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Founder Editor-in-Chief : COMRADE SHIBDAS GHOSH

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SUCI called general strike on 30 October

People of West Bengal made it a resounding success

The statewide 12-hour general strike and hartal in West Bengal on October 30, 2007 called by SUCI has met with all-out success. Our party SUCI called this strike on a 10-point demand charter relating to number of burning issues of people's life. The call came in sequel to a sustained movement on the same issues that the party had been organizing since long and it was accompanied by a firm commitment to continue the movement to step it up to higher

and higher stages, more organized and imbued with higher ethics-morality and culture. People of the state were well aware of how SUCI was fighting for their cause and had full confidence that its commitment were never empty words.

However, had anybody decided to know from the media coverage about how far this call was responded to by the people of West Bengal, he would have found virtually all the channels of the electronic media chanting

throughout the day and the print media repeating it next morning, that people of the state has totally refused to respond to SUCI's call. CPI(M) leaders did not fail to reiterate these chantings in their reaction too.

On the basis of the reports we had during and immediately after the strike, we place them here to show the reality the media and CPI(M) masked.

The spontaneous support of the people to SUCI's call, increasing

day by day, was evident, aloud or tacit, not only in the rural West Bengal but even in the urban areas even before the date. What was its measure on the day of the strike? In Calcutta, all the major markets, including the Sealdah Koley Market, the largest wholesale market of fish and vegetables in the state, as also the renowned Mangalahaat of adjacent Howrah, a huge weekly market, were shut down and deserted. Wherever there

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Howrah Bridge, Calcutta at 12-30 p.m. on 30 October



Sealdah Station, Calcutta at 9-45 a.m.



Gariahat Flyover, Calcutta at 10-30 a.m.

People's strike on 30th vs. 'Deadlock Bangla' call of 31st

The overwhelming response to the call of 12-hour general strike and hartal in the state by our party on October 30 based on a specific 10 point charter of demand bears eloquent testimony to the fact that gone are the days when the tormented people would remain mum and passive tolerating all oppressions and deprivations, derided by the incessant lies and calumnies spread by the CPI(M), the party wearing a Marxist cloak and running the government alongwith a batch of associates surviving on its crumbs and covered by its threat and intimidation. On a sustained basis,

our party throughout the country has been trying utmost to organize the various sections of the toiling masses bleeding white under exploitative capitalist rule effectual through the subservient governments of different hues on the platform of united democratic mass movements over the burning problems of their life. Accordingly, in the state of West Bengal as well, ours has been a persistent effort to unleash organized people's struggles against the pernicious anti-people policies of the CPI(M)-led government devoted to the class in power. To give a fillip to these legitimate struggles and give them a

more organized shape in deference to the wishes of the common people intending to escalate the pitch of their voice of protest, the strike call was given by our party. While the three main demands were immediate

- i) end of corruption by a nexus of dealers, officials of government food department and CPI(M) leaders in the rationing system, ensuring proper supply of foodgrains, kerosene and other essential items through Public Distribution System (PDS) and bringing down the prices
- ii) arrest and exemplary punishment

to all the police officers and CPI(M) criminals responsible for the carnage and mass rape in Nandigram and restoration of genuine peace and normalcy there by stopping firing from Khejuri side as well as withdrawal of all false cases slapped on the leaders and cadres of the heroic resistance movement and

- iii) arrest and punishment of Asok Todi, the notorious business tycoon, Prasun Mukherjee, former commissioner of Calcutta police and other culprit police officers responsible for

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Conspiracy to downplay people's strike on 30th exposed

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the conspiratorial killing of Rizwanur Rahman, the young upright computer teacher,

the other demands included

- iv) stopping infiltration of monopoly capital and multi-nationals in retail trade and agro-business
- v) opening of all closed industries including tea gardens and reinstatement of the retrenched workers
- vi) return of land forcibly grabbed at Singur, setting up of industries on non-agricultural land against proper compensation and stopping acquisition of fertile agricultural land in the name of industrialization
- vii) effective implementation of a master plan to free rural West Bengal and Calcutta from flood, river erosion and water-logging
- viii) scrapping of sex-education and gradation system in schools
- ix) stopping of load-shedding and providing subsidies for supplying electricity to agriculture, domestic use and small business at cheaper rate
- x) stopping of woman and child trafficking.

Re-affirming that all these legitimate demands articulated their feeling and urge, the people took initiative to make the strike a grand success ignoring all anti-strike propagandas by the bourgeois media and giving a fitting reply to the CPI(M) and its cohorts vending as usual like any other bourgeois party or combination the puerile theory of such calls being purported to 'create disorder' in an otherwise orderly rule and then deploying all its coercive machinery to break the strike at gunpoint.

This time, the opposition was just not in the form of slanderous propaganda coupled with media blackout. There have been planned acts of disruptions and diversions on the part of the rightist forces in connivance with the government to dilute the importance of the call and shift attention to the antics of vote-seeking political figures roving in the centrestage in sickening desperation to reap electoral benefits by usurping the credit of people's movement. Our party announced the general strike on 22 October. A statewide campaign was released to reach out to the people at every nook and corner with written

appeals, handbills, posters, and wall writings. Innumerable group meetings, street corner meetings were organized. While the campaign was picking up and receiving thunderous response from the people, Mamata Banerjee, the chief of Trinamool Congress, an offshoot of the Congress following internal squabbles centring around the question of leadership and pitchforked by the ruling class and bourgeois media as the main opposition to the CPI(M) in the state, suddenly announced on 27 October that over the same demands, she would render the state immobile, a synonym of *bandh* (closure), on 31 October. What prompted her to do this after five days of our announcement? If her honest intention was to involve the people in a movement for expressing solidarity with the attacked Nandigram peasants, she could have extended support to our strike call or in case of any difficulty in doing so, given a separate strike call on the same day. But her refusal to do either of that vexed not only the people at large but even the rank of Trinamool Congress.

During the press conference on 28 October, many journalists asked Comrade Provash Ghosh, Central Committee member and state secretary of the party, whether her move was to frustrate the general strike on 30 October. Comrade Ghosh replied, "It is up to you and the struggling people of the state to judge." In fact, it has not been difficult for the conscious people to make out that the politics of the Trinamool Congress is not to build up planned organized movement with the objective of achieving legitimate demands of the people. Never had it ventured in that direction. The crux of its politics is to demonstrate strength to reap electoral benefits. The threat of immobilizing the state on 31 October was also from that narrow political objective. Trinamool chief knows that the SUCI workers make untiring efforts to reach out to the people with the message of movements and strikes and rouse them to release their own initiative. But her party does not need that as the media undertakes the responsibility of working as her propaganda machine. Before she opens her mouth, the bourgeois media jumps into action to make it the headline. Yet what has been the history?

In 2003, we had given a call of general strike on 27 January on various demands of education, healthcare, power tariff reduction and so forth. The announcement was made a month earlier. Suddenly after some days, Trinamool chief declared a strike on 10 January keeping in the forefront the Party for Democratic Socialism (PDS) having hardly any presence anywhere in the state. At that time also, the question arose as to which strike call the people would respond to since the Trinamool Congress had more number of legislators and clear backing from the media. But all sections of the toiling people unequivocally told our workers, "We do not know what would happen on 10th, but our observation would be on 27th." And indeed that happened. The state was brought to grinding halt not on 10th but 27th because like all previous occasions, the people had emotionally responded to the SUCI's call because it was based on their own contemplation and initiative.

