agents of the enemy by attacking the Party and capitalising on their previous association with or inside knowledge of the Party.

The rectification movement is mainly and essentially an educational effort to recognise, criticise and repudiate the deviations, errors and weaknesses and thereby further strengthen the Party and the revolutionary movement. The objective is to bring about a higher level of revolutionary consciousness and militancy and therefore a higher level of unity within the Party.

The overwhelming majority of Party members are definitely good and desire to do their best in advancing the revolutionary cause. There can only be a handful of elements who oppose the rectification movement and who refuse to rectify their errors. If these elements persist in the Party, they can continue to inflict damage on the Party members to reaffirm the basic principles of the Party and rectify the errors.

**Labour :**

## **Promises . . . commitments . . . inaction !**

The Indian government is a founder member of the International Labour Organisation; it is the only permanent member on the ILO's governing board from the Third World and a signatory to a large number of ILO conventions (36 as compared to 11 by the US and 17 by China).

In February this year, the tripartite committee on International Labour Conventions met in New Delhi to review and monitor the country's performance. Its conclusion: most of the rules laid down in the conventions are being flouted in the country and a weak trade union movement coupled with a tardy administrative machinery has led to poor implementation of the Conventions' guidelines.

The government commends itself for having signed the ILO conventions and claims to be a Welfare State. It is used to declaring its firm commitment to the ILO charter frequently in the various fora. But its track records in implementing these conventions' guidelines, the least we could say, is persistent inaction; and if any law is enacted at all, it looks the other way while employers blatantly flout it.

India ratified the minimum-wage-fixing convention in 1955, which provides for a review of minimum wages every two years in accordance with the rise in the consumer price index and for wages to be fixed according to the needs of a worker and his or her family.

But these rules are never followed. The government's formula for minimum wage determination is arbitrary and erratic. And though it promised the ILO that the Minimum Wages Act 1948 would be amended to bring it in line with the convention, this has not yet happened. Moreover, many state governments have been refusing to periodically revise the minimum wages that were notified long ago, in some cases more than a decade.

The Indian government ratified the forced labour convention 1930 of the ILO in 1954. It enacted the Bonded (system) Abolition Act 1976, to give effect to ILO's convention. The Act requires state governments to set up vigilance committees in each district and provide quarterly reports to the Centre on the steps taken towards the implementation of the Act.

But this is seldom done. Very few vigilance committees have been

formed to identify the use of bonded labour and, wherever formed, they are not functioning effectively. The failure of the government can be easily seen in the fact that it cannot provide the exact number of bonded labourers even after one and a half decade of the enforcement of the law. The 1993, the report of the experts committee on ILO conventions noted that "punishments have been few under the Act . . . the situation has not improved much". The central government shirks its responsibility by blaming the state governments for not taking effective steps to implement the Act. But its real intentions are clear in the following episode.

The Government of Nagaland enacted the Requisition of Porters' Act in 1965. This permits the armed forces and paramilitary forces to forcefully engage the services of porters during an emergency to carry their luggage and equipment. The ILO objected to this because the Act violates the convention on forced labour and demanded it be amended. This has not yet taken place. A labour ministry official admitted this and said, "if the amendment is not brought about soon, it will create a lot of adverse publicity abroad". The central government is not worried about the arbitrariness of the Act but about the adverse publicity it may generate in the foreign press if not amended, which would jeopardise its prospects for more crumbs from the imperialist masters.

Likewise, the Rural Workers' Organisation Convention was ratified by India in 1977. This convention stipulates that member states will take steps to facilitate the establishment of rural workers' unions. This included the recognition of agricultural unions and affording them basic facilities for functioning.

Though rural workers' unions are recognised, there is no central legislation providing for facilities. The government promised to come up with the required law in 1991, but it has not yet done so.

At present, rural workers' unions are being recognised under the Trade Unions Act. But they are not given other facilities offered to organised sector unions, such as permanent employment, minimum wages, provident fund and gratuity. The government is just paying lip service to the woes of rural workers. Eventhough Article 2 of the ILO convention defines rural worker as one working in a rural area whether wage-earner or self-employed, the government refuses to recognise 3,00,000 female employees of the Integrated Child Development Scheme as government employees.

#### **Women and child labourers :**

"Equal pay for equal work" is another region where the government has failed to stand upto the expectations of the ILO. The Convention for



Equal Pay for Equal Work 1951 was ratified by India in 1958. It requires that equal wages be paid for equal work by men and women, and dictates payment on a time-rate and not on a piece-rate basis.

The blatant violation of the equal pay for equal work principle occurs in the unorganised sector. The kind of wages being paid to women goes against the very principle of the law. In the plantation, bidi and matches sectors, which employ a majority of women, wages are paid only on a piece-rate basis.

Given this track record of the government, it is foolish to believe that the government is bringing laws to abolish child labour with all the sincerity to put an end to child exploitation. Recently, it announced that it will eliminate child labour in the carpet industry in a span of three months and will provide education, vocational training, supplementary nutrition and health care to such children.

Children, deprived of a childhood, slaving away in factories and street corners of our country is a common sight. They are the worst of all exploited workers. The largest number of them are in Asia, where in some countries, including India, they make for more than 10 per cent of the labour force, states the UNDP's human development report for this year. Poverty is the main cause of child labour. While most children work to help their poor families, many others take up jobs due to lack of opportunities like schools.

Despite the existence of the Child Labour Act, which prohibits employing children below the age of 12, child exploitation is rampant. A Commission appointed by the Supreme Court in 1985 estimated that one lakh children were employed in the carpet industry in the Mirzapur-Bhadohi belt in UP. The number has tripled by now. The story of toiling children in the match sector is well documented. Rules and regulations have always existed, but only on paper, while several lakhs of children toil under harrowing conditions of exploitation and torture.

Then why this sudden flurry of activity over a long standing issue? Not surprisingly the answer lies in the fears of the Indian rulers that they may lose foreign markets for their carpets. The Tom Harkin Bill, introduced in the US Senate on March 18 this year, seeks a ban on the import of all goods made with child labour into the US. It is likely to be passed by the Senate in November or December. The European Economic Commission, in its agreement with India stipulated that EC will have the right to reject any of the imports from India if they involve child labour or pollution of the environment. These clauses would be used by the imperialists for arm-twisting. And the Indian government needs a show piece legislation to soothe the feelings of their imperialist

masters. As has been the case with other labour laws, this will also remain on paper.

