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Hindutva zealots pitting people against people articulating sinister bourgeois design

It is probably one of the worst violence in the history of Orissa if one counts it at all as a communal clash. After Swami Laxmananda Saraswati, the octogenarian VHP leader engaged for the last 45 years in re-conversion of Christian tribals and dalits to Hinduism in Kandhamal district of Orissa was, along with four of his associates, gunned down under mysterious circumstances on 23 August, 2007, at his Jalespetta Kanyashram (Orphanage for girls), the Hindutva zealots of Sangh Parivar like the VHP, RSS and Bajrang Dal, hitherto waiting for an opportune moment to light a communal inferno did not wait for even a moment to lead a violent attack on the minority Christian community alleging that they had committed the crime. Though 'Maoist' groups have claimed responsibility for the killings, the Sangh Parivar is pointing fingers at the Christian

community to buttress its ulterior motive. Violence has now spread to adjacent Boud, Kalahandi and Malkangiri districts. Though as per government report, the death toll is 60, but with more and more decomposed bodies being retrieved from jungles the number may be shockingly high. Violence has left more than 20,000 people homeless. Around 11,000 people are still living in relief camps. Several churches were vandalized. A 28 year old Nun was brutally assaulted, gang raped and paraded naked for hours in broad daylight in the presence of a strong contingent of police force, but the ruling establishment of the state and a section of vernacular media tries to downplay such a heinous and dastardly act as a natural and inevitable Hindu reaction to large-scale proselytism by the Church and the killing of Laxmananda. After a

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Comrade Nihar Mukherjee's message of solidarity to National Conference of Workers World Party

[Comrade Nihar Mukherjee, General Secretary of SUCI has sent on 3 November, 2008, the following message of solidarity to the Workers World Party, USA, on the occasion of its National Conference of the November 15-16, 2008.]

On the occasion of the National Conference of the Workers World Party of the United States of America, I, on behalf of my Party, the Socialist Unity Centre of India, send you warm revolutionary greetings and convey our best wishes for the success of your Conference and for the progress of your struggle. We admire your endeavour to build up militant working class movements on the American soil overcoming all odds. Your effort to hold high the banner of Marxism-Leninism in the bastion of capitalism is an inspiration to working class parties of countries all over the world. Your Conference is being held at a time when the economic collapse has brought calamity to the American people and millions are facing total ruin. USA is in turmoil over the economic catastrophe, on top of the disastrous consequences of its wars of aggression and intervention. The

effects of the financial meltdown have spread all over the capitalist world which is convulsed with this severe economic crisis. Even the bourgeois economists are admitting that the effects of the present crisis would be more far-reaching in intensity and span than the great depression of the 1930s and they are at a loss to find ways to contain it.

After instigating the counter-revolutionary overthrow of socialism in Soviet Russia and the East European countries the capitalist class was trumpeting the final triumph of capitalism and was proclaiming that socialism is dead and buried, that Marxism is a failed ideology. Exposing all these utterances as simply rubbish and slanderous, the present crisis has brought into open the utterly putrid skeleton of the totally moribund capitalist system, the vicious circle into which it is inescapably entrapped, and the gasping state of its existence. At the same time it has once again proved beyond any debate how correct and infallible were Marx's scientific analysis and conclusions about the crisis of capitalism. We strongly feel that the need of the hour for all the revolutionaries of the world is to strive to convincingly demonstrate to the people the infallibility of Marxism-Leninism, to carry its teachings to them and to educate them about the real character of the present crisis and the way-out based on the tenets of Marxism-Leninism.

We also note and perhaps you too have noted it, that in all the

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SUCI Calcutta District Committee observes 91st November Revolution Day at Esplanade, Calcutta on 12 November, with Comrades Sukomal Dasgupta, Asit Bhattacharyya and Provash Ghosh, all Central Committee Members of SUCI on the dais. Comrade Debaprasad Sarkar, MLA and Member, West Bengal State Committee, presided and Comrade Provash Ghosh was the main speaker.

Only surge of genuine democratic movement can keep arch communalism at bay

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spree of violent and barbaric attacks, thousands of mortally scared homeless and hapless Christians trying to come back to their deserted villages are being forcibly re-converted at gunpoint by VHP, RSS and Bajrang Dal storm troopers. A few have been killed for resisting the Hindutva communalists whereas thousands have already migrated from the state. The scourge of communal hatred and brutality the country is facing is thus compounded by what seems to have become a persistent policy of inaction on the part of the law enforcement agencies, from the government down to the policeman. The BJP-BJD coalition government of the state, instead of taking necessary administrative measures to stop the violence and rounding up the culprits is maintaining a conspicuous silence. So the situation is sliding from bad to worse and the communal Sangh Parivar is having a free hand in carrying out its sinister mission to spew venom against the religious minorities, persecute them with alacrity. Notwithstanding the fact that such outbreak of communal conflagration and orchestrated anti-minority hostility is a common feature in capitalist India today because of increased indulgence by the power that be to rabid communal forces, a little acquaintance with the specific backdrop in which the current violence erupted with such ferocity would enable one to locate the precise reason behind it.

Socio-economic background

Kandhamal was made a separate district on 1st April, 1994. It is named after the *Kondhs* who comprise more than 51.96% of the 6.5 lakh population. About 40% of the population belongs to the scheduled caste category. But since the converted scheduled caste people are not recognized as a caste group, the census report 2001 pegged it at around 17%. Percentage of Christians in Kandhamal is 25% compared to 2.44% in the whole of Orissa.

Kandhamal is the poorest district of Orissa, the poorest state of Indian Union. This district is home to one of the primitive and aboriginal tribes of India, the *Kutia Kondhs* and they constitute the

majority of the population. Apart from the *Kondhs*, a few thousand caste Hindus and relatively affluent business class, mostly confined to urban areas of the district, the other major chunk of the population spread over whole of the district belong to scheduled caste (*Pana*) community. Both the tribals and scheduled castes, except a small group of scheduled castes called Oriya *Panas*, caste Hindus and business class, speak in the *Kui* dialect unique to the district. Irrespective of their caste and religious affiliation, people in this scenic place, described as Kashmir of Orissa by many, live in abject poverty, destitution and backwardness. There are no industries, no railway lines. Even buses are rare. Access to health care, education and modern modes of livelihood is a day-dream for the people here. For ages, people — both *Kondhs* and scheduled castes — traditionally depend on forest produce and shifting cultivation to earn their livelihood; this practice continues even after more than six decades of independence. The only life-line, window to the outside world, access to modern health care facility and education is the Missionary sponsored schools and hospitals. In spite of appalling poverty and backwardness since time immemorial the two major communities of Kandhamal lived in perfect harmony with mutual co-operation and social dependence.