This time also, the people stood firmly behind us, assured us of total participation in the strike call since they were aware that it was a part of their own struggle against all-pervading attack on life and livelihood and no political stunt from electoral or any such other exigency. "You carry out your preparatory work. 30th will be total success" said the people to our workers. They also stood by what they said. The success of the strike was wholly due to people's initiative. CPI (M) leaders and their criminal brigade threatened them of dire consequence if they supported the strike call. Shop owners and vendors were warned of eviction. But they did not capitulate before such threats. In fact, many honest workers of the CPI (M) helped in many ways to ensure that the strike was successful. Particularly, many CITU-run unions massively took part in the strike. The government made bus, tram and train to run. But there was hardly any passenger. Nowhere our workers made any attempt to disrupt the service by hurling bombs or pelting stones. There was peaceful picketing at select spots which the police cleared within short time by using force. Yet the strike was all-out. Because the



Baharampur (Murshidabad) bus stand on 30th October

people wanted it. They responded because of their profound confidence in the fighting character of our party.

On the other hand, there was a deadlock situation not round the state but in the city of Calcutta on 31st, not because of any spontaneous response from the people but out of sheer fear. The role of the police was totally in contrast to that of 30th. While SUCI workers were picked up even for organizing processions, Trinamool supporters created train and road blockades for hours without any intervention from the police let alone being arrested. Likewise, police made no attempt to prevent Trinamool workers from shouting before various offices and even from entering into the premises. But only the day before, SUCI workers while making peaceful appeals were lathicharged and taken into custody. Bias on the part of a sizeable section of the pliant media was glaring. Those who on 30th were up and doing in propagating 'fail story' of the strike suddenly became hyperactive in singing 'pass tune' for Trinamool sponsored "Deadlock Bangla" on 31st. People chuckled in amused disbelief on either occasion. In fact, when some electronic media panning the camera on some empty buses were trying to dish out their concocted version of the strike on 30th, the deserted roads and rows of closed shops in the background held out glimpses of the reality. Likewise a host of examples could be cited to show the fundamental and qualitative difference between the successful strike on 30th and the Trinamool Congress *bandh* on 31st. It was evident that right from the government and the CPI (M) to a section of the subservient media were bent upon undermining people's strike of 30th and instead granting official recognition to the Trinamool Congress *bandh* the next day. The way the CPI (M)-led state

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Ration row in West Bengal

People burst out in fierce movement against corrupt dealers-administration-CPI(M) nexus

People today are in no mood to relent but to assert their power in West Bengal, once held in high esteem by the countrymen as the citadel of Left-democratic movement and a crusader against all kinds of menace and malaise, oppression and suppression. Accumulated grievances of the people torn apart by ruthless capitalist exploitation were no doubt finding expressions in some of the fierce movements launched against the pro-capitalist anti-people policies of both the central as well as the CPI(M)-run state governments. But the courageous resistance of the Singur peasants against forcible land grab in the name of so-called industrialization by the state government augured a landmark in the course of people's movement. It remained no more a protest but became resistance. And then the gallantry shown by the brave Nandigram people augured a new era. Inspired by the grit and spunk of the fighting peasantry, the well-meaning conscientious people of the state cutting across different strata and segments came out to the street in their support, became vocal against the persistent assault on the life and livelihood and squarely held the CPI(M) leadership, masquerading as Marxists, responsible for defrauding and perpetrating a cowardly cloak-and-dagger attack on the agitating poor, particularly the womenfolk. Then broke out the incident of the killing of Rizwanur Rahman, a young upright teacher belonging to a poor family, allegedly by a nexus of his business tycoon father-in-law and the top brass of Calcutta police basking under the shelter of the state government and the CPI(M) high-ups. Seething in anger the entire people of the state burst in protest and indicted the CPI(M) and its government for indulging in a palpable foul play to hush up the crime. And now a rage over the ration scam sings the state. The people have virtually revolted against the engineered shortage of supplies in rationing outlets breaking open all the shackles, defying police atrocity and overcoming the red eyes of the CPI(M) leadership. After the 60's, the state has not been witness to such a massive emotional participation of the people in any movement. "We'll teach you a lesson. You can't give us rice and wheat, instead you talk mumbo-jumbo. We don't understand the nuclear deal, give us food," the Telegraph quoted an agitating villager, as saying.

How the movement sprouted and spread

It first started in the district of Bankura which, incidentally, returned all the candidates of the CPI (M) and its Front partners to the state assembly as well as parliament in the last elections. Most of the village panchayats are under their control. The rationing system practically reached the point of being non-existent in this perennially poverty-stricken district, claimed to be a CPI (M) stronghold going by poll results. But corruption in ration distribution reached such an abysmal depth that the people had reached the end of their tether and hence the so-called bastion of the CPI (M) exploded against its 'supposed mentors'. For a long time, the people belonging to both the categories of 'Below Poverty Line' (BPL) and 'Above Poverty Line' (APL) were not getting their due quota of rice, wheat, cereals, kerosene and other essential items as the supplies meant to be distributed at subsidized price were diverted to the open market by the corrupt dealers and sold at huge

premiums in connivance with corrupt PDS officials. Most of these dealers running a racket of such rampant pilferage and black marketing in collusion with the distributors and local administration have been either members or close associates of the CPI(M). It is alleged by the local people that the corrupt ration dealers financed the CPI(M) local conference. Even the ration dealers in their programmes carry large portraits of a high profile CPI(M) polit bureau member who is also often seen in the close company of these corrupt operators. So there was a volcanic eruption of the accumulated wrath of the people first on September 16 last at a place called Radhamohanpur in Sonamukhi area where the villagers had gathered outside the venue of a CPI(M) party conference voicing protest against the irregular supply of rations and alleging that a section of the CPI(M) leaders were hand in glove with the corrupt ration dealers. But the villagers crying for rice and wheat were met with bullets. Trigger happy police and the insane CPI(M) leaders went berserk. Two persons including a

teenaged school student were struck with bullets while many others were seriously injured. This infuriated the poor villagers who began raiding the houses and shops of the corrupt dealers, chasing the conniving CPI(M) leaders and demanding not only the prescribed quota of ration at fair price but also adequate compensation against the supplies hitherto denied to them. Spontaneously, the agitation extended throughout the district gaining momentum everyday. Incident of a ration dealer opening fire on the protesting mob was also reported from Barjora area of the district. In the face of such a rage from the people at large, the CPI(M) district committee reportedly had no alternative but to admit involvement of its cadres in the malpractices and wrongdoings.

The message of this legitimate struggle of the people reached other districts as well in no time and everywhere, the deprived and aggrieved populace was spurred into action against the rampant corruption that has rendered the PDS well nigh defunct in the state. The corrupt ration dealers have been gheraoed, the hoarded stuff seized, road blockades organized, bandhs called and most importantly, the dealers had to confess their crime in public and yield to the public demand for providing cash compensation against the due quota of ration to the deprived. Everywhere the police-administration openly sided with the defaulting dealers-distributors-CPI (M) activists and pounced upon the unarmed masses with lethal weapons. The way the police resorted to indiscriminate firing gave an impression as if they are licensed to kill. But the people were in no mood to relent. Instead of being frightened, they advanced boldly. In many places the police-administration as well as CPI(M) anti-socials had to retreat in the face of the militant agitators. In fact, the intensity with which this militant movement is spreading like a prairie fire is ushering in a new era. One more notable feature is that the movement has surged forth in the places known to be strongholds of the CPI(M) and the people demonstrated open defiance to the CPI(M)'s reign of terror and did not spare even its 'powerful' leaders

holding brief for the unscrupulous dealers. In many cases, these leaders were chased away from the locality by the agitating masses. In one instance, the starving people vent their wrath at a party conference of the CPI(M) where the participants were to enjoy a sumptuous lunch menu. Likewise, people gheraoed one dealer known to be a CPI(M) activist and ransacked his sales outlet alleging that the supplies were shifted to the grocery shop owned by his brother located just on the opposite side thereby forcing the people to buy the same provisions at exorbitant market price. Outraged at the news that seven CPI(M) leaders had entered into a clandestine deal with corrupt dealers to save them from public fury against payment of Rupees 14 lakhs, the residents of Bhatakul in Burdwan hounded the said leaders and confronted by the agitating people, one of the leaders confessed in writing that they had received the amount in a local primary school. Clearly, the bases of the CPI(M) are now being dented.