Poverty may be the cause of child labour, but it cannot be an excuse for child labour as the government tries to defend itself of its callousness. If these child labourers were removed and their jobs given to their parents, these children would be cared for by them. But child labour is cheap and the government has to ensure super-profits to capitalists while exporting the carpets cheaply. Exactly for this reason it is not addressing the problem and resorting to eye-wash measures that too to soothe the feelings of the imperialist masters.

### **Backdoor retrenchment :**

Jute mill owners have been using the cyclical and periodic lockouts of their mills to retrench workers and cut various payments due to the workers for a long time. This is happening under the very inspection of the Left front which boasts of being the representative of the working class and its government.

In May 1993, three of the 59 jute mills in West Bengal were under lockout. By July-end, eight more had been added to this list. This is not an exceptional feature of 1993. In 1989 the figures were 12 and carried forward 4, and in 1990, 13 and 6. In 1991, the number of fresh lockouts was 11 and 4 respectively. In 1992, 16 mills were under lockout.

The crucial point about these large scale lockouts is that almost every time the mills reopen, it is with a substantially reduced number of workers and with bipartite agreements that clamp down stringent conditions on workers. The net result is that more jute workers join the swelling ranks of the unemployed, while the mill owners benefit from cutbacks in the wage bills.

Being an agriculture-based industry, jute has a slack season of four months. During this period, the production of many mills drops by 40 per cent. The mill owners, taking advantage of this slack season, declare lockouts. During the lock out period, a majority of the workforce is reduced to looking for work on a daily basis. While 60 per cent of them emigrate to other states, traveling as far as Punjab to find work (lockouts coinciding with the harvest season), the others work on daily wages as construction labour, domestic servants or hawkers.

What follows then is a bipartite agreement between the mill owners and local union leaders in which workforce is drastically reduced and wages slashed -- often way below the minimum wage agreement of Rs. 2700 per month, including benefits.

The fall-out of these bipartite agreements has been the dual wage

structure in the industry, with wages varying from Rs. 3000 per month to Rs. 900 per month. The mills Premchand, Ambica and Nashkapara are among the latter category. With the government and central trade unions choosing to ignore the problem, the mill owners have a freehand to impose their will. Only 18 jute mills in West Bengal are paying the statutory wages and benefits.

In these bipartite agreements, there are other stringent conditions imposed to lift the lockouts. The most popular is freezing or paying provident fund or gratuity in installments to those retired as well as retiring. Given this, it is hardly surprising that the total PF default of the industry as on March 31, 1993, was as high as Rs. 83 crores.

Another equally popular condition imposed to lift the lockouts is deducting a part of wages as contribution towards the working capital. To add to this, the mill owners do not pay the arrears due to the workers for the lockout period nor have they been paid their arrears due to them after the lockout.

The left government's attitude of closing its eyes and refusing to see the problem is causing hardships for workers. The government signed the tripartite agreement in 1992. It cannot stay as a mute spectator to bipartite agreements which runs counter to the tripartite agreement, cut in wages and retrenchment. It has all the responsibility to see that tripartite agreement is implemented in toto. But the left-front government and its trade unions are shirking this responsibility by arguing that "if an agreement can be hammered out between the owners and the workers, we feel there is no harm. At least the work will begin and the labour can get some wages".

These wanton and periodic lockouts and closures are harmful to the workers in the long run leading to lower wages and retrenchment. Decades of bitter and valiant struggles brought them statutory guarantee for minimum wages and job security. Under the so-called friend of working class rule of the left front government, their hard won rights are under attack. They should resist these sinister moves on the part of mill owners and secure their rights.

#### **Public sector follows suit :**

The practice of pocketing employees' Provident Fund contributions used to be common among the private enterprises. The Indian capitalists are using the PF contributions as working capital to earn profits while retired workers run from pillar to post in desperation to get their dues. It is not only the employer's contribution but also the employees' contribution which is being pocketed by the private enterprises. These PF 'defaults' as they used to be called run into several

hundred crores of rupees. In West Bengal alone the total PF default in 1992 reached Rs. 124 crores.

This sinister practice of cheating the workers of their hard earned income is now fast spreading to the public sector too. Public Sector Undertakings belonging to the central government which used the employees' contributions to meet working capital requirements have defaulted to the tune of Rs. 20 crores in West Bengal alone. They include large Public Sector Undertakings like Mining and Allied Machinery Corporation, Jessop, Braithwaite, Burn Standard, Bird Heilgers and National Jute Manufacturers' Corporation.

Several PSUs of the West Bengal government have also defaulted with regard to PF contributions to the tune of Rs. 7 crores. These include the North Bengal State Transport Corporation, South Bengal State Transport Corporation, Saxby Farmer and Saraswati press.

While State Labour Minister Shanti Ghatak and top union leaders confine to a verbal condemnation of managements for not depositing the workers' PF contributions deducted from their wages with their own matching contribution, they are not taking any effective steps to make the managements pay the dues of the workers.

On the other hand, the central government is considering the idea of devising an instrument similar to that of the Excise Collectorate for instant collection of PF dues from business concerns, since the pricing of products includes the wage cost (including PF contribution) element. It is everybody's knowledge that such an instrument will not be easy to implement. It is clear that the Union government is using the same old ploy of making the workers believe that something can be done by the government.

The High Court of Calcutta, keeping in tune with all the other arms of the State machinery, has consistently favoured the managements. It often allows the managements to pay PF arrears in liberal installments over 10 years or more. This is also what the managements are insisting on in their bipartite agreements for lifting lockouts, as we have seen in the previous comment. And the High Court is legalising the demands of the managements. While retired workers are starving, managements are making profits with what they have pocketed from the earnings of the workers.

Wages and bonus are other areas where great disparities exist in public sector units, as in the private sector. The principle of equal pay for equal work is being flouted here too. Private enterprises are demanding the linking of wages and bonuses to productivity and the financial viability of the units. A recent seminar organised by the

Standing Conference on Public Enterprises opined that wages and bonus need not have parity and that norms governing them should be changed. The government is also working on linking wages to productivity and streamlining the PSUs. In its recent report on India, the World Bank has advised the government that the operational and financial autonomy of the PSUs has to be retained including the greater flexibility of set prices and wages and to adjust workforce. This clearly indicates the shape of things to come in the near future. All the public sector undertakings, despite their being owned by the government, will start functioning on the lines of private capitalist enterprises.