But this social tranquility of Kandhamal was broken in 1830s with the entry of British imperialists into the area. The British imperialists entered the area under the pretext of stopping alleged human sacrifice (*Meria* in local parlance) by the *Kondhs* and of “civilizing the uncivilized”. The entry of British forces into Kandhamal met with fierce resistance of the *Kondhs* and this is recorded in history as the famous *Kondh* rebellion. Such was the doggedness of *Kondh* resistance that it took three decades for the British forces to push the “belligerent” *Kondhs* deep into the jungles and consolidate their position in the whole area. The scheduled caste people fought the British forces shoulder to shoulder with their *Kondh* brethren. But in order to crush *Kondh* resistance British imperialists tried to drive a wedge

between the two communities and the educational institutions and hospitals established in the area around 1860s by the Christian missionaries were used to the hilt for the purpose. This was nothing but the infamous ‘divide and rule’ policy of the British imperialists. With the aim of precipitating discord and mistrust among the two communities, scheduled caste people were given preference in the educational institutions, though officially these were open to everyone. Moreover, the nomadic lifestyle of the *Kondhs* had proved to be an impediment in so far as their access to modern education and other facilities provided by the Christian missionaries was concerned.

Though missionaries had entered Kandhamal towards mid-eighteenth century, the first Church was established at *Katingia* of Kandhamal in 1880 and the first ever “conversion” to Christianity in that area was also recorded in the same year. The ruthless oppression of upper caste Hindus, though a microscopic minority in the district, on these hapless tribal and scheduled caste people, side by side the selfless sacrifice and love for the poor and suffering of the missionaries in those days, who provided benefits of education and health care to these poor people, impelled more and more scheduled caste people to embrace Christianity. Subsequently the *Kondhs* in large numbers with a hope of a better living also got attracted towards Christianity. But contrary to the vicious propaganda unleashed by RSS and its associates, most of the scheduled caste people of the district have not been converted. Rather it would be more correct to say that majority of Christians of the district belong to scheduled caste community. However, despite all efforts by the British imperialists to create animosity between two communities and spread of Christianity, the social equilibrium and mutual trust between the two communities could not be ruined. Both the Christian and non-Christian tribal and scheduled caste people continued to follow their traditional rituals of worship.

Seed of discord

In fact the seed of discord

between *Kondhs* and scheduled caste people was sown by the anti-people and divisive reservation policy enacted by the Congress government led by Jawaharlal Nehru after independence. Through this policy only the Christian tribal people got the benefit of reservation meant for tribal communities as a whole in educational institutions and government jobs. But this benefit of reservation was not made available to the Christian scheduled caste people. Though it is a common experience that reservation as a tool of social and economic equality has proved an abject failure and has only helped the power-greedy politicians to buttress their vote bank politics, Christian tribal and Christian scheduled caste people failed to see through the sinister design of the Indian government subserving bourgeois class interest that seeks to keep the toiling people divided over caste, creed and religion. Exploiting the genuine feeling of deprivation of the scheduled caste people who embraced Christianity, casteist organizations claiming to represent respective caste and community interests sprang up in the district, aided and abetted by the interested quarters and vested interest. The so-called scheduled caste leaders blamed it on the tribals and started demanding tribal status for all *Kui* speaking people of the district. On the other hand, the so-called tribal leaders started organizing the tribal people by impressing upon them that scheduled tribe status for Christian scheduled caste community would deprive them of their due share in the economic pie.

Entry of RSS and communalization of Kandhamal

In this backdrop, RSS led by Laxmananda Saraswati entered Kandhamal around the mid-1960s. With his saffron robe of a Hindu *Sadhu* (Saint) and self proclaimed reincarnation of *Lord Parasuram* (*a character of Hindu mythology*), Laxmananda targeted the vast majority of *Kondh* tribals who had not embraced Christianity, for propagation of communal ideas. The process of conversion of tribals into Hinduism started and nature worshiper *Kondhs* were encouraged to follow and practice Hindu rituals.

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Delhi and Madhya Pradesh on the eve of Election

Alongwith other four states, Delhi and Madhya Pradesh are going to polls. While election for Delhi Assembly is scheduled on 29 November, 2008, electorates of Madhya Pradesh will exercise their franchise on 27 November. At present, Delhi is ruled by Congress while Madhya Pradesh is having a BJP government. Both BJP and Congress, the main two bourgeois contenders for power, have begun their customary propaganda on the eve of elections accusing each other of incompetence to rule, utter failure in solving basic problems of 'roti, kapda and moukan' (bread, clothing and shelter) of the 'aam aadmi' (common people) and projecting themselves as most suitable for providing good governance as well as ameliorating the plight of the people. Other bourgeois outfits are also in the fray with the same slogan and most of them are frantically trying to forge some kind of alliance with either of the two big bourgeois parties, overtly or covertly, to mark their presence in the rendezvous of bourgeois power politics. The pseudo-Marxists like the CPI (M), CPI also, under the garb of leftism are engaged in the same ball game. And the bourgeois media and propaganda machine have also started their usual 'poll coverage and election bulletins' to ensure that the people's choice remains confined to these bourgeois power-mongers and at best, in the name of change, the baton of incumbency changes hand. But the question that must stir the minds of the toiling people, back-broken by the increasing assaults of ruling capitalism in every walk of life, is that whether such alteration between Congress and BJP or, for that matter, any third force professing the same bourgeois politics of pelf and power, would bring any succour to them or they ought to raise their political consciousness to fathom the depth of the problems tearing them apart and chart out the right course of action to redress the same.

Current socio-political scenario

These elections are taking place at a time when the life of the people is devastated by ruthless capitalist exploitation. Everyday, the situation is turning from bad to worse. Unemployment is soaring. Retrenchment, lay-off is mounting. Peasants are losing land, not getting remunerative price for their produce. Prices of essential commodities including pulses, rice, wheat, sugar, oil, fruits and vegetables are so spiralling as to elude affordability of the impoverished. Thousands of starving peasants as well as jobless workers are committing suicide. According to the report of the government constituted Arjun Sengupta Committee, 80% of the population in our country is not having an income to spend 20 rupees per day for survival. The gap between a handful of rich and myriads of wretched is widening every moment. In fine, bulk of the population is doomed to a sub-human life condition. With unfolding of a severe global economic crisis, the situation is slated to become still worse.