CPI(M) bares its ugly face

Had there been a government having even a trace of concern for the people, it would have immediately intervened with due respect for the legitimacy of the movement and take necessary political initiative to meet the most reasonable demands of the people. But the CPI(M) government of West Bengal was nowhere near that. No such political process was released. Instead the CPI(M) and its government opted for flexing their muscle and showering barrage of canards to throttle the voice of legitimate protest. The CPI(M) branded this people's agitation as 'ration riot' and a 'foul game' of the opposition parties and dubbed the agitators as 'miscreants' and 'lumpens' out to 'disrupt the public distribution system'. The semantic quibbling was indeed a contrived attempt to skirt the central issue and sneakily sought to overlook the misery people have been engulfed in because of a noxious acts of the unscrupulous party cadres doubling up as dealers and panchayat functionaries in connivance with corrupt administration. Implicit has been an attempt to give a clean chit to the corrupt dealers-distributors. The government has declared that security would be provided to the dealers the majority of whom are believed to be involved in the manipulation and diversion of stocks. In other words, those

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CPI(M) openly sides with corrupt dealers and calls agitators 'dogs'

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responsible for the scam are entitled to protection, not the people who are crying for supplies legitimately due to them. There is as yet no semblance of an effort to rush supplies and ensure that a proper monitoring system is in place, far less any attempt to probe the diversion of stocks. The CPI(M) leaders have no qualms in siding with the corrupt ration dealers by openly saying that "unless the ration dealers indulge in corruption, they can not run their business in the given condition of our country." Not only this. The CPI(M) leaders went to the extent of addressing the agitators as "dogs" and exhorted their party men to adopt the policy of 'Like dog, like hammer'. Accordingly, in public meetings, the CPI(M) leaders declared that "though the ration dealers are thieves" yet they would "resist any attack on the ration dealers." "There is no escape," they warned, "for the agitators who attacked the ration dealers. If necessary the hands of those pointing fingers at the dealers will have to be chopped." (Dainik Statesman 17-10-07)

Thus the CPI(M) has bared its real face hidden behind the mask of Marxism-Leftism. Discernibly unnerved at the rapidity with which the movement was gaining momentum, failing to stifle the agitation with slanders and fabrications as well as by deriding the common people by gnashing teeth at the opposition, it let loose, like any other bourgeois government, its police-administration alongwith armed anti-socials upon the agitating masses to quell the rebellion by indiscriminate firing, hurling of tear gas shells, resorting to brutal baton charge and such other repressive measures claiming five lives including that of Ayub Sheikh at Labhpur, Birbhum and Dhanugopal Das in Ketugram, Burdwan. What happened in the Nababhat area, on the outskirts of Burdwan town, on October 7 gave a clear indication as to how determined is this CPI(M)-led government to suppress legitimate people's movement through brute muscle power. Thousands of CPI(M) men armed with sticks and sharp weapons brought out a procession with CPI(M) vice-chairman of Burdwan Municipality and the

CPI(M)'s zonal secretary in the forefront to, what they said, 'establish the rule of law.' The servitude of the law enforcers who showed hyperactivity in pouncing on the protesting agitators with reckless frenzy and taking many of them into custody on charges of violence was equally nauseating as the police officers present there remained mute spectators to such brazen display of brandishing unauthorized weapons in broad daylight. A well-known goon belonging to the CPI(M) was found to be giving direction to the police for opening fire on the demonstrators at Ketugram. Perhaps one needs no further proof to understand for whom tolls the bell of the CPI(M) which tries to pose as champion of the poor in the states where it is not in power and makes a show of opposition to the rabid anti-people policies of the incumbent bourgeois governments there solely for reaping electoral gains. Such shameful authority of the party over the administration in every field of governance is receiving widespread condemnation and protest for blighting the civil society from within and paving the way for it being ruled by hard core criminals and anti-social elements under the aegis of the ruling party trampling underfoot the most legitimate demands of suffering humanity.

Collapsing Public Distribution System

This crumbling of rationing system of West Bengal can not be viewed in isolation. As is experienced by the people, the PDS which was introduced under pressure of popular movement is in shambles throughout the country today forcing the poverty-stricken people to purchase from the open market at exorbitant prices whatever little pulses or cereals they need to survive. In fact, there is a concerted effort on the part of the governments, both Central and in the states, to gradually dismantle the system and shirk off the responsibility of providing essential foodgrains and other items to the people at affordable rates. The whole purpose is to make way for the big business and moneybags to reap bumper profit by open market deal on foodgrains, kerosene and such other items of extreme need

just the way there is a move afoot to handover the retail sector to the domestic and foreign monopolists

The modus operandi of decimating the PDS is no doubt unique. Deliberately, sub-standard and even rotten stuff is being supplied. Progressively, the quantity is being cut. Also the number of items to be distributed through the rationing is being systematically reduced. Kerosene, another item so essential for the poor and impoverished is scarcely available through PDS. Often, the ration card holders are harassed by saying that since there is no stock or replenishment has not been received; so the stipulated quota can not be distributed. Above all, though the PDS outlets are called fair price shops, there is a steady escalation in the ration prices so much so as to be on par with open market. The objective is very clear. Apart from other dissuading measures, planfully and subtly, a situation is created whereby people themselves out of disgust stop coming to the ration shops. Once the consumers are thus driven away, the supplies are merrily routed to blackmarket by the unscrupulous dealers-administration-ruling party nexus.

It may be mentioned in this regard that in order to prevent such mega scale malpractice and corruption in PDS, we have been demanding for long all-out state trading in foodgrains and other essential items under which there would be no private trading in these items and the government would procure from the producers at fair prices and undertake distribution at affordable prices. When it was thus necessary to ensure that the government did undertake the total responsibility of PDS, no other political party came forward to endorse our proposal. And now one finds the PDS in shambles. So there is every justified reason for the people to rise in virulent protest against such a well-knit conspiracy to gradually wind up a system that is bound to hit them below the belt and make them scramble for bare subsistence.