**Land ceiling :**

## **Land to big businesses on a platter**

Less than three decades after the land ceiling laws were enacted for the declared intention of more equitable distribution of land, the Indian ruling classes are taking steps to send the land ceiling laws onto the pages of history. The Government of Maharashtra has paved the way for others to follow. It has proposed that the Land Ceiling Act of 1957 be struck off the statute book to attract the private sector and multinationals to horticulture, floriculture and allied businesses. The proposal is yet to be cleared by the Central government.

The rationale behind such a move, as explained by the Maharashtra government, is that land ceiling would be a hindrance to improve farm output and tapping export markets as corporate, cooperative or individual entrepreneurs would not be able to buy as much land as required to make farming a commercially profitable activity. It is further noted that during Pawar's foreign tours, NRIs and foreign investors pointed to the same problem. So goes the argument, when 'socialism' has failed as an experiment, and the central government is going in for privatisation and globalisation, the state government has decided to do the needful by removing the ceiling on land.

To ward off any criticism, the government has proposed to allow the corporate sector to develop fallow and wastelands, which is around 70 lakh hectares in the state. Even if this fallow land is to be given to big businesses on a platter, there will be no takers as providing irrigation would be a big problem, both financially and technically. Every year the water table in the state is falling at an alarming rate. To replenish it or to divert the surface water needs massive financial expenditure. Unless the government agrees to provide irrigation with its budgetary support or allow the big businesses to buy irrigation and cultivable land, big businesses do not intend to use these lands for farming. Once the land ceiling law is removed, the big bourgeoisie, big landlord and foreign capital will decide on the land to be made captive for agribusiness and what crops should be raised on them. The Maharashtra government has also claimed that it has taken measures to protect the interests of poor farmers. Since big companies would offer prices which are too tempting for poor farmers to resist and consequently, there is the risk of landowners turning landless, the government has proposed the sharing of the company's profits with them and provisions of leasing land by the farmers to the company. In both the cases, the peasants will be deprived of their land, while MNCs using it as their own will acquire greater

strength to coerce the peasants to submission.

Whatever may be the arguments of the state government, which are aimed at deceiving the people, its objective is clear: to remove land ceilings so as to make the accumulation of land in the hands of a few more attainable. It is not that these land ceiling laws prevented concentration of land. On the contrary, the concentration of land grew in myriad ways. It is everybody's knowledge that land ceiling laws remained on paper and were never implemented in their real sense.

On the other hand, despite the presence of these laws, several hundred acres of land were made captive farms for the big bourgeoisie and the MNCs. In the name of Blue revolution, the placid waters of Chilika and Pulicot lakes on the east coast were made happy hunting grounds for imperialist sharks. The Anglo-American multinational, ITC, worked out medium-term arrangements with oil- seed farmers, particularly sunflower farmers, which stops short of buying their land, but keeps them virtually as its captive producers. Individuals are buying land, often flouting several laws, and pooling it for commercial exploitation as is happening in the case of brackish water as well as fresh water culture of fish and prawn. Infact, several hundred acres of prime agricultural land is being transformed into aquaculture farms in Godavari and Krishna delta system, the rice bowl of Andhra Pradesh. Every concrete step taken by the government in this direction is only meant for unhindered penetration of foreign capital into the agricultural sector.

Whether the Centre will clear Maharashtra's proposal is an irrelevant question for it has moved a long way in that direction in any case. The draft agricultural policy of the central government listed the increasing of agricultural production, promoting value addition in agriculture, tapping export markets, correcting the terms of trade to favour agriculture as "challenges" before Indian agriculture. To achieve this, the draft policy delineated a course of action that would provide infrastructure for agriculture with public investment to promote private investment in agriculture-based industries so that agricultural exports are "brought to the centre-stage of the country's ambitious globalisation drive". The thrust of the draft is clear : at any cost increase the agricultural production to export.

An internal paper of the government, relating to agriculture issues raised at the GATT talks, indicates that its position is by and large in consonance with the Dunkel proposals. It implies that the Indian government prostrated before the imperialists and agreed to turn Indian agriculture into an appendage of MNCs. It means that farmers would no longer be allowed to keep patented seeds back from their harvest for

replanting. It means that the size of the agricultural subsidies would be decided by the extent of tradeable agricultural goods piled up in the imperialist countries. It implies that foreign agribusinesses should be given all the protection and incentives to set up their units in India which would in the first place include free access to land. Notwithstanding the plethora of land ceiling legislations, the central government is already on the way of turning prime agricultural land to big businesses on a platter.

Intellectuals of the establishment propose the same theory. In the name of critical review of the state of Indian agriculture, they are suggesting the repealing of land ceiling laws. In order to increase agricultural production, they argue that the fragmentation of land should be stopped, freehand should be given to big businesses to buy land and put it to commercial use. The draft agricultural policy is echoing the same arguments and has taken steps albiet in a disguised phraseology.

Given the all-round political and economic crises that the Indian ruling classes have landed in, the question of doing away with land ceiling laws has remains more or less a question of political expediency.



## Rice exports :

# Aggravating starvation

In the last two years, rice exports have recorded an unparalleled growth. They have doubled from Rs. 450 crores in 1990-91 to Rs. 900 crores in 1992-93; and it is estimated that they could reach Rs.3000 crores within a few years, increasing our share in the world market from 4 per cent to 15 per cent. The Secretary, Union Ministry of Agriculture, M.S. Gill, said that the large production of rice of about 75 million tonnes per annum and wide varietal spread offered "an excellent base" for our country to become a leading rice exporting nation. He has disclosed that the Ministry of Agriculture has submitted a proposal to the Ministry of Commerce to set up a Rice Export Promotion Council. He also suggested that India should export superior quality rice and import inferior quality rice for domestic consumption. Such a policy was adopted by the colonial government before the Second World War, which had resulted in an artificial scarcity leading to largely man-made famine and human misery. Is it desirable to follow a similar approach at present?

India is the second largest producer of rice in the world, next to China, but is only the 54th in yield. Rice yield per hectare has not shown a significant increase in recent years. It was 1745 kg per hectare in 1989-90, 1740 kg in 1990-91 and 1741 kg in 1991-92. Every year there has been a heavy loss in production due to flood or drought.