On the other hand, there is increasing attack on the basic human rights. Any legitimate protest agitation or democratic movement is ruthlessly crushed. Attacks on women and children are increasing.

It is a common experience that the entire administration, including police and judiciary, only work in favour of the rich, affluent and touts of power politics. Justice is denied to the poor and downtrodden. Over and above, the rabid communal-parochial-chauvinist forces are raising their ugly heads with the blessings of the power that be, fomenting divisive mentalities among the oppressed and repressed, precipitating disaffection among communities, disrupting the harmony of the people and instigating fratricidal feuds and communal bloodbaths. This is not only tearing asunder the very fabric of the country but bringing on a situation where the poor people are constantly haunted by a sense of fear and insecurity. Thus, the suffering is compounded. With the current set of electoral reforms, the election process controlled by money-mafia-media power is poised to become still more farcical. The stage is clearly set for virtual introduction of two-party system so that people alternate between two representatives of the same exploiting ruling class and thereby allow only the outright anti-people bourgeois policies to be articulated and implemented by this or that servitor party or combination of the rulers. In other words, incumbents in the government may change, but government policies remain

unaltered. For example, we have seen Congress and BJP taking snipes at each other and pretend to be so caring for the people. But when it comes to the question of pursuit of policies, there is hardly any difference.

It is in this backdrop that the electorates have to view the coming elections and decide their action. It is pertinent to mention that if one chooses to remain indifferent about politics or refuses to draw oneself into rational analysis of the political situation, it will only strengthen forces of reaction and the predicament will not only continue unabated but accentuate. So, as responsible citizen of the country, one must take an informed conscious decision even while exercising one's franchise.

Pre-poll situation in Delhi

When all these problems stemming from exploitative capitalist rule are making people bleed white, the bell is tolling for another round of Assembly elections. As capital of the Indian state, Delhi occupies a prime position in the country's politics. Naturally, elections to the Delhi Assembly assume much significance. After Delhi was granted statehood, it is being alternatively ruled by BJP and Congress. But every habitant of Delhi knows that there has been no discernible difference in the rules of these two most trusted outfits of the ruling bourgeoisie. There is no abating of spiralling prices, no improvement in the law and order situation, no respite from continuous incidents of molestation and harassment of women. Women are not safe even at home. Delhi has become the capital of crime against women. With the intention to crush the cultural and ethical backbone of the youth, they are being persistently bombarded with obscene literature, songs inciting perverse proclivities and vulgar films filled with overdose of prurient sex and wanton violence. Youths are being pushed to unethical means of livelihood. The repercussions are all before us. Rape, murder and looting are on the increase. Even innocent children are not spared from assaults.

All-pervading corruption is on the rise. So are the incidents of

illegal construction and bulldozing of slums. Though the city is now dazzling with wide roads, plethora of flyovers, tall skyscrapers and expensive metro-rail, the living standard of the poor and middle class continues to plummet. Though the international crude price has reduced by more than 100%, there is no downward revision of fuel tariff forcing the common people to shell out extra money in transport as also in purchase of essential commodities. The Public Distribution System is defunct. Large-scale hoarding and black-marketing are making things still worse.

Transportation is becoming increasingly unaffordable for the masses. Instead of improving the transportation facilities of DTC and making it cheaper, the corporation is being systematically downgraded. Big companies with a fleet of hundreds of buses are being considered for grant of contracts to ply buses on Delhi roads. Certainly, it will make the same unaffordable for the vast majority. Metro railway is still far beyond the reach of labouring masses.

Lakhs of eligible students have been denied admission at all levels particularly in higher education. Schools lack not only the basic amenities like desk-benches, water, electricity, and toilet but are also suffering from the shortage of teachers. Recently, the government has announced a no detention policy up to class seven. This policy is aimed at destroying the scope of any higher education to the child after that by making him incapable. With the sole objective of polluting the young minds, a scheme of sex education has been introduced in primary schools. Being faced with intense resistance of the people, now attempts are made to introduce the same through surreptitious means with different names. The recent incidents of rape and atrocities against school children show that even minor girls are not safe within the school compounds.

There is no semblance even of healthcare to the urban populace who cannot meet the hefty tariff of private hospitals. Conspiracy is going on to hand over the healthcare delivery system to the multinationals. Already many

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Delhi has become a city of crimes

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services inside the hospitals like laboratory, CT scan, etc., have been privatised. A conscious attempt is going on to degrade the government hospitals to create apathy among the middle class by systematic negligence so that an atmosphere conducive to privatization can be created, as was done in other Public Sector Units. Water, which is the most basic necessity of healthy life is also being considered by the government for handover to private players. The Congress government has hiked the rate of water tax by six times. Still in most of the colonies people are faced with long queues for water.

In power sector, assets worth billions of rupees, created with public money and enthusiasm, were sold to Tatas and Reliance for a pittance. At the time of privatisation, it was argued that this would enhance the quality of electricity distribution and make it cheaper. But the situation today is totally opposite. Electricity cost has already been hiked to 300%. Still load-shedding has become the order of the day because of the deficit of 300 Megawatts per day. But Tata and Reliance are not happy even then. The Congress or BJP, whichever party comes to power will carry out these policies in the interest of the monopoly houses because all these are parties of the ruling capitalist class.

Millions of people in Delhi are residing in buildings found to have been constructed illegally. At a time when hundreds of crores of rupees are being spent for beautification of Delhi in the name of Commonwealth Games, these people are denied even the minimum amenities for life. This part of Delhi where a large section of people lives has no health facilities, water, schools or sewerage. Mountains of dirt and garbage are accumulating there, creating a breeding ground for insects like mosquito and flies. Dangerous diseases like Dengue and Malaria are spreading due to this. The only intervention the Government has done is restricting the spread of this rather 'uncomfortable' news.