West Bengal shows same spectacle

West Bengal has been no exception to this sordid state of affairs. Rather, things are worse here. It is reported that not just black

marketing of siphoned out ration items within the state is thriving, such items are being smuggled out to the foreign countries neighbouring the state as well. Seeking to shift the blame to the Centre for the recent agitation, the CPI(M) top brass, in accord with its traditional carping over Delhi's "stepmotherly" attitude towards West Bengal, accused the UPA government running on its support for "huge cuts" in the allocation of foodgrain. Brinda Karat, CPI(M) Politbureau member, has shot up a letter to Sharad Pawar, the union agriculture minister, saying that, "While there may be local factors at play in some of the areas, the main reason for the current shortages in West Bengal is the huge cuts in allocations in foodgrain in both rice and wheat for APL cardholders." But the fact is that even the incoming supply does not get distributed but smuggled out to swell the coffers of the shady dealers the CPI(M) is so keen to protect and nurture. Just the other day, it was reported that in some areas of Calcutta proper, the ration material was found short by 7 to 10 kilos in sacks of 50 kg. It has also come to light that in the current year, the West Bengal Government could procure just 6.26 lakh metric tons of rice as against a target of 21 lakh metric tons. The Chairman of Food Corporation of India has informed that the offtake (lifting the foodgrain) of the state was lower against the central allocation during August and September last. "There is no problem in any district of West Bengal as far as availability of wheat and rice is concerned," he told the reporters. The Centre has a total stock of 52.43 lakh tonnes of rice and 99.11 lakh tonnes of wheat as on October 1 this year. Out of these, West Bengal has a stock of 1.70 lakh tonnes of rice and wheat under Central pool. (Economic Times, 10-10-07) While the ration card is rendered bereft of bread-and-butter value 2.33 lakh tonnes, the number of ration cards, found to be about 8.26 crores, has outnumbered the projected population of 8.15 of the state as per the 2001 Census report. It only shows to what extent the entire system is mired in corruption. To salvage image, the CPI(M) government decided to provide succour to the poor during the festive season, by making essential commodities available at a subsidized rate through PDS. But it fell flat on its face when it became apparent that there was no

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Bangladesh under de facto army rule**What caused people's valiant struggle for restoration of democracy being brought to naught**

The neighbouring country of Bangladesh has been under de facto military rule since January, 2007. It may be recalled that on the expiry of the term of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)-led government there late last year, a caretaker government was to have taken over, as per the Constitution, for conducting a fresh parliamentary election. But the ruling BNP-Jamaat-e-Islami coalition seemingly to manage another term through backdoor arrangement sought to appoint its own protégés as the head and members of the caretaker government. Even its attempt was to plant a pliant group as the members and the Chief of the Election Commission in order to manipulate the election results in its favour.

A dark regime took over

But the common people of Bangladesh having bitter experience of rigged elections on almost all earlier occasions rose up in protest and a wave of mass movement surged forth all over the country. In the face of such a massive protest, the manipulative game of BNP-Jamaat did not work out. It was at this juncture that feigning to respect the popular demand for a free and fair election under an impartial regime, Iajuddin Ahmed, the incumbent President of Bangladesh, who got elected with the support of the BNP-Jamaat coalition, unconstitutionally appointed himself as the head of the caretaker government formed on 29 October, 2006. Soon it became clear from his acts that an election conducted under him would not be free and fair but tilted in favour of BNP-Jamaat. So, all the opposition parties decided to boycott such an obvious stage-managed election. A fresh wave of protest movements gripped Bangladesh and Iajuddin was ultimately forced to resign as the head of the caretaker government. But what the people desired did not come about. Under pressure from the army, Iajuddin declared a state of emergency on 11 January, 2007. The election scheduled on 22 January 2007 was postponed. A second caretaker government, for which there is no provision in the Constitution, was formed with military backing, headed by Fakruddin Ahmed. Thus a virtual military rule was clamped behind facade of a so-called caretaker government. Immediately after assuming power, the present government suspended almost all the basic civil rights granted by the Constitution. All political activities were banned, freedom of expression curtailed, freedom of association annulled and media censorship imposed. Rudiment of democracy has thus been given a good bye. The

highhandedness of the police has been at the peak. And most significantly, the elections remain postponed indefinitely. Also from the very first day of its installation, this government concertedly targeted Begum Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina, the respective chiefs of BNP and Awami League, the two major bourgeois outfits having been hitherto sharing power alternatively, accusing them of corruption, grafting, malfeasance, misfeasance, money laundering and extortion. Both these leaders, Khaleda's sons, Tareque and Arafat Rahman Koko as well as many leaders, functionaries, ex-ministers and public office holders belonging to their parties were taken into custody. Criminal and other cases including murder cases were slapped on them. It is quite clear that the intention of this army-backed government is to thoroughly discredit the two leaders before the people, make them politically ineffective and pretend that its is a mission to cleanse the administration and polity of all aberrations and corruption. Thus it sought to elicit an acceptance from the people and douse the fire of people's movement.

Obviously two vital questions are agitating the mind of each and every democratic-minded people both inside and outside Bangladesh. First of all, when the army itself is mired in limitless corruption, how could this second caretaker government mount on its support succeed, even if temporarily, to pacify the people by directing the gun against the corruption of two former prime ministers? Next, what is the reason for such a powerful struggle of the people being brought to naught paving way for such a dark regime to take over and subvert even the trace of democracy prevalent earlier ?

Fallout of neglecting task of developing left-democratic movement

Since the days of erstwhile Pakistan, before the emergence of the nationhood of Bangladesh itself, on several occasions people of this small country did have the courage to rise en masse against oppression and injustice. They waged the historic language movement of 1952 in defence of Bengali language and culture against forcible imposition of alien language and culture of the Urdu-speaking autocratic Pakistani rulers. It was followed by the bitter street fight against the ruthless military of Pakistan to overthrow despotic President Ayub Khan of Pakistan in 1958. Then ensued the fight against cruel repressions of President Yahiya Khan and his brute mercenary killers, the Rajakars. In course of all these movements emerged the concept of Bangladeshi nationalism that finally triggered the national independence movement to fulfil the urge for coming out of the shackle of a virtually colonial status in Pakistan culminating finally in establishing independent sovereign Bangladesh. In independent Bangladesh also, people had to wage a militant movement against the hated President Ershad with a view to establishing parliamentary democratic system instead of autocratic military-presidential rule. Many other movements against communalism-fundamentalism, curtailment of civil and democratic rights, disruption in the democratic process etc. also surged forth in sequence thereafter. These militant mass movements that people of this country launched and carried through on each of these occasions spoke loudly of their laudable courage and determination in the fight against oppression and injustice. It is this spirit of combat that spurred the people there to rise against the odious move to manipulate elections and deprive them of the right to install a government of their choice free from any encumbrance and in accordance with the principles of parliamentary democracy. But what caused this setback then?

In our previous articles on the developments in Bangladesh, we had broached the question and indicated that answer has to be sought at the root. As world

capitalism has entered into a moribund decadent stage, the bourgeois political system, in either parliamentary form or a dictatorial rule, has been rendered worm-eaten, fraught with corruption and all such other vices. Side by side, to prevent the masses from breaking out in resentment and wrath against the system under revolutionary leadership, the ruling bourgeoisie of all capitalist countries, developed or not, are taking to more and more centralization of economic and political power with growing trends of fascism, strangulating the people from all ends. Unless capitalism is overthrown by revolution, there can be no respite from this stifling condition. However, till the anti-capitalist revolution is brought about, what is required is to develop intense class and mass struggles on the burning problems of people's life, extra-parliamentary and parliamentary whatever form they may be of, under correct revolutionary leadership to be conducive to revolution. Failing this, even mighty militant mass movements snatching significant victory at one stage may find them bogged in the blind alley of ultimate failure.