The quantity of rice exported was 4,21,737 tonnes in 1989-90, 5,05,029 tonnes in 1990-91 and 7,51,416 tonnes in 1991-92. The quantity of rice imported in these three years was 5,44,485 tonnes, 66,038 tonnes and 12,117 tonnes, respectively. Thus the net outgo of rice is increasing with every passing year.

Rice and other cereals constitute the staple food of the large majority of our people. But despite the implementation of the green revolution, per capita net availability of cereals continues to be meagre, according to the Economic Survey for 1992-93.

Year	Per capita availability of cereals
1986	434.2 gms
1987	435.4 gms
1988	411.8 gms
1989	452.6 gms
1990	435.3 gms
1991	470.1 gms
1992	443.0 gms

Instead of ensuring the adequate availability of foodgrains to the people at prices within their reach, the government has adopted an aggressive policy to export them in its anxiety to maximise the earnings in foreign exchange as directed by the imperialist agencies.

The government is deliberately neglecting the agricultural sector. During the span of nearly half a century, it has been able to provide dependable irrigation to only 30 per cent of arable land, while a majority of the peasants are left to the mercy of vagaries of the monsoons. Other infrastructural facilities in the farm sector are also alarmingly poor. In 1990, nearly 30 per cent of the villages did not have a metalled road within a radius of five kms, 55 per cent did not have seed store, over 80 per cent did not have facilities for repair of agricultural implements, 75 per cent did not possess warehousing facilities and 60 per cent did not have a market centre.

In the face of all these odds, while the peasants are increasing production every year, the government is engaged in measures that will break the back of the peasantry -- removal of fertiliser subsidy and food subsidy, hike in irrigation water rates and power tariffs at the behest of the World Bank and the IMF.

In a recent document on India's progress and challenges in the economic transition, the World Bank proposed a reform package that consisted of greater integration with the global market, removal of domestic market impediments, restructuring the rural credit system in line with reforms of the overall financial system and further reduction of farm subsidies, largest among them irrigation, fertiliser and power.

The World Bank terms it as reallocation of public expenditure in agriculture from subsidies to investments, which should increase private investment. The entire thrust of the programme is clear: make the agricultural activity unviable for the poor and middle peasants by burdening them with additional expenditure and make it a commercially profitable activity for landlord sections and agricultural based industries, so that India can supply agricultural products at cheaper rates to the imperialist countries.

In their subservience to the imperialist masters, the government is acting in the fashion of colonial rulers. It is ruining the peasant economy to make agriculture an appendage to imperialist MNCs, and creating scarcity of foodgrains to earn foreign exchange to pay imperialist debts resulting in the scarcity of foodgrains, thus aggravating starvation, misery and death.

## Truckers' strike :

# Problems galore

For the second time in six months, the truck operators went on a countrywide strike. Their strike has once again focussed the dismal situation prevailing in the road transport sector and the plethora of problems faced by the truck operators.

India has a road length of 21 lakh kms and is increasing at the rate of 3 per cent every year. This is gigantic in absolute terms but considering the vastness of the country the road coverage is much below that in the developed countries. There are more than 25 million vehicles plying on these roads today as against a mere 8 million 10 years ago. By the year 2,000 this is slated to increase to 40 million. If this happens, and if the network of roads does not increase dramatically, there would be no standing room, parking place or running capacity.

The condition of the Indian roads is appalling due to the multiplicity of authorities and rampant corruption. The blame should squarely rest with the government which has always looked upon road transport as a source of income without need for providing funds for its development. It has never lost any opportunity of taxing the vehicles. Trucks have been continuously overloaded with yearly increases in excise levies. Spare parts too have not been spared. The Finance Minister never tires of taxing tyres. The administrative prices of diesel and other inputs of the transport sector have been increased at the drop of a hat. The trucks are also subjected to *pathkars* in virtually every important commercial centre; they are compelled to pay entry-taxes in every town and are harassed by octroi collectors in every major city.

Where goes all this money? Not into the development of the transport sector, not for the upkeep of roads, not for the research and development efforts to improve road lying and maintenance, nor for the upgradation of technology of trucks. It is gobbled up by the growing budgetary deficit and the road transport sector has been left to fend for itself.

Take a look at the quality of the heavy commercial vehicles. The standard truck, a 10 tonner, is manufactured using technology which is three decades old. There has been no effort whatsoever to improve its quality despite the protected market by the big bourgeoisie. It is stiff, heavy, non-maneuvrable and a fuel guzzler. It has to run continuously for 300 kms a day to become economically viable. It is a difficult job, but the average Indian driver has no alternative. If he is an owner-driver, then

it becomes a question of survival and if he is a contract driver, this is a question of his employment.

So what can the transport operator do? He has to repay the loans incurred in buying the truck. Maintenance costs are prohibitively high. The easiest way is to overload the truck. As against the official carrying capacity of 10 tonnes, a truck usually carries about 15 tonnes. This again compounds the problem reducing the life of the roads, increasing the wear and tear of the trucks and leading to more accidents.

The truck is no good but it has to be overloaded. The roads are horrible but distances are long. The driver is continuously plying the truck for over 10 hours every day. Increased traffic on the highways is choking and causing frequent traffic jams but he has to reach his destination without delay. With recession and taxes, incomes are dwindling. Added to all these, harassment at the entrance to every city by toll/tax collectors and the police vexes the operator. Therefore, when a headline on the front page of a leading economic newspaper screamed that "India is losing Rs. 50,000 crores every year due to road accidents", it hardly surprised anyone.

The state governments look upon road transport as a source of revenue. But they never feel it necessary to invest the amount collected back into roads. Everytime the problem has been brought to their notice the standard answer is paucity of funds. The central government has set up a separate National Highways Authority which has achieved nothing despite its four-year existence. Again the justification for its failure is lack of funds.

This is a tailor-made case for the World Bank to press for privatisation of road transport sector. The government also peddles privatisation of roads as a panacea for all the ills it is made to succumb to. It is not ready to forego any of its revenue by resorting to allowing private investment in road construction. It allows private companies to construct express highways and to collect toll from every vehicle plying on these highways. It imposes an additional burden on the truck operators without improving road conditions in general. Instead it creates another special category of roads in addition to national and state highways and zilla parishad roads. It also creates private monopoly on roads and truck operators will soon find themselves in a situation where they have to ply their vehicles on the private roads, whether it is good or bad at the exorbitant toll rates, as they would have no other alternative.