There is no difference among the parliamentary parties irrespective of hues in so far as pursuit of pro-capitalist anti-people political line is concerned. While the pseudo-lefts like the CPI (M),

CPI and regional casteist parties like BSP are mouthing protest against the anti-people policies of Congress or BJP, the fact is that they are all pursuing the same set of policies in the states where they are in power. Any voice of dissent or protest is being identically muzzled by all these forces with the help of police-administration or party mafias. Incidents are not short in number where those dared to oppose them have ended up in losing their lives.

Like in any other state of this country, capitalists have opened their coffers overflowing with black money to all their entrusted parties; Congress, BJP, BSP, and SP in Delhi as well. All these parties are, overtly or covertly, indulging in divisive politics of casteism, communalism, linguistic fanaticism, parochialism and regionalism to secure votes. The CPI (M) and other so-called Marxists-Leftists are traversing no different path either. Instead of organising all sections of people against these attacks and taking genuine initiative to forge desired left-democratic alternative to this pernicious bourgeois politics, they too are hobnobbing with this or that party to get seats and for that are not hesitating to rally behind the divisive forces and slogans as well.

Being the only genuine revolutionary party of the working class in our country, the SUCI right from its inception has been struggling against the capitalist class and its trusted parties and their anti-people pro-capitalist policies. With its limited resources the SUCI has emerged as the voice of the common people in 22 states. In Delhi also our party with all its might is organising mass movements in different areas. We have been exhorting the suffering people to understand that a change of incumbent in the government will not ameliorate the situation. It is alone the power of people's movement that can exert pressure on the ruling class and its servitors to concede to people's demands. To strengthen this movement, it is incumbent to make SUCI candidate victorious in the polls.

Pre-poll scenario of Madhya Pradesh

While Delhi government is in hands of Congress, Madhya Pradesh (MP) is having a BJP government. Everyone is aware that the main

plank of BJP's politics is communalism, to be precise, Hindu-communalism. As the political face of RSS, BJP's strategy is to polarize people on communal line and then encash on the divide by cornering Hindu votes. What BJP emphasizes on is its open hate campaign against the minority Muslim and Christian communities, and the fomenting of Hindu sentiment by promoting revivalist thoughts, crass fundamentalism and obsolete creed so that people remain enfeathered in blind faith and bigotry and cast their votes with this warped mindset. Its current tenure in Madhya Pradesh has been no exception. The sole aim of BJP ministers and leaders has been to keep the state communally surcharged. In fact, they have attempted to 'saffronize' the whole administration by saddling arch communal elements in the key posts of bureaucracy. It is reported that even priests have been given appointment in these important administrative positions so that policy executions can be absolutely on the declared communal line of RSS-BJP. As a reaction to this, some Muslim as well as Christian fundamentalist forces are also trying to raise their ugly heads. Though Congress, on the other hand, has been trying to woo the minority section by projecting itself as 'secular', the fact is that it too is tacitly playing on community sentiment to succeed in its objective. But in Hindu-majority areas, the Congress leaders are openly peddling what is called 'soft Hindutva' to compete with BJP. Both BJP and Congress are going to the polls nurturing the communal polarization so that this overrides other burning issues wreaking havoc in people's life. Veteran Congress leaders have also been found to openly incite casteist sentiments to divide Hindu votes and outmanoeuvre BJP in the polls. Sporadic incidents of communal skirmishes are quite common in this communally sensitive state as functionaries and touts of both these parties are always on the lookout for a suitable opportunity to precipitate communal violence so as to reap electoral benefits. But of late, dimension has been added to that because of open patronization of Hindutva forces by the government and their engineering communal strife. In August this year when the state of Jammu and Kashmir was in flames centering round precipitated

Amaranth Shrine controversy, the Sangh Parivar zealots spared no time in raising the pitch of Muslim bashing and stoking the fire of communal conflagration in which two members of minority community lost their lives. Recently after the communal clashes broke out in Orissa and Karnataka, spearheaded by RSS and associates, Sangh Parivar hoodlums vandalized churches in Jabalpur. In Burhanpur district, 10 persons were killed. Though the BJP leaders are trying to distance themselves from these ghastly incidents, a BJP leader is quoted in *Hindustan Times* to have said, "This will help us through a consolidation of Hindu votes". The role of Congress in this respect is also despicable as its leaders, besides issuing some customary statements, did nothing to quell the violence. As both the parties are ridden with internal squabbles and feud and plagued by usual dissent over ticket distribution, floor crossing and desertions, group conflicts are also nakedly surfacing with all rival factions claiming to be 'true' proponents of Hindutva or so-called secularism making the scenario yet more murky while people's issues are kept on the backburner.

As we have said earlier, both BJP and Congress are vying with each other to prove their unquestionable loyalty to the ruling capitalist class. The BJP-led Madhya Pradesh government organized this year a series of investors' meet in five major cities to cajole the capitalists. The government has signed over 100 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the capitalist investors promising them cheap electricity, water and land. It has passed a Facilitation Act to confer legality to such 'gifts' to the capitalist owners. Fertile agricultural land in a place called Powarkheda in Hosangabad district is being forcibly acquired for handing over to the large corporate houses by paying a price of just Rs 3 lakhs per acre when the ruling market price by most conservative estimation is Rs 25 lakhs per acre. It is learnt that under 'private-public partnership', a euphemism for private projects set up with plethora of concessions from the government, a 'logistic hub' would be developed there. Likewise, for the purpose of setting up 'Special Economic Zones',

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Kandhamal : Ugly Bourgeois conspiracy to pit people against people

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Under the guise of a religious preacher, Laxamananda's main propaganda plank was that the Christian scheduled castes were out to grab government benefits from the tribals. Hence, to prevent the Christians from doing so, the tribals need to follow Hindu rituals, become Hindus and organize themselves against the former. Apart from this, Laxmananda used anti-cow slaughter movements and re-conversion ceremonies throughout the district to spread vile Hindutva doctrine and precipitate communal disaffection. As a reaction to this, a section of the Christian religious leaders also aped Laxmananda and called upon the Christians to combine for protecting their religious identity. This is how communal battle line was drawn under the aegis of the *agent provocateurs*.

The first communal riot, though on a very small scale compared to the present one was engineered by Laxmananda and his followers in 1987 at Katingia, symbolically at the place where the first church of the area was established about 107 years back. The then Congress government of the state instead of dealing with the rioters with a firm hand buckled for fear of losing Hindu votes, and this emboldened Laxmananda to continue communal propaganda and further polarize the whole district along communal line. The communal riot of Katingia was followed by an organized caste riot between *Kondhs* and scheduled caste people in 1994 which engulfed the whole district and continued for more than a month. Twenty-five people lost their life in it.