With this historically-determined imperativeness in mind, we, while presenting our analyses of the complex political situations in Bangladesh a year back, drew the attention to the fact that since emergence of independent Bangladesh, people could ultimately establish parliamentary democracy after a long, arduous battle against the military-presidential rule, two major bourgeois combinations led by Awami League and BNP respectively were operating and holding sway over the masses. While BNP joined hands with communal Jamaat, Awami League found parties going by the names the Bangladesh Communist Party, Workers' Party etc. joining its alliance. Notwithstanding their apparent differences and enmity, both BNP and Awami League bear the same outlook and approach on the basic question of serving the ruling capitalist class and capitalist system of the country. Hence for the oppressed people to achieve their objective of freeing themselves from the evils of capitalist rule, the

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Corrupt army hoodwinking people by sham slogan of corruption alleviation

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necessity of developing a combination of left and democratic parties and forces appeared supreme, a combination which would organize and develop militant class and mass struggles along the correct line. Only in the process of intensifying these struggles the people could expect some relief by impelling the rulers to yield to some of their demands under pressure of movement. It would be in this course that instruments of people's struggle as against the reigning bourgeois combinations that are constantly hoodwinking people with their opportunistic politics would emerge. Though leftism and Marxism-Leninism came to reckoning as an alternative thought and guiding principle in the heritage of militant mass movements of the country and left-wing politics was gradually taking roots, gaining strength and earning prestige in the society, it did not reflect correct outlook and approach in all respects and among all the left forces. Rather, it was marked by its absence. This, in turn, had been and is still causing difficulty in advancing and strengthening mass movements as conducive to the main struggle of anti-capitalist revolution. BASAD (Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal meaning Bangladesh Socialist Party), which has grown in the post-independence days in Bangladesh, has been making a consistent attempt towards these ends and trying to forge a strong unity of left and democratic forces and developing class and mass struggles under its leadership as conducive to the anti-capitalist revolutionary movement. But when BNP came to power combining with the arch-communal Jamaat, the major constituents of the eleven-party combination fell back from their tasks and joined hands with the Awami League in the name of thwarting the danger of fundamentalism-communalism paying no heed to the repeated warning of BASAD about the danger of joining hands with Awami League whose pretended allegiance to secular principles was a hoax. Its support to *Ghatak-Dalal-Nirmul movement* was superficial and meant for public consumption. They forgot that Awami League itself an offshoot of the erstwhile Muslim League has softness towards fundamentalism right from

the beginning. Besides, as a bourgeois party born and grown in the decadent stage of capitalism, it was already submerged in all concomitant vices and deviations, viz., corruption, power-madness, opportunism and rotten value. So, at a critical historic juncture of the post-independence Bangladesh, when the secular, democratic values, to the extent they were acquired during and through the freedom struggle against Pakistan, were being eroded, when religious fundamentalist thoughts and ideas were posing an increasingly menacing threat, when reign of terror was spreading its tentacles throughout the country endangering peace and security of common people, the major leftist political parties forsook this task and took up the line of joining hands with the Awami League in the name of fighting fundamentalism. Appreciating the correct political stand of BASAD, we had expressed the apprehension that in the absence of such a united front of left-democratic forces, even the glorious victories of the people of Bangladesh won through waves of mass movements at the cost of so much suffering and sacrifices would ultimately come to naught. That apprehension has come true.

Limitless corruption marked both BNP and Awami rules

While the valiant people of Bangladesh, through incessant mass movements from October, 2006 up to the beginning of January, 2007, had won a number of victories, wresting several important concessions from the unwilling hands of the rulers, foiled all conspiracies to foist a rigged election and forced President Iajuddin to relinquish the post of the head of the caretaker government that he had assumed unlawfully, the power ultimately passed onto the hands of the second caretaker government backed by the army having a dubious record. The present regime, shrewd and cunning as it is, knew that in order to elicit popular acceptance of its rule, best suited strategy would be declare crusade against the cesspool of corruption BNP and Awami League indulged in while being in the corridors of power.

It is not that the BNP and the Awami League are not corrupt or do not indulge in crass opportunism to

ride and cling to power. They are immersed in all sorts of corruption and malpractices of long standing, as a bourgeois party is bound to be in this era of decadent capitalism. For well over a decade, combinations led by the BNP and the Awami League have been ruling Bangladesh alternately. In 1991, the BNP came to power dislodging General Ershad. During the BNP regime, the parties in opposition led by the Awami League aspiring to ride to power by using popular sentiment against the pernicious pro-capitalist policies of the BNP government adopted an apparent militant posture through continuous strikes and "*abarodh*" (laying of siege) programmes. It paid them dividend. The Awami League won the 1996 election and formed the government. There was a change of government but not the rule or basic policy directive. Naturally, it now became the turn of BNP to repeat what the Awami League did earlier—playing to the gallery by perpetrating chaos in the name of movement. Striking an alliance with Jamaat, BNP regained power in the 2001 elections. Immediately Awami League went in the offensive. Thus both these bourgeois parties in order to buttress their narrow sectarian parliamentary interest went on harassing the suffering people in the name of conducting movement. None of them behaved with the least of responsibility either as ruling party or in opposition. While in power, they behaved like die-hard autocrats running steam-roller of oppression on the people, flouting all democratic norms with impunity and completely engaging in self-aggrandizement. As opposition, theirs was job to create obstruction in the functioning of the government by resisting and stalling its every act, continuously boycotting the legislature to create deadlock. None of them had even the least concern for the people. Moreover, the corruption indulged in by the BNP and the Awami League, both full of self-seekers, careerists, dishonest businessmen and blackmarketeers, crossed all thresholds of tolerance. Corrupt practices of the family members and close associates of Begum Zia and Sheikh Hasina became common knowledge. For example, during the last BNP rule, Tareque Zia, eldest son of Begum Zia, as a kingpin of corruption rackets, became a hated

name in households all over Bangladesh. He arrogated to himself all autocratic powers and virtually emerged as an extra-constitutional authority licensed to do whatever he wanted. It was becoming almost impossible for people to tolerate the wanton despotism of the Prime Minister's son. For long years, there has been no rule of law, nothing as administrative or juridical neutrality. In the rural areas, the people not only went hungry but had no security as the countryside virtually became fiefdom of the mafias belonging to the BNP and the Awami League. Thus, a state of instability, insecurity, anarchy and chaos prevailed in the country, further aggravated by the series of bloody clashes between the BNP and the Awami League that took a heavy toll on people's life.

Constrained in conducting their struggle under correct leadership due to absence of a genuine alternative, the people torn apart by ruthless capitalist exploitation alternated between the two bourgeois parties and sought solution or at least amelioration of their escalating problems through parliamentary route. But they received nothing but deprivation and derision. Naturally, grievances piled up against both of them knew no bound. The army-backed second caretaker government craftily used this accumulated wrath in its favour by confusing people with the catchy slogan of removing corruption and though Awami League from its anti-BNP standpoint as parliamentary foe was siding with the people's movement, those at the helm of this camouflaged military regime had no difficulty in raising question about the integrity and propriety of its leader, Sheikh Hasina and her close aides. Had they meant taking on corruption, they would not have singled out Hasina or Khalida but booked Jamaat leaders, Ershad and others. But that has not happened. Jamaat leaders have been left untouched. No action is being taken in regard to the several corruption cases pending against Ershad. So framing the select two is not out of any principle but from a purpose definitely having no relation with corruption alleviation.

Bourgeois class needs political stability congenial to implement class design

One more question is what impelled the ruling bourgeois class of Bangladesh to be so keen to marginalize Hasina and Khaleda,

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Not shortage but pilferage and blackmarketing behind decimating ration system

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difference between the subsidized rates listed by the state food and supplies minister and the market prices of these items. The food minister also announced that edible oil, flour and semolina would be supplied through ration shops 10 days before Id festival. One wonders where the supplies, which commenced three days after Id, have gone to.