The solution lies not in private -- both Indian and foreign -- investment. It lies in the rational utilisation of funds collected from this sector. Apart from properly metalling the highways, the network of arterial roads

should be developed to reduce the congestion on the national highways. Research and development efforts should be directed to find new ways of laying roads with longer life. Newer technologies suitable to Indian conditions should be employed to improve the quality of trucks; in this case simply allowing screw driver technologies with foreign imports of almost semi-knocked down kits, as in the passenger vehicles, will do more harm, both in the short as well as long run. This may sound revolutionary. But the bottleneck is clogged so tightly that it needs a drastic solution. And it is not within the reach of the government which has "sufficient will and commitment towards the interests of our nation".

## State and communalism

*Reproduction of one of the papers presented at the Convention against Communalism and against Imperialism held at Lucknow on September 29 & 30. — Editor*

This note contains some tentative propositions on communalism. In the recent past a serious debate arose in Indian politics about communalism. Among the secular groups and individuals a section has been defending the ban imposed on the communal groups and the dismissal of State governments headed by the BJP. The basic presumption is that State action can be an effective deterrent on communal forces. The secular forces can rely on the State to contain communalism and to expand secularism. In this understanding of the State it seems as an autonomous agency that can be pressed into service to protect secularism.

Such an understanding about the State is not of recent origin. It was widely prevalent in the first decade after 'independence'. After independence, a Constitution was formed, and democracy and secularism were declared as the ideals to be achieved. A premium was put on the State in achieving these ideals. It was expected that the State would embark on a project to build a model economy and a nation. In view of the legitimacy derived from the national movement, the political leadership was able to convince the people that the State possessed the magic to transform everything. Thus arose the Statist notion in Indian politics. Even the left group believed in this Statism. The establishment of public enterprises, massive public investment in agriculture, creation of civic amenities were shown as the evidence of the positive aspects of interventionist State. It was believed that the State would even achieve secularism. The myth started exploding since the late 'sixties. It has become clear that the State achieved growth by diverting the resources to some regions, sections and sectors, the others are excluded from growth. The tribals, dalits, slumdwellers and dwellers of dry regions are denied all the benefits. Thus arose the doubts about the role of the State.

In India, the State does not follow the civil society, but it precedes civil society. In the process, the State preemates every sphere of social life. This form of the interventionist State has developed over a period of time. Its origins perhaps can be traced back to the colonial period. During the colonial period, the State initiated the process of modernisation, which included a restructuring of the economy and of politics. These changes were superimposed on a pre-capitalist society. The pre-British society was marked by caste divisions that led to differential access to resources and institutions. When colonial rulers created new laws based on new discourse, the dominant sections

received the maximum benefits. Same is the case even in independent India. The State extends support to the dominant sections and strives to preserve their power in society. Through the discourse on development and socialism, State laws always prevented challenges to power relations since development and socialism can be achieved only when there is stability. Any challenge to the dominant groups is seen as a threat to stability and progress.

In this context there exists a modern economy but equality in the marketplace is denied. So the growth in productive forces only reinforces the authority of the dominant sections, while marginalising the subordinate sections. Dominance in society is sought to be established on the basis of archaic culture. So development creates a lumpen class that strives to strengthen its hold with the help of an archaic culture. The factions in Rayalaseema (AP), caste *senas* in Bihar, upper-caste assaults in Coastal Andhra, rising incidence of dowry deaths, all indicate the same process. The rise of fundamentalism is an outcome of this ugly process. With the advent of liberalisation and the release of 'market forces', the pace of marginalisation increases. Along with it goes virulent communalism to sustain control over the marginalised groups. This process creates a situation where some rights to those belonging to the minorities are given not as individuals in the society but only as minority groups. Therefore it can be emphatically stated that the State has an upper-caste, Hindu character in India. In this process, communalism is a means through which the State seeks to acquire legitimacy. The only process of surplus extraction in this context is primitive accumulation. Political institutions lose their transformative of proclaimed objectives but in relations to the civil society. Thus the historical development of the State should be studied.

In this moment, State intervention against communalism is always counterproductive. Nationalism is an ideology to counter. Communalism has not yielded results, for the Hindutva forces are using nationalism to buttress their argument. Hindutva is presented as a means to reinforce nationalism. The results of State interventions to suppress riots is widely known. Communalised police forces in many parts have acted on behalf of Hindu communalism. Elsewhere, the minorities have lost faith in it, because they think that police are used to suppress them while the dominant Hindutva forces are allowed to operate with impunity. Similarly, the ban has only helped the Sangh Parivar. More than anything else, the State uses the secular card to legitimise authoritarian rule. Any draconian powers vested in the political institutions are bound to be used against legitimate democratic activity. Therefore, the fight against communalism has to be waged politically. And such a fight is inextricably linked with the battles of the oppressed masses against the dominant classes.

Report :

## **Convention against communalism and against imperialism**

The Convention against communalism and against imperialism organised by the AIFTU and Navjawan Bharat Sabha (Uttar Pradesh) was held at Lucknow on September 29-30, 1993, followed by a rally on October 1st. The Convention was attended by 1,000 delegates from various parts of the country.

A wide range of issues from the role of the State in spreading the virus of communalism and at the same time ushering in the Structural Adjustment Policy and the Dunkel Draft, to the question of dalits and minorities in fighting communalism, to the effects of communalism on women and culture were discussed during the Convention. The Convention was a success in that it sought to establish the linkages between imperialist expansion and control over the oppressed masses and the use of communalism as a weapon in the hands of the ruling classes to divide the people on the bases of religion and caste, so as to divert their attention from class struggle. The Convention also ensured the participation of the delegates in all the sessions.

The Convention was attended by Prof. Prempati and Prof. Dilip Swamy of Delhi University, Prof. Mehrotra and Prof. A.K. Singh of Lucknow University, Prof. D. Tripathi of JNU, Prof. Illaiah and Prof. Kondanna Rama Reddy of Andhra Pradesh, film-makers Tapan Bose and Madhushree Dutta, freelance journalist Prashant Kumar and women's activist Jita Kaur among others.

Cultural troupes from AP, UP, Bihar, MP, W Bengal, Punjab, Maharashtra, Orissa and Kerala sang revolutionary songs and performed street-plays exposing the role of imperialism and the native ruling classes in spreading communalism.

A co-ordinating committee of representatives of workers, peasants, women's and students' organisations was formed at the Convention as only a step towards uniting revolutionary, democratic, like-minded organisations and individuals to join forces in order to fight the growing menace of communalism.