The caste riot of 1994 more or less completed the process of communal polarization, and the whole district of Kandhamal had been sitting on the precipice of a volcano since then. The BJD-BJP coalition government in the state gave Laxmananda and RSS the opportunity they were searching for. On 24 December, 2007 they floated a rumour that Laxmananda had been attacked fatally by Christians and his condition was grave. To lend credence to the claim, Laxmananda first got himself admitted to MKCG Medical College Hospital, Berhampur and then forced the doctors to refer him to the medical college and hospital at Cuttack. At the instigation of RSS and its associates, communal strife broke

out in different parts of the state including Kandhamal. But soon the whole story of Laxmananda's fatal injury was found to be false and hence the communal conflagration could not be intensified in spite of all efforts by BJP, RSS, VHP and Bajrang Dal. But this time, after the killing of Laxmananda, the long cherished plan of the Hindutva brigade to create large-scale communal riot in the state could be fulfilled. We have mentioned earlier that the killing of Laxmananda is shrouded in mystery and only a thorough investigation by a high-level and impartial agency can unravel the truth.

In the meantime the report of the National Commission on Religious & Linguistic Minorities chaired by Justice Ranganath Mishra, former Chief Justice of India, was released on May 21, 2007. It recommended that benefits of 'reservation' be extended to *dalit* converts to Christianity and Islam and let there not be any religious tag to scheduled caste status. Naturally this recommendation had given a fillip to the demand for reservation for converted Christians resulting in further straining of the relation between the two communities. Thus the stage was set for a long-drawn caste conflict and it was subsequently exploited by power hungry political parties to win elections, thus widening the mental chasm between the two communities.

Role of the Naxalites

Not only the communal and caste organizations and the bourgeois political parties but the Naxalite groups, too, in their bid to get a foothold in the district have played a divisive role in polarizing Kandhamal along communal lines. Many such groups after being chased by the Andhra Pradesh government had sneaked into Kandhamal around the year 2000. They projected the tribal *Kondhs* as the exploited and branded the scheduled caste people as the exploiters alleging that the latter had grabbed the land of the tribals. On the basis of such a totally incorrect subjective analysis of class conflict in the district, the Naxalite elements started an armed campaign for reclaiming the land from the scheduled castes owners. But the allegation was baseless as not the scheduled class people but only the rich business class people constituting a microscopic minority

of the district population owned 35 percent of total recorded arable land in the district and they were the real usurpers of tribal land. But turning a blind eye to this hard fact, the Naxalites as well as the Hindu communalists continue to accuse scheduled caste people as the usurper of tribal land. Had the Naxalites even a scant regard for Marx, Engels, Lenin or Mao Zedong, they would have organized the poor people irrespective of their caste and religion and defeated the sinister design of the communalists. Instead, in the name of following the teachings of great Mao Zedong, they also indulged in pitting one section of the poor against the other, thus ultimately strengthening the class politics of the ruling bourgeoisie that the RSS and its associates are articulating so menacingly.

Baseless allegations of RSS and associates

The allegation that tribal land has been grabbed by poor scheduled caste people is not correct. If one refers to government records, it will be proved beyond doubt that this land has been acquired by the rich business class and not the scheduled caste people as a whole as it is made out to be. Moreover if such allegations are found to be true against any member of the scheduled caste community, the government agencies are free to take steps in accordance with the law. But that does not permit anyone to spit venom against the community as a whole. But the Hindu communalists are exactly doing that. The second allegation against the Christian scheduled caste community is that though they are not entitled to reservation, they have used large number of false caste certificates to obtain government jobs. Anyone conversant with the sad state of affairs in the country would agree that such fraudulent practice is not uncommon among all other communities, including the upper caste Hindus. But the VHP, RSS and their ilk are motivatedly trying to demonize a particular community for this. The third allegation that by converting to Christianity the scheduled caste people have become rich in comparison to Hindus of the same village is equally baseless. The plight and penury of the Christian scheduled caste people are no different from their Hindu brethren, both crushed

under the grinding wheel of ruthless capitalist exploitation. Around 80 percent of this Christian scheduled caste community even today is mostly landless and migrant labourers, finding it hard to make both ends meet. Finally, to rebut the accusation that conversion to Christianity by force and allurements is a major cause of the present communal riot, we just want to quote Swami Vivekananda. In a fitting reply to such allegations, he said "... for want of sympathy from the Hindus, thousands of Pariahs in Madras are turning Christians. Don't think this is simply due to pinch of hunger; this is because they do not get sympathy from us." (Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda Vol. 7 page 246). Vivekananda further added, "Why amongst the poor of India so many are Mohammedans? It is nonsense to say they were converted by the sword. It was to gain their liberty from the... *zeminders* (feudal lords) and from the... priest..." (Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda Vol. 8 page 330). We do not know whether the Hindutva zealots would dare to brand Swami Vivekananda as anti-Hindu for having commented like this.

Kandhamal is not an isolated incident

Kandhamal is no doubt in flames, but it is not an isolated incident of whipped up communal frenzy. In fact, the country is increasingly churned by waves of communal-parochial-chauvinist hysteria and strife which besides taking a heavy toll of innocent lives, are ripping through the solidarity of the various sections of toiling masses. From Kashmir to Kanyakumari and Maharashtra to Assam, the soil is stained with blood, rife with communal-parochial-casteist tension. It is so volatile a situation that any time, anywhere, a single spark can cause a prairie fire. Exploiting to the hilt the accumulated wrath and ire of the people against escalating oppression and repression in every walk of life, the arch communal and other divisive forces enjoying patronage and backing of the ruling bourgeoisie are, so to say, on a rampage. These disruptive elements are strategically releasing a slander campaign in order to make one section believe that it is the other section or community who are

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The U.S. presidential election — a new political situation rife with potential for working class solidarity and workers' struggle

By Larry Holmes

There is a new political situation in the U.S. and in the world. Even though Barack Obama's sweeping electoral victory was not entirely unexpected, now that it has happened—the reality of it—the way in which it demonstrated to the world that something big has changed about the working class in the U.S., is so stunning that many still find it hard to believe.