People defy CPI(M) dictate

As already mentioned above, the most significant aspect of this agitation over a genuine cause is the spontaneity with which common people have joined it in massive numbers. For the last thirty years, we have been launching various democratic movements on the burning issues of people's life. People no doubt responded to each and every call of ours. But much of this support had been indirect or covert. They had grievances but hesitated to come out in the open because of the terror let loose by the CPI(M) which promoted a thinking among a section of the people that unless they sided with the CPI(M) and remained passive onlookers to all its wrongdoings, they could not expect to survive on the favours offered by it. In other words, to get anything, even to sustain a bare living, one has to indulge in tailism of the CPI(M). If one dares to defy, he would invite trouble including threat of physical assault, mental harassment, police interference in personal affairs and what not since it is the party which is in command of everything. The CPI(M), by selectively doling out benefits and other facilities, could also create a group of privilege seekers subservient to it that were used as propagandists and overseers in the vile game of arresting a sizeable section of the distressed populace within precincts of passivity and inactiveness. In spite of all this, if any movement did sprout up, the CPI(M) echelons in the hierarchy had no hesitation in brutally crushing the same with police and one could see for himself in the Singur brutality, Nandigram massacre and the Rizwanur episode what an abysmal depth the CPI(M) leaders could stoop to in crushing the same. Thus the CPI(M)'s bare knuckle way sat well with its game of footsie and while the people had

been fuming with rage, they were hesitant to openly turn against the CPI(M).

But this ration row has taken the lid off of the simmering cauldron. Overcoming all intimidating tactics of the CPI(M) bosses and disdaining bullet-baton of the police-RAF, the suffering people have now taken up cudgels against the 'axis of evils' ruling the state sucking their blood, flouting every legitimate demand of theirs, playing ducks and drakes with their life and livelihood and dooming them to a subhuman life condition. No doubt the heroic battle of Singur-Nandigram has helped in breaking the inertia and in providing language to these mute, stupefied, languid lips.

Need to channelise the movement along right track

But that once again brings to the fore the most important question as to how to ensure that this legitimate movement does reach its logical culmination. Such spontaneous movements no doubt have a very positive aspect in the form of massive participation, display of undaunted spirit of combat and militancy. But such sporadic movements, howsoever militant it may become and whatever sacrifices people might make in its course are prone to quick fizzling out before achieving the objective since they lack direction in absence of correct leadership and necessary organized bind. People had fought earlier also and would continue to be in the field of struggle in future as well. Sometimes these movements burst with tremendous fury, while in some phases, they remain a bit subdued and move with a slow pace. If the struggles, as repeatedly shown by Comrade Shibdas Ghosh, our leader, teacher and guide and one of the foremost Marxist thinkers of the era, remain confined to mere agitations and do not get elevated to the stage of a conscious organized ideologically imbued mass struggle under correct revolutionary leadership committed to bring about people's emancipation from the yoke of capitalist exploitation, they would not be sustainable and hence be vulnerable to premature termination or disorientation towards parliamentarian end providing fodder to the political parties and forces who usurp the benefits to

build political careers. More than often it has happened that the election-based political parties serving bourgeois class interest, by keeping popular discontent and disgust within the confines of parliamentary vote politics, took advantage of such spontaneous movements feigning sympathy for the people's cause, demonstrating apparent belligerence, taking snipes at the ruling party or combination and thereby impressing on the people that casting ballot in their favour would solve all the problems. The tremendous possibility with which the current movement against corruption in rationing system has erupted and is sweeping across the state might also fritter away if the fighting people once again fail to grasp the essence of the lessons from previous setbacks and do not come forward to steer the movement under correct revolutionary leadership. The CPI(M) now, completely sold out to the ruling monopolists, is trembling on a tottering base. If the current movement intensifies and consolidates along the right track, does catch the celerity, it is well-poised to strike a decisive blow to the CPI(M) camouflaged as Marxist-Leftist and usher in a new era of democratic mass movement in the country.

With this objective in mind, our party units have jumped into the movement mustering all their strength, building up people's committees and recruiting volunteers to organize the movement on a firm footing to ensure that such a valiant struggle of the people do not abort midway entailing frustration and despair and strengthening the hands of the ruling class. Ours has been a consistent emphasis on building up people's committees right from the grass root level so that these committees could emerge as instruments of conducting sustained movements along right track and foil the bourgeois attempt to enfeeble the struggles midstream by turning them towards petty-electioneering. The moment the people of Bankura caused the first spark, our district committee there took up the issue and threw gauntlet behind giving an organized shape to this sporadic outburst as the cause was genuine. At our call, there was an all-out strike in the district on

September 21. A citizens' committee to steer the movement against corruption in the Public Distribution System (PDS) was formed through a convention on September 26. In Birbhum district, it has been possible to wrest many of the demands under pressure of movement. News of such victories is pouring in from other districts as well. Everywhere, our local party units are engaged in steering the movement along right track. Bowing down to the people's demands, the authorities in Bankura and Birbhum districts had to give assurance of taking immediate measures to supply the pending quota, restore full-fledged PDS and punish the culprit distributors-dealers. Some of the dealers were arrested and a magisterial enquiry ordered in the Radhamohanpur firing incident. Around 180 dealers have been suspended. As a face saving, the CPI(M) state secretary had to say that "Ration supplies are either not being stocked or are being sold in the black market." To lead the struggle along right track, alongside formation of innumerable people's committees and volunteer corps right from the grass root level, a sustained ideological campaign in different forms has to be unleashed in right earnest to imbibe people with the spirit of conducting a protracted battle. An appropriate bent of mind ought to be instilled among the fighting people to elevate their legitimate movement to yet higher stages. It may be added that whatever little excess has been committed here and there in course of this sporadic outburst of the people against raging malpractice, deception and deprivation, would not have any repetition once the movement assumes proper conscious organized shape on the edifice of higher ethics and culture under correct leadership.

SUCI stands committed to people's cause

We also call upon the struggling people to embrace this correct course of movement to achieve their just demands. They must raise united voice against dismantling of PDS — a social security measure that entitles the card holder to food at subsidized rates and raise the demand for strengthening as well as extending the system. Both number

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Imperativeness of establishing revolutionary leadership on democratic movement reaffirmed

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two of its most trusted political figures on the pretext of removing corruption and reforming the administration and foist an army-backed regime on the people while the army which constitutes a principal pillar of the capitalist state structure, itself is so corrupt? An objective analysis would reveal that the motive behind this drastic move has been to fulfil some exigency of the ruling capitalist class of Bangladesh. What is it?

The ruling national bourgeoisie has over the last three decades become relatively stronger by multiplying capital at their command through unrelenting savage exploitation of the people by its own as well as collaboration with foreign monopoly capital in the form of executing contracts outsourced by the advanced capitalist countries in areas like garment manufacture etc. Now in the context of globalization, it foresees an accelerated and profitable economic activity, related particularly to coal and natural gas – in mining, extracting and setting up processing and downstream by-product plants by partnering with foreign monopoly capital. To make full utilization of the unfolding prospects, it has already embarked upon certain projects to improve infrastructure for improved commercial activity. The proposed highway connecting China, Myanmar, Bangladesh and India would lead to increased transportation and trading of commodities and related commercial activities. Ruling Bangladesh bourgeoisie also perceives that in view of the contradiction of the US and the European Union (EU) with China, profitable concessions may be obtained from the US and the EU in exchange for allowing them an increased foothold in Bangladesh and enabling them to have a stronger presence in South and South East Asia vis-à-vis China. So, in pursuit of its ambition that would entail yet more exploitation of the country people, what the ruling capitalist class needs most is a kind of political stability in bourgeois sense. By remaining engaged in perpetual mud-slinging at each other and precipitating total chaos and anarchy by giving calls of