## **Movement against armed landlord factions in Rayalaseema**

Rayalaseema region, comprising of the south-western districts of Kurnool, Cuddapah, Ananthapoor and Chittoor with a population of about one and a half crore, is well known for recurring drought, backwardness and violence by armed landlord factions. The landlord factions of this area are heavily armed with guns, country-made hand bombs and traditional weapons. In Kurnool district alone, which falls under the Prime Minister's and Chief Minister's electoral constituencies, Nandyal and Panyam, there are more than 2000 licenced big weapons, while the number of illegal guns are estimated to be ten times that number. Crude hand grenade-making is a cottage industry in this district as well as in the adjoining district of Cuddapah. These armed landlord factions are notorious for the mutual killings and also for violent suppression of the democratic rights of people. These factions go to any length to establish their supremacy over the resources and establish themselves as 'people's representatives'. Scenes of challenging the opponents with battles cries of 'ready for war or peace' are a common sight. The 'Rayalaseema culture' is slowly spreading to the adjoining districts.

These armed landlord factions are duplicating the earlier 'palegar' system which existed for about three centuries before the arrival of the British. The lives of people already burdened with recurring drought and industrial backwardness is made even more miserable with the increasing tyranny of these landlords and their cruel suppression of democratic rights. It is these factions that have secured the 'record breaking' majority for the PM in Nandyal and again it is these armed factions that came to the rescue of the CM when he needed to be elected as an MLA. Both of them have selected these constituencies because of the unstinted support of various factions. All the political parties are dependent upon them as these factions are 'the political groups' and faction leaders are 'the political leaders'. Without their support it is impossible to win any election. Parliamentary democracy in Rayalaseema is synonymous with booth capturing, rigging and frightening away people from voting.

### **Worst oppressors of people :**

These armed landlord factions of Rayalaseema are well-known for their acts of violence, oppression and exploitation of people. Each

faction leader has developed a distinct style of his own. Baireddy Rajashekhara Reddy, the son of the Nandikotkur MLA, is famous for his acts of vanishing those who dare to oppose him either in politics or in business. His family has about 600 acres of land on which agricultural labour are forced to work and accept a paltry amount he offers as wages. He is said to be responsible for more than 50 murders in that constituency. He rules supreme here and no political activity which harms his interests is ever allowed. Both CPI and CPM dare not criticise him. They are totally silent to the happenings there and pretend he does not exist. All government work tenders in the area are awarded to him without any competition and he then holds his own private auctions where the works are awarded again to the highest bidders. He controls the entire arrack (country liquor) business of the area, which yields more than one crore rupees annually as profits. He controls the film business in this area as well. His followers in the villages are local tyrants, quite notorious for their atrocities on dalits and women. When Baireddy sets out, he is followed by a convoy wielding not less than two dozen rifles.

Rambhoopal Reddy, who was forced to sacrifice his MLA seat of Panyam to enable the CM to get elected to the State Assembly, is known for the terror he has created in that constituency by chopping off the limbs of those who come in his way. His victims are no less than 100. This list includes those who have dared to rent out election propaganda offices to his opponents and those who have refused to pay extortion money. He controls the entire arrack business in his fiefdom. He and his followers extort interest at the rate of ten to fifteen percent per week from the quarry workers of the area.

Budda Vengal Reddy, MLA of Atmakur in Kurnool district is another faction leader well-known for an incident involving his son. His son, who heads a mercenary force, was incensed when a truck driver did not immediately pull to the side to clear the way for his jeep. The driver was immediately shot to death. Budda Vengal Reddy got the president of a major panchayat belonging to his own party killed when he entered into competition with him in the arrack business. His sons are notorious for their lust for women. They select a woman, abduct her and keep her captive for a week and then send her back. If the husband of the woman approaches the police, they simply refuse to file an FIR and 'advise' him to wait for a day or two so that she may return.

It is necessary to note that the present CM, C. Vijayabhaskara Reddy, hails from this district and has himself been a faction leader. Nowadays, he plays the role of political godfather to many such factions. His family owns about 2000 acres of land in his native village Laddagiri. His family is still in possession of more than 200 acres of land belonging to his

rivals who had been driven away from the village some decades ago. Vijayabhaskara Reddy's political opponent in this area is K.E. Madanna, a political leader from a backward caste. These two leaders have their followers in hundreds of villages in this district and it is said that about 2000 people have died so far in the factional warfare continuing over the past 35 years. Both of them have hundreds of gun licences issued to their followers, illegal weapons and property worth crores of rupees. The followers of these factions collect taxes from people as though they were the government. Water cess of about Rs. 100 to 150 is collected by whoever dominates the village where irrigation facilities exist. It is they who decide who should get the water. Naturally their opponents are denied water even if they happen to be in the command area. Vijayabhaskara Reddy's son has also entered politics and is taking steps towards the formation of a faction.

Another faction leader who has developed newer and different forms is Challa Ramakrishna Reddy of Owk area. He collects Rs. 125 per truckload of granite that goes out from this area. He has to be paid a royalty on every property deal of significance in that area. People are posted on duty at his house for security reasons. Either one has to go or supply a confidant as a substitute in case he cannot attend duty in person.

The constituency of Allagadda is known as 'Bombula gadda' (storehouse of country made handgrenades.) It has a long history of rivalry between two families which dominate this area. Whenever their followers cross each other, hand grenades fly invariably. Each group is busy looting in order to maintain their gangs. No person would dare to walk the streets at night as he will be looted on his person by any one of these groups. Any empty truck that passes through this area is seized by these groups and is used for the smuggling of timber from Nallamala forests. The police refuse to register complaints and send the person to the head of the group. Every small dispute amongst the people is invariably turned into a clash where innumerable murders take place by these factions.

The above mentioned are but some of the methods in this long list, which if compiled in detail can become a monotonous volume. This situation is almost duplicated in Cuddapah district and is now spreading fast in Ananthapoor and Chittor districts.

Many of the ruling class politicians and their '*jeehuzur*' intellectuals have so far tried to project this particular phenomenon of armed factions as something that is exclusively confined to power struggle and has no bearing on the common people. That this is a big lie to fool the people is evident. An armed gang which has no interest in people's welfare

existing among unarmed people will invariably use its arms to loot the people and suppress their democratic rights.