The long history of racism in the U.S. seemed to preclude for the foreseeable future the election of an African-American president. The meltdown on Wall Street and the gravest capitalist crisis in 75 years beat back the bigotry that could have stopped Obama's victory.

A record-breaking turnout on the part of African-American and Latin@ voters, and a tidal wave of young voters—including tens of millions of white workers from Virginia and North Carolina, Indiana, Ohio and Pennsylvania—

cemented the multinational electoral coalition that made history.

Of course, the capitalist ruling class of the U.S. is still firmly in charge. The loyalty of the two ruling class political parties, including the president elect, to U.S. imperialism is still intact.

True, much of the U.S. ruling class had concluded that Obama might be the radical makeover that their government needed to deal with the crisis ahead. But that fact cannot negate the role or the feelings of the masses in this phenomenon.

In the African-American communities from Chicago to Harlem to the still Katrina-devastated New Orleans there is elation over the outcome of this election, even a feeling of liberation from a measure of the racism born out of slavery, then cultivated into an unofficial second-class status, enforced by terror at the hands of the police, prisons or the KKK.

Indeed hundreds of thousands of people everywhere, for the most part spontaneously, took to the streets after Obama was declared the winner and the first African-American president of a country built on African slave labor.

And the celebrating was by no means exclusive to the African-American community. Everywhere, both within and beyond the borders of the U.S., people of every race and nationality poured into the streets crying, yelling and embracing strangers as if a long terrible, reactionary, life-stifling occupation, exemplified by the Bush regime, had finally come to an end.

Will this election restore people's faith in the U.S. capitalist system and government at the very time that exposing the system and government is so critical to forging the mass struggle against capitalism? Perhaps for a little while, but it won't last long.

In the coming days and months,

the mass suffering brought on by the deepening of the worldwide capitalist economic crises, and the reality of the continuing U.S. wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere, will betray the truth of what has or has not changed as a result of the presidential elections.

The inevitable revelation of how much change the incoming U.S. government represents, and how the mass of working and oppressed people in the U.S. and everywhere react to that revelation, will to a large degree provide the content of the world struggle against U.S. imperialism over the next period.

In lieu of that revelation, something has already changed. Only time will tell how deep and meaningful that change is. The people by the tens of millions have awakened and they have desperate expectations. The people want the U.S. capitalist government to end its wars abroad, stop layoffs and home foreclosures, provide healthcare and education.

Will the new government end the wars? Or will it withdraw troops from Iraq only to send them to Afghanistan?

Will the new Democratic Party government, with an even larger majority in Congress, bail out the workers who are losing their homes and jobs? Will it take the side of labor against capital?

One of the issues that is likely to come before the new Democratic government is a long-standing, simple, proposed law that would require a majority of workers at a workplace to sign union cards in order to get union recognition. The labor movement has been waiting for this law to pass. Will it be signed?

The people want the government to come to their rescue instead of Wall Street's. It's a dangerous thing to wake people up and arouse their expectations.

Now that the people are awake they may organize and fight for what they want and need. More than anything else, it is this potential that portends a new political situation in the U.S. and the world.

The feeling on the streets of cities large and small across the U.S. on election night was that now, anything is possible, and it is.

(Reprinted from *Workers World*, November 6, 2008)

Comrade Manik Mukherjee's Canada Visit

In course of attending anti-imperialist conferences in Lebanon, Sri Lanka, Sudan and Venezuela in succession, Comrade Manik Mukherjee, Central Staff, SUCL, and General Secretary, International Anti-Imperialist and Peoples' Solidarity Coordinating Committee (IAPSCC), has lately visited Canada and America, in connection with preparing for the 2nd conference of the IAPSCC at Beirut, Lebanon in 2009. In America Comrade Mukherjee also held discussions with Ramsey Clark, the former Attorney-General of US, an internationally acclaimed personality of anti-imperialist movement and President, IAPSCC. Comrade Mukherjee is further scheduled to visit Germany and Syria this month. Several countries, with Pakistan as the latest in the list, have consented to join the Beirut Conference. President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela has also agreed to attend the Conference.

At Toronto in Canada the international council meeting of the organization 'For Friendship and Solidarity with Soviet People' (FFSWSP) was held on 10-12 October. Comrade Manik

Mukherjee has been a member of the executive committee of FFSWSP since its first Congress in 2001. FFSWSP is an organization set up to offer assistance to the struggling people of Russia, for reinstatement of socialist Soviet Union. It publishes the North Star Compass, a widely read monthly published in English, French, Russian and Spanish. It is chaired by Comrade Michael Lucas, an octogenarian dedicated personality towards the cause of scientific socialism. Comrade Lucas welcomed the new representatives from Russia, Ukraine, Brazil, Chile, Turkey, North Kurdistan, Byelorussia, Czech Republic, Senegal, North Ireland and Iran in the conference. While presenting his report to the conference, Comrade Lucas, at the outset, said that the world situation is now not only complex and dangerous. It is also an opportunity for the progressive and anti-imperialist forces to consolidate their efforts in the struggle for peace in a more cohesive, meaningful and united way. In this struggle, the international council of FFSWSP has a big role to play in helping the Soviet people to again become the bulwark for peace and to stand

against the growing menace of US-NATO road towards fascism. Today, socialist camp is no more. It is replaced by exploitative raw capitalism and growing cooperation with US imperialism at the expense of the oppressed people of the world. Blatantly exploitative capitalist rule has set in Russia. However, exemplary protests, strikes and popular unrest are rearing their heads up. This is corroborated by the recent actions of wreckage perpetrated by US-NATO combine at Iraq and Afghanistan on one hand and recent clashes in Georgia being coincidental. US imperialists had promised to invite Georgia become a NATO member, but this US plan was shelved off because of Russian intervention. This may well serve as a historical moment for the Russian people if strengthened through unification they can initiate struggle not only against NATO, but the present rulers of Russia, Ukraine and Georgia as well.