continuous *bandh*, *avarodh* not for upholding any people's cause but to disrupt normal life for upsetting the incumbent rule, these two parties under the two recognized leaders by turn never allowed the political situation to settle and the parliamentary system to function. This instability or ongoing turmoil hindered articulation of the class desire or implement the class design of the ruling bourgeoisie who is also convinced that although both BNP and Awami League have been its faithful political agents, they under Khaleda and Hasina had been and still are quite incapable of providing the kind of political stability it requires to fulfil its class aspirations and pursue capitalist exploitation and profit making in a smooth, lasting and organized manner. Some attempts were made to identify any other alternative force and personality who could prove useful and dependable in achieving that objective. So persons like micro-credit man Mohammad Yunus once figured in the list of their choice. But such moves did not materialize, as acceptance of any such figurehead by the enraged people was ruled out. Under the circumstances, it has become a pressing need for the ruling capitalist class to bring to the fore a political force that would beget the political stability as explained above and implement its class design in the way it desires. So the search is on. It is also observed that the ruling bourgeoisie is exploring the possibility if a suitable political outfit could be created by reorganizing either BNP or Awami League sans Khaleda and Hasina. In the intervening period, it got the present government installed by using the army and enlisting the support of the bureaucracy and adopted the shrewd tactics of releasing a tirade against corruption of two former prime ministers.

Army is equally corrupt

While exposing the knavish act of the present army-backed government, what ought to be brought out sharply alongwith all other aspects is that by no means the army of a bourgeois state can be free from corruption today. The army chief Moeenuddin Ahmed has accused the political parties of giving Bangladesh "nothing good"

during the 36 years of freedom and blamed corruption for all the woes of the people, as if the military is the messiah, incorruptible, out to free the country from corruption. But that is just ridiculous. The armed forces of Bangladesh, are permeated with institutionalized corruption from the top to the bottom, as is usual in a capitalist country. In 2001, Transparency International had found that the defence deals in Bangladesh were "notoriously corrupt". There have been numerous cases of money extortion by the army personnel where citizens were forced to pay large sums in order to be spared from being arrested. There have been instances where huge sums of money and valuables seized in raids in the name of unearthing corruption were shared by the army and the police personnel as booty without reporting the seizure to the government. Not only the rank, even involvement of army chief Moeenuddin in financial scam and acts of favouritism is also reported. If the administration rots, the corridors of power stink, the society can not remain insulated. Alongside accentuating plight and penury, malaise and misery of the people, chaos all around, corruption is making decisive inroads in every sphere of the society.

Realization dawning on the people

The redeeming feature is that a section of the people of Bangladesh though initially lulled by the exhortations of the present rulers did have come back to realization within a short time. They could make out from experience that the slogan of removing corruption and streamlining and reforming the administration by the army-backed government is a hoax. More instances of corruption in the army and police have come to light. Obviously the people of Bangladesh who, as we have stated above, have again and again proved their mettle and grit in building up massive movements, standing out as a source of inspiration for the struggling masses all over the world, could not remain mum for long. Growing discontent of the people found expression in the recent student outbursts against military rule that rocked Bangladesh

where there were violent clashes between the protesting students and the police-military for several days and the clashes spread from the campuses of Dhaka, Rajshahi and Chittagong universities out on to the city streets. But again, as we have been repeatedly stressing, the movement could not gain the desired momentum in absence of correct leadership. The army-backed rulers succeeded in scuttling the movement. So there is again status quo ante. The economic distress of the people continues. Drastic curtailment of the democratic rights and civil liberties has created a stifling atmosphere. Demonstrations are outlawed and the path of building up mass movement on the people's grievances is blocked. Seething in anger and simmering in discontent, people of Bangladesh are craving for emancipation.

Important lessons to be drawn

What needs to dawn upon the fighting brethren of Bangladesh is that just by clipping wings of two political personalities like Khaleda and Hasina and making them non-entities or by reforming Awami League nor BNP, neither would Bangladesh be cleaned of the filth and dirt nor would abate their predicament and destitution. Both the above two parties as well other rightist forces owe allegiance to and are committed to safeguarding the exploitative capitalist social system which is the root of all evils. The custodians of so-called non-party government and its mentor, the army are also bent upon serving the aggregate class interest of the ruling Bangladesh bourgeoisie which runs counter to the cause of the toiling people. Hence none of these forces notwithstanding their espousals and postures as well as surfeit of promises and pretended concern would protect and advance their interest. Rather, the common people would be the target of attack of these parties and forces. The lesson of the developments in Bangladesh over the past year has been that if the bourgeois parties are saddled in leadership, then the gains made through hard struggle and sacrifices cannot be consolidated, rather they are nullified through the backdoors. When a bourgeois party, because of its position in the opposition in

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SUCI-called General Strike on 30 October

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were a few shops or a market open, there were hardly any buyers. Street hawkers and small temporary stalls make a major part of business; they were absent on the day by and large. Gariahat in south Calcutta, the area of the largest number of street hawkers, had a deserted look. Even the big shops had their shutters down. They could not but stand at one with the important demand of the strike to stop infiltration of big business and multinationals in retail trades. Bookshops in College Street area, the nerve-centre of publishers and book-sellers, were completely closed. Most of the banks and offices were closed or business-free. A print media reported next day that it had no report of any government or non-government office remaining closed. Perhaps, the reporter forgot that the government employees were also observing a successful day-long strike at the call of their own organizations. It is thus strange how the reporter could find government offices open and well-attended

While this was the picture of the



Bankura Town at noon

humming daily activities in the city of Calcutta, it was slightly different with the transport system. Yes, there were trains plying in most of the suburb-routes; but they were virtually empty, moving in and out of deserted platforms. Hundreds of thousands of people daily commute to Calcutta for their bread-earning; they include few thousands of household maids. They were conspicuously absent or skeletal in number. On roads, there were trails of government buses, trams and private buses that had unions dominated by the CITU, the trade union of CPI(M); there were auto-rickshaws too. But the vehicles ran virtually passenger-less. It was clear that the government was all set even to drain out crores of rupees

from the public exchequer, only to try to frustrate SUCI strike; CITU unions of private-owned public conveyances did not hesitate to prove an able accompaniment. And of course there were private cars on Calcutta roads. They carried that section of population whose mission of life is to oppose any and every kind of people's movements branding them nuisance to public life, meaning really nuisance to their smooth-sailing life, that knows no hardship, shows no flutter at the sky-high price rise and views life as money-and-merry-making device.

The picture was rather different in districts from north to south, west to east over the state. There private buses were off the road; government buses, as in Calcutta, were crying for passengers. Markets, shops, offices, and banks were closed. Some industries were open; though they had poor attendance. Notably, there was resounding response from the districts of Bankura, Purulia, Birbhum, Malda, Nadia, N. and S. Dinajpur and Burdwan where people's agitation against ration system had been at its peak.

It was very similar in Calcutta and districts in another respect. And that was the hostility of the government, the administration and CPI(M) party. It was apparent even before 30th during the campaign for the strike. To frustrate this strike, CPI(M) as usual used threat,

intimidation, terror and even assault on our party cadres. Later on the day of the strike, that is on 30th, the electronic media, busy in proving the strike unsuccessful, could not avoid showing how SUCI cadres were treated. So belying the words and narrations, the images from Darjeeling to South Bengal, showed deserted streets, shut-down shops and markets, buses standing still in depots. But all important junctions and spots were covered with huge deployment of police. At the sight of any squad of SUCI workers campaigning for the strike, they pounced upon the peaceful demonstrators, severely charged them with lathis, the batons, shoved them into the police cars to arrest them and in many cases, lodged

non-bailable cases against them. On the contrary, the police stood absolutely indifferent to the squad of CPI(M) workers campaigning against the strike. Over the state, 1585 SUCI workers have been arrested and at least 60 have been seriously injured from the attacks of



Police atrocity against SUCI volunteers at Coochbehar Town

CPI(M) goons and police.