These armed landlord factions do not allow people to go against their interests in any election. They act as more supreme than even the Supreme Court and there can be no appeal against their judgments passed in the name of 'panchayats'. Democratic organisations are not allowed to function against their interests in their areas. One Suryanarayana, a trade union worker of CITU, was killed when he tried to organise quarry workers. CITU is even afraid of disclosing the name of the faction leader responsible for this murder. Even student unions are not exempt from the dictates of these faction leaders. There are instances where the faction leaders have forced the elected representatives to resign. The low paid government employees are at their mercy, or else, they are not allowed to continue in their area, while the top brass of the administration is always in league with these factions.

#### **State connivance :**

The State encourages these factions in myriad ways. It keeps on issuing gun licences to every faction and more to those affiliated to the party in power. No action is taken against them even when they beat up police personnel. Instead of the State eradicating this phenomenon, they boast of their deeds of compromises between various warring factions, thus giving them recognition and institutionalising them. These so-called compromises arranged by top police brass for their public image do not last long anyway. The State is only bothered when these factions decide to fight it out amongst themselves. But it is least bothered with the violence on the masses. At present, a battle of sorts is taking place between two important leaders of Congress-I in Rayalaseema. The roads and building minister in the State cabinet JC Divakar Reddy and the MP of Cuddapah YS Rajashekhara Reddy have locked their horns. Tadipatri, the constituency of Divakara Reddy is the battlefield where their followers are looting each others' properties, burning down houses, destroying fruit gardens, abducting rivals etc. All this is taking place with the knowledge of the police, who are hiding the fact since they are responsible for these acts of vandalism. The government is conveniently looking the other way. Refusal to register cases against faction leaders and their followers, arresting those responsible for criminal activities only after getting permission from their leaders and that too at a time and place of their choice, looking the other way even when unlicensed arms are exhibited openly are some of the inactivities of the police in this region. Recently these armed factions have developed a new form of abducting a person and then throwing his dead

body at a distant place where no one can identify him. This list of unidentified dead bodies is reported regularly in the newspapers, but the police plead helplessness.

### **Reincarnation of the old Palegar system :**

This system has a past history of such local feudal lords ruling the area for many centuries. It started in the period of Vijayanagar empire when a unique system of administration known as Palegar system came into existence. Vijayanagar empire was primarily a feudal military alliance under Hindu cloak. As this rainstarved, dry mountainous region was difficult to police, the institution of palegars was introduced where villages ranging from 2 to 300 were kept in the possession of the Palegar who would maintain an army and supply it to the emperor in times of need. The palegar was only required to pay a fixed sum to the king's treasury annually. The rest of the rule was left to the palegar's discretion. As Vijayanagar empire collapsed in the 16th century, these palegars became more autonomous with each acting as kings and trying to extend their area of influence. Thus numerous petty battles were fought between these palegars. It was for the most part banditry, with each palegar raiding the villages of others, looting whatever available and going back to safety of his small fort. These palegars collected taxes, tributes etc from the people indiscriminately. This resulted, sometimes, in the population of an entire village migrating to some other area leaving all their immovable properties behind. Basically these palegars were persons with some military background or tribal chieftains. They used to have armies from tens to some hundreds of soldiers and these were mostly not standing armies. While on the other hand, the dominant agricultural caste was Reddy, the palegars then were mostly from Boyas (now a scheduled tribe), according to some researchers.

Most of this region was handed over to the British by the Nizam of Hyderabad in 1800, and since then came to be called as the ceded districts. The palegars who were used to nominal overlordship by higher powers did not receive positively the British takeover. There were numerous revolts against the British as they tried to establish their power in the remote areas. It took the British almost a decade to subdue the palegars. Many of the palegars turned into bandit chiefs and took to the hills. Britishers turned these palegars into pensioners or prisoners. The British rule in this region was one of ruthless exploitation as taxes were collected without taking into consideration the sources of income. Areawise tax was collected and the British went about the collection in a ruthless fashion. With the advent of the British, the local irrigation sources (mainly tanks) which are vital for the sustenance of agriculture fell into neglect as the State took them under its wing and paid little

attention to their maintenance. No new irrigation sources were created. Thus the British Raj also heralded a series of droughts in this area which also falls under the rain shadow region. This led to a catastrophic situation and there were many revolts against the British, some of them led by the dethroned palegars or their descendants who still constituted a significant social force. One such revolt led by Vuyyalawada Narasimha Reddy lasted for about six months and he could mobilise an army of 55000. This indicates the widespread discontent with the British rule. Though it removed the tyranny of the palegars, it did not in anyway better the conditions of the people and the people cherished the rule of the old palegars as something better and thus expressed it in their folklore. Reddys retained their hold over land during the British rule and to some extent gained political leverage through their interaction with the State.

After the transfer of power in 1947, the parliamentary system established the dominant landed caste of Reddys as the new rulers down from the panchayats to the parliament. The transfer of power did not bring any democratic reform. Land ceiling acts enacted at various times could not break this caste's holding on the land. Reddys, who constitute around 10 per cent of the population, hold more than 50 per cent land. With the coming into being of the so-called parliamentary democracy all the old features of this area came to the fore once again in a gradual manner. The intense rivalry between various sections to control the scarce resources of this area led them to form armed gangs. The State, by now in their hands, supported them in innumerable ways in establishing their supremacy. The lifting of the ban on liquor gave them additional resources to finance their armed gangs. And now the entire region is in their grip with this system spreading to every nook and corner. The backwardness of this region has become a powerful weapon in their hands to divert people's attention away from their oppression. In times of political necessity, they use the plank of regional discrimination.

### **The emergence of Prajaswamy Vedika (Democratic Platform) :**

The growth of the revolutionary movement in this region has brought this problem onto the agenda. Revisionist parties like CPI and CPM are, according to their political line, allied with one or the other faction and are fast losing the confidence of the people. It has become a ridiculous sight to see CPI and CPM opposing one faction one day (until it is with Cong-I) and then joining hands with them the next day (when they jump into TDP). In some areas, CPI and CPM have formed their own armed gangs after getting licences for guns. Thus 'left Palegars' have come into being (as people call them). They have never attempted to build a

people's movement against these landlord factions and their atrocities on the people. After realising the necessity of building a people's movement some of the revolutionary and democratic organisations working in this area have come together to form 'Democratic Platform' against armed landlord factions (Bhooswamy Sayudha Muthala Vyathireka Prajaswamy Vedika). Com. Sandhya (POW - Stree Vimukti) has been elected as the Convenor. It has decided to organise people's movement against the government with the following demands:

1. Government should withdraw all licences to weapons in Rayalaseema, must seize all illegal weapons from landlord factions; Or, it must recognise the right of the people to take measures of self-defence against attacks on them.