In the Conference, the Russian representative Comrade Victor Burjerov, in his written speech on the present condition of Russia described the present ruling Russian

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Make time-tested soldiers of democratic movement victorious to reflect people's voice in assembly

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conclaves of 'free trade' for the industrialists with everything available free and labour laws made inoperative, arable farmland is being snatched away or grabbed from the hapless peasants unable to repay loans because of falling procurement prices of the produces coupled with escalating cost of farming. While the government is beating drum of development by thus giving away land and other concessions to the private houses mostly for sprawling real estate business, more and more peasants are dispossessed of land and turned into agricultural labourers to be further wretched and pauperized. Madhya Pradesh, it may be added, is extremely backward in agriculture. Whatever little development in this area has taken place in other states is also absent here. If someone undertakes a visit to rural MP, it might appear to him that he is in old feudal surroundings. The penury and helplessness of the farmers has reached such a height that more than 3, 000 poor peasants have committed suicide in the last five years. But the government is unfazed, carrying out its pro-capitalist policies by raising pitch of its hated communal preaching. Likewise, despite availability of vast mineral resources, there has hardly been any progress in the industrial sector. Road condition and other infrastructural facilities are extremely poor for industrial development to take place.

The spree of privatization of education, health and road transport that Digvijay Singh, former Congress Chief Minister, had initiated has been pursued further with increased dimension by Shivraj Singh Chauhan, the present BJP Chief Minister. In private engineering colleges, the fees have been increased exorbitantly by Rs 15,000 per year. The rise in the tuition fee of the B. Ed colleges has been as high as Rs 40, 000 per year. It was in the range of Rs 300 to 500 just a few years back. The present BJP government has passed a Private University Act to facilitate setting up of three universities by the RKDF group of Bhopal and 14 other industrial houses. Agreements for another 19 private universities have also been signed. It is clear that with such steep hike in

education fees and rapid commercialization of education, only wards of rich and affluent would avail of the benefits. Even after passing out from these colleges by shelling out hefty sum of money, the youths are starved of jobs. Hundreds of engineering graduate are teaching in the schools at a paltry compensation of Rs 500 or so. Post graduate students are running roadside tea stalls or rolling out *bidis* (cheap indigenous cigarettes for the poor).

For the rural people, medicare is an alien term. Bereft of any adequate protection, people are hapless before the vagaries of nature, dying in excessive heat or cold. Even flood and drought take a heavy toll of life every year. The stark reality is that if anyone falls sick in a village, the only option he has is to knock at the door of quackery and sorcery for cure. Free medical service in the government hospitals has been withdrawn. Only one doctor is available per 18, 000 patients. Admission to the hospitals is only through unfair means. One could imagine what is there in store for the poor. Recently, 165 children in four districts have died of malnutrition. One would be frightened to see the state of public hygiene. In absence of any sanitation, not only in rural areas but even in urban localities people excrete in open space causing atmospheric pollution and health hazard. But the government feels no compulsion to improve the situation. One wonders if there is any civic body at all even in the cities and towns.

The power situation in the state, as is known to anybody, including visitors, is precarious. Though BJP, before the last elections promised extensive rural electrification, no one has any idea as to what happened to that in the last five years of its rule. On the contrary, the government has dismantled the state electricity board, resorted to large-scale retrenchment and slapped a moratorium on recruitment. Most of the work is now being done through contract workers at cheaper rate caring a fib for the quality. Public Distribution System is defunct. Like other states, private monopoly operators like Reliance group is being licensed to enter retail business threatening livelihood of lakhs connected with

the trade.

While BJP boasts of '*sanatan*' (traditional) Hindu culture and 'purity' and pretends so deep a respect for '*gomata*' (mother cow), the cultural scenario in this state under its rule is horrific. Madhya Pradesh is placed at number three position in so far as rape, molestation and violence on women are concerned. Revenue earning of the government from sale of liquor has increased many fold during BJP's tenure. Corruption, nepotism, bribery and misfeasance have all climbed to a dizzy height. Only allegiance to the ministers and party bosses count for promotion and limited employment in the administration.

Surely, a mere change in the government will not bring any relief to the people. But the alternative is not catching the imagination of the people as left-democratic movement is extremely weak in this state. That is why, the rightist forces are gaining upper hand in the state and are posed as the only available choices before the people in the electoral battle. The pseudo-Marxists have not only opted to desert the path of movement for pelf and power in parliamentary politics, they are now openly declaring that for reaping electoral benefits, they will forge alliance with any force. We have seen them earlier tying knots with the Congress. We do not know if, on finding tomorrow that a pact with BJP promises them better electoral prospect, they would enter into that as well.

It is pertinent to mention here that various Naxalite groups are claiming that they are engaged in the battle for seizure of power. But the way they are handling the

grievances of the poor strata of people — everyone would agree — clearly indicates that their agitations are confined within the bounds of democratic movement only. But as they are calling these agitations as revolutionary struggles and not democratic movements, the government is getting a handle in unleashing worst state terrorism in the name of suppressing insurgency. The government is also getting a chance to confuse the common people and make them averse towards legitimate mass and class struggles. As a result, the Naxalite groups are not only harming themselves but also providing opportunity to the coercive state machinery to harass poor common masses. And in the process, a kind of hostility is also developing among the toiling people against the Naxalite movements.

As we had shown earlier, in order to initiate the people towards progressive leftist ideology, it is necessary to release a powerful united organized protracted left-democratic movement based on the edifice of higher culture and ethics in demands for resolving the burning problems of life. It is only under pressure of this movement that the people could wrest some of their demands from the government and restrain it from adopting one after another anti-people policies. Like all other states, it is SUCI which alone is holding aloft the banner of left-democratic movement in Madhya Pradesh. Hence, the need of the hour is to strengthen SUCI in the state. With this approach and appeal, we call upon the people of the state to vote for the SUCI candidates in the coming election.

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bourgeoisie as comprador. In response to the proposal to publish this write-up in the North Star Compass, Comrade Manik Mukherjee pointed out that it was not appropriate to characterize present Russian bourgeois class like this, as it is bound to create confusion. Comrade Lucas informed that in view of the objection from Comrade Mukherjee, this write-up might be published in North Star Compass

under the category of debatable discussion. Dr. Sprignie Victor from Poland submitted a paper on socialism in present day China. The Conference decided to hold the third Congress of FFSWSP in Chile. Comrade Lucas expressed his willingness to join the Beirut anti-imperialist conference. After discussion with Comrade Manik Mukherjee, representatives from Poland, Slovakia and Chile also agreed to participate in Beirut meet.