In spite of all these adversities, people of West Bengal have come forward resolutely, as they have done on earlier occasions too, to make the general strike and hartal successful in every respect. They accepted it as a part of their own

movement. Workers and supporters of CPI(M), as also of other parties, have been coming out in our support since quite some time. This time they have remarkably increased in their number. Hence the general strike and hartal stands out as a step ahead in SUCI effort to continue the

sustained mass movement on democratic demands of people, on the strength of the weapons for peoples' united disciplined struggle, by forming peoples' committees and raising volunteer forces imbued with higher culture-morality and ethics.

Strike vs. 'Deadlock Bangla'

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government in connivance with its friendly Congress-led government at the Centre alongwith a section of the pliant media made every attempt to break the strike and sought to downplay the response it received from the masses is nothing but an affront to the struggling people of the state and a vivid exposure to their outright anti-people fascist character. Of course, there is nothing to be surprised in it because the ruling bourgeoisie whose orders are carried out by both the Congress and the CPI(M) for pelf and power wants to project Trinamool Congress as only opposition to the CPI(M) in the state parliamentary politics and the CPI(M) too is quite comfortable in dealing with Mamata and her party sharing identical electoral ambitions.

But the people's defiance of all these tricks and conspiracies to rally behind the strike call on 30th once

again reaffirmed the teachings of history that oppressing rulers and their lackeys do not speak the last word. More frightened they are at the growth and penetration of the genuine revolutionary force, more frantic they are in arraying their entire arsenal to deride and distract people and keep them away from the truth. The experience of the common people while wholeheartedly supporting the general strike as a symbol of firm protest against the ongoing onslaught on their life and livelihood corroborated the same in no uncertain a term. While congratulating the struggling people of West Bengal for their hearty response to the strike, Comrade Provash Ghosh, Central Committee member and state secretary of the party reiterated our commitment to uphold people's cause and take the legitimate mass struggles forward.

People must wrest their demands by sustained organized movement under correct leadership

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and quantity of items to be distributed through ration have to be increased. Regular supply of stipulated quantities has to be ensured. There should be no rise in price and necessary subsidy has to be provided. As far as possible, Government must undertake direct control of procurement, operation and distribution through its own agencies. If due to some pressing necessity, induction of private dealers can not be avoided, there should be close monitoring of their performance and in case any flaw is detected, it must be handled

firmly and the offender punished. SUCI stands committed to leave no stone unturned in taking the movement to its logical culmination. We also appeal to each and every well-meaning person to firmly stand by the just struggle of the suffering people of the state and spread the message of the movement throughout the length and breadth of the country so that people of other states, equally battered by a fractured PDS, could release a wave of united conscious organized movement against the conspiracy to trade on their hunger.

MAKE ANTI-IMPERIALIST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

**a grand success
on 28- 29 November
at Calcutta, India**

Calcutta, a city with glorious tradition of anti-imperialist struggles is scheduled to hold an anti-imperialist international conference against 'globalization, imperialism, Zionism and imperialist occupation in different countries' on 28-29 November, 2007 organized by the All India Anti-Imperialist Forum (AIAIF). It will be attended by personalities like Ramsay Clark, the erstwhile Attorney General of USA, who stood in defence of President Saddam Hussein of Iraq, Nina Andreeva, General Secretary, All Union Communist Party Bolshevik of Russia and leaders of anti-imperialist struggles of countries like Lebanon, Turkey, Syria, Algeria, Mauritius, Chad, Sudan, Bangladesh, Nepal, USA, Canada, Italy, France, Germany and others. As at present scheduled, the conference will be preceded by a massive demonstration on 27 November in front of the US consulate in Calcutta, under the leadership of Ramsay Clark and other eminent personalities and representatives from abroad as well as different states of India. On 28 November, the historic Palestine Solidarity Day, the conference will be inaugurated at 10 am at the Mahajati Sadan auditorium, itself a venue of many historic assembly. The next morning on 29 November has been earmarked for deliberations on problems of Arab countries, namely Palestine, Iraq, Lebanon and others. It being in keeping with the glorious tradition of anti-imperialist struggles of Indian people, our party, SUCI welcomes the decision of the AIAIF and appeals to every section of democratic-minded, peace-loving people of the country to come forward with all their might to make the conference a grand success.

SUCI demands stringent punishment of the guilty of Gujrat anti-Muslim pogrom

In a statement released to the press on October 27, 2007, Comrade Nihar Mukherjee, General Secretary, SUCI, said :

"The recent Tehelka exposure, *prima facie*, confirms the common belief that the gruesome post-Godhra carnage was organized by the Sangh Parivar, backed by the Modi government. This also establishes that the systematic massacre of innocent minority Muslims was a preplanned one.

We demand of the Supreme Court and the Central Government that the guilty be brought to justice without further delay.

We also appeal to all sections of the people to remain firmly united and demand punishment of the guilty."

Peasants rise against land-grab in Orissa

On 12th September, 2007 a massive demonstration and rally was organized at the joint initiative of newly formed Mittal Pratirodh Manch (MPM) and All India Krushak Khet Mazdoor Sangathan (AIKKMS). In this demonstration, thousands of men and women participated. A well decorated procession started from Bhubaneswar railway station and marched towards PMG square. At the lower PMG square a meeting was held presided over by Muralidhar Sardar, who is also the president of the Mittal Protirodh Manch. In this meeting Shambhunath Naik, the SUCI MLA

addressed the gathering and urged the people to continue their movement till the withdrawal of MOU signed by state Government with Mittal. As per the MOU, the government will hand over more than 8,400 acres of land to the Mittals for an SEZ in Keonjhar district. Raghunath Das Orissa state secretary of AIKKMS, in course of his speech called upon the affected people to organize militant resistance movement against the anti people attitude of the Government and to protect the high yielding valuable land. The rally was also addressed by Surendra Mallik, an AIKKMS leader.

Bangladesh under de facto army rule

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parliamentary politics, engages in and comes to the forefront of mass movements, it exercises leadership not for steadfastly leading it to its logical conclusion, but for channelising the people's grievances in such a way that it can capitalize on the same to make gains in election politics. The experience in Bangladesh has been that bourgeois leaderships have again and again muddled up mass movements in this way.

Need of the hour

So, the need of the hour is to launch a fierce united organized movement demanding end of the present de facto army rule, withdrawal of emergency, restoration of all democratic rights and immediate holding of free and fair elections and gradually scale this movement to new heights. The struggle must be sustained till the demands are achieved. Accordingly, congenial bent of mind must be

developed among the fighting people and people's committees as instruments for conducting the struggle on a prolonged basis ought to be set up right from the grass root level. This movement must be built up by forming broadest possible unity of the people under the leadership of genuine left forces. In the course of development of this movement, due care has to be taken and emphasis given on further consolidation of left forces. People must expedite releasing the movement in this direction and hasten the process of emergence of genuine revolutionary leadership. It is heartening to note that a move has been made to consolidate the left and democratic forces by forming a Democratic Left Alliance at the initiative of the BASAD (Bangladesh Socialist Party). We hail this development and hope that this effort will further crystallize and gain momentum so that the valiant struggle of the people of Bangladesh becomes victorious.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF : NIHAR MUKHERJEE