2. The government should hold public trials on all atrocities, killings etc of these factions and punish them.

3. The government must confiscate all property amassed by these factions and use it in public interest.

With these demands, the Vedika has launched a campaign to mobilise public opinion as the first stage. A series of public meetings were held in some areas notorious for factions and their violence. Propaganda teams have gone to those very villages where factional landlords reign supreme. People have attended these meetings in thousands though the forces of the constituent organisations of Vedika are not present in those areas. This campaign and demands have received support from different sections and most of the political parties in this area are forced to issue public statements against factional violence.

The convention organised by Vedika on June 12, 1993 at Nandyal was attended by more than 300 delegates from four districts of Rayalaseema region and from different sections. The convention unanimously adopted the resolution on the above mentioned demands. Later 1000 people marched through the streets of Nandyal and a public meeting was held which was attended by about 4000 people.

On August 12, 1993, Vedika organised a march to the Assembly. About 1500 men and women marched to the Assembly and a delegation presented the memorandum to the Speaker urging the Assembly to act on the demands of the Vedika. Days before this march, a TDP MLA and ex-minister was killed by the Congress(I) goondas in broad daylight in Hyderabad as a continuation of factional fight of these sections going on for a long time in Rayalaseema. This has once again highlighted the culture of violence that is reigning terror on the people.

## Repression in Dang

The declaration of vast lands of forests as reserve areas and driving adivasis out of their lands was a bureaucratic practice of the British colonialists. This was done by the colonial rulers to establish their monopoly over the forest resources and exploit them. The Indian rulers, who inherited the British legacy, are continuing this policy even today. Periodically they bring newer areas under reserve forests by bureaucratic notifications and ruthlessly drive the adivasis out from their only source of livelihood, that is, land, and from collecting the forest produce upon which their economy of sustenance desperately depends. While vast tracts of forest lands were made into happy hunting grounds for foreign and native bourgeoisie, various state governments as well as the central government resort to oppression of adivasis by falsely making them responsible for the degradation of forests and in the name of protecting the environment.

The adivasis of Dang in Gujarat are questioning this ruthless suppression. With the help of Lok Adhikar Sangh, Ahmedabad, they filed a writ petition in the High Court praying for the quashing of forest department orders that prevented them from tilling their lands. On July 14, 1993, the High Court issued a stay order on the forest department till the case was finally disposed of. On hearing about the stay order through Avinash Kulkarni who supplied them with copies of the stay order, adivasis belonging to about 50 villages started tilling the land and were planning to carry out normal agricultural operations till the time of harvesting.

Avinash Kulkarni, an activist of Adivasi Bhoomiheen Kisan Hakk Samrakshana Samiti, went to Laha Kasad village on August 25 to inform the adivasis of the stay order. Apprehensive of the forest officials' notorious ways, the adivasis insisted that Avinash stay back and help them in this regard in case the forest officials visited the village. On August 28, when Avinash was about to have a bath in the river, the villagers informed him that the ranger had come to the village and wanted to meet him.

Avinash rushed back to the village and found a group of forest officials and four others led by the forest ranger awaiting his arrival. When he approached the ranger and suggested that they sit down for a talk, they surrounded him and fisted and kicked him. He fell down and started bleeding from the nose. His shirt was torn to pieces and his spectacles



were lost. When he protested to the ranger, he received some more blows with abuses in the filthiest language. He was threatened with death by being cut to pieces or being left naked in the jungle. During this time the ranger was only asking his men not to beat him hard, since it would kill him and land them into trouble.

From Laha Kasad village, he was taken to the Mahal range office on foot and throughout this distance they continued to beat him with sticks, fists and kicks. The beating continued even after reaching the Mahal range office where some higher officials were also present. These officials leveled all sorts of charges against him, the chief being that he had entered the Dang area without the permission of the forest officials and village Sarpanchs. They interrogated him with all sorts of unrelated and irrelevant questions branding him a terrorist. When one woman came from Laha Kasad with some food for him, she was threatened and asked to leave the place. However, she did not pay heed to their threats and left only after giving him food. During interrogation, the officials insisted that he should sign papers which contained some matter in Gujarati. When Avinash insisted that the matter be read to him, he was again submitted to torture.

Subsequently, he was taken to Ahwa in the same condition, in shorts, a torn shirt and without chappals. Avinash was then taken to the residence of the DFO, RL Meena, who came out to talk to him and told him that it was not correct on his part to have contacted the villagers without first informing the forest officials. The DFO also said that the forest officials had to intervene because there was a complaint regarding the land dispute. When Avinash informed him that the High Court had issued a stay order and that the forest officials could argue out their case in the High Court too, the DFO merely asserted that he had to act on the complaint made by the third party. Incidentally, the hearing of the case was to take place on September 4. After this brief conversation, Avinash was asked to leave.

Later Avinash made a complaint to the police asking them to initiate proceedings against these officials for their criminal action against him and for showing utter contempt for the High Court by illegally preventing him from enlightening adivasis about the contents of the stay order. He also informed the district collector of this illegal act of the forest officials.

On 29th August about 40 adivasis from various villages had set to go to the Mahal range office. On the way, they happened to meet the ranger and a guard who were responsible for the beating up of Avinash. They questioned the two of Avinash's whereabouts and admonished for beating him without any reason. The adamant answers given by the officials angered the adivasis and they beat the Ranger and the guard.

Later the ranger filed a police complaint and the police used this as a pretext to effect indiscriminate arrests. On the 1st and 2nd of September, about 30 adivasis charged under different sections of IPC were arrested and later released on bail.

This episode brings to the fore certain facts about the real nature of democracy prevailing in the country. All over India, adivasis are being denied their democratic rights. Even the least assertion on their part to exercise their legal rights means brutal repression from the exploiting classes and state machinery. They are not even considered 'civilised'. They are denied of their right to organise and whoever attempts to organise them is branded a terrorist and eliminated. The so-called concern about environmental degradation shown by the government and the intellectuals of the establishment is being utilised as a ploy to deny the adivasis of their right to life.

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