Message to Workers World Party

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countries, as also in yours, the capitalist class, in its fanatic bid to tide over the crisis is trying to shift and pass on the entire burden arising out of this crisis to the working class of the respective countries. In an unabashed manner they are robbing common people of their hard-earned money to bail out the capitalists. We strongly feel that at this juncture, it is the first and foremost duty of all genuine Marxist-Leninist parties to come forward to organize the working class against these onslaughts. We do hope that you will also give thought over this crucial aspect. We firmly believe that your growing struggle against these attacks in the citadel of capitalism-imperialism would be adding further impetus to the revolutionary movements all over the world.

By the time the Conference starts the results of the US elections would be known. The Conference will surely make a thorough analysis from the working class viewpoint of the politics of the electoral process and the implications of the results. We are confident that the Conference would not fail to note that whatever be the result and whoever wins, by that the imperialist character of the US state is not going to fundamentally change. The American working class will have to continue and sharpen its fight against the imperialist state and its war-mongering policy, against exploitation and oppression, against racial discrimination and discrimination against immigrants. We must not fail to note that whatever minimum democratic element the bourgeois parliamentary system and its elections used to bear in the days when the system emerged and developed in the world, to howsoever minimum extent those reflected people's dreams and wills, have all become matters of bygone days. Today in all the capitalist states, the electoral process is by and large controlled and manipulated by the capitalist-monopolist class, with the help of a vicious combination of money, muscle power and media, bringing to the seat of power whosoever they choose as their trusted political manager. I would like to mention in this connection that long back in his struggle to further advance the thoughts of Lenin and Stalin, Comrade Shibdas Ghosh, the founder General Secretary of our party SUCI and one of the foremost Marxist philosophers of this era, clearly stated that in the face of the irrevocable crisis

of the system and out of the fear-complex of proletarian revolution, capitalism in all the capitalist states is struggling hard to find refuge in fascism which has thus appeared as a general phenomenon in the capitalist world. In his enunciation of fascism, he showed that fascism bears the distinguishing features of economic centralization, maximum concentration of political power in the state and rigid, firm administration relying upon the nexus of a military-industrial complex and bureaucracy, all this leading to more and more identification of the interest of the monopolists with that of the state. And in tune with all this, fascism also thrives upon cultural regimentation marked by fusion of spiritualism and technological progress of science. He also pointed out that in the present epoch, the monopolist class, unless forced by circumstances, does not necessarily follow the route of military dictatorship. With a view to minimizing resistance of people by confusing them, fascism is foisted upon "in a 'democratic' form" keeping the façade of democracy, including its Constitution, be it through multi-party or a two-party parliamentary system of government. In reality, from behind this façade, and with the help of the nexus of a military-industrial complex and bureaucracy, the capitalists-monopolists maintain their ruthless rule of administrative fascism.

We most ardently feel that revolutionaries of the world today must not fail to comprehend this imminent danger of emergence of fascism in the cloak of a democratic system and must not desist in their effort to make people conscious of this with a view to freeing them from the still-existing illusion of parliamentary system and elections.

Once again, we express our deepest appreciation of and full solidarity with the arduous struggle of the Workers World for holding aloft the banner of Marxism-Leninism against all odds in a land held as the fortress of capitalism-imperialism, in a state which acts as the demonic military-machine for perpetrating the rule of capital over the world. We sincerely wish all success to its National Conference. We firmly believe that your deliberations will significantly contribute to the international working class movement and your future struggle will provide unending inspiration to the freedom and peace-loving people of the world.

Worst communal bloodbath in Kandhamal

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responsible for all their peril and predicament. Continuous harping on this line is inculcating a warped mindset, driving a wedge between two communities, getting them to drift towards violence and then embroiling them in gory internecine clashes. Thus, the people are kept in the dark about the reality that it is not their brethren of the other community who are precipitating all miseries and maladies and depriving them of their dues. In fact, they all are equally oppressed, deprived and deceived under ruthlessly exploiting capitalist rule. Capitalism is the root of all evils. Lest the rage and fury of the exploited millions gradually get transformed into anti-capitalist movement and their unity solidified rock-like, rising above caste, creed and religion, the ruling capitalist class mortally afraid of anti-capitalist revolution is fomenting all kinds of divisive mentalities with the help of its servitors of different hues and powerful propaganda machine. This is a well-thought out immaculately planned design of the exploiting rulers that is articulated with alacrity by the communalists-parochial-chauvinist forces feigning as friends of this or that community and posing to be great champions of their cause.

Obvious question will be how could these arch enemies of the people get such an upper hand and take people for a ride? The answer is not far to seek. It is the absence of democratic mass movement on the burning problems of life that is allowing these divisive forces to thrive. Had there been a spate of legitimate mass movements based on higher ethics and culture sweeping across, it would have not only cemented people's unity irrespective of caste, religion or ethnicity but raised the political consciousness of the people. In that event, the common people would not have fallen prey to the sectarian forces, and got to know the heinous motive behind the machinations of the ruling class. Moreover, the cultural milieu of this democratic movement of all sections of toiling people for a common cause would have been conducive for eradicating all pernicious thoughts like communalism-fundamentalism-casteism-regionalism and so forth. In such a favourable environment, if an intense ideological struggle could be conducted right from the grass-root level, it could completely isolate the divisive forces from the masses and pave the way for correct ideology and thoughts being embraced by the suffering people. But, such has not been possible mainly because of the treachery of the pseudo-Marxists like the CPI(M), CPI who, in order to be in the corridor of power, opted for appeasing the ruling bourgeoisie and hence shunned the path of movement. Not only that. They are now brutally crushing any legitimate democratic movement surging forth in the states having their government. Being betrayed by these pseudo-lefts, the oppressed people are being cajoled by the communal-parochial elements and becoming innocent, ignorant victims of the sinister bourgeois conspiracy. This is what Kandhamal has fallen prey to. It is only, we reiterate, by organizing all sections of toiling people on the platform of united intense prolonged democratic mass movement on the edifice of higher ethics and culture and pressing for the burning demands of life that this heinous conspiracy can be frustrated. While the pseudo-Marxists have deserted the people's cause by turning away from the path of mass movement, it is the SUCI, the genuine communist party on the soil, founded by Comrade Shibdas Ghosh, great leader of the proletariat, who is holding aloft the banner of class and mass struggles in Orissa as well. We appeal to the poor people of Kandhamal as well as the whole of Orissa to embrace the course of movement and come out of the tentacles of rabid communal forces.

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