

Proletarian Era

Volume 42 No. 20
June 1, 2009

Organ of the SOCIALIST UNITY CENTRE OF INDIA
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Price : Rs. 2.00

Some reflections on the last Lok Sabha Polls

Elections for the 15th Lok Sabha were held in 5 phases on 16, 23 and 30 April and on 7 and 13 May last. Counting was done on 16 May and the results were declared. Seats won in the newly elected 543-member Lok Sabha by the different parties are as follows :

While Congress-led UPA secured 262 seats, ten short of absolute majority, its principal contender, BJP-led NDA trailed far behind with 159 seats 18 seats less than last time. Congress as a single party has secured 205 seats, 61 more than what it had in the previous Lok Sabha. The CPI (M) and its associates, who call themselves leftists, could manage to secure just 24 seats, reduced from 61 seats they held in 14th Lok Sabha. Its other poll allies like Biju Janata Dal (BJD) and Telugu Desam Party (TDP) won 14 and 6 seats respectively. The balance seats were shared by other parties and independents. Significantly, braving all odds and overcoming all obstacles, our party, SUCI, came out victorious from Joynagar parliamentary constituency in West Bengal by a handsome margin. Trinamool Congress with whom SUCI had forged an alliance in West Bengal for developing and intensifying democratic mass

movements against the anti-people policies of Central and State governments romped home with 19 seats. The stage was thus set for a Congress-led UPA ministry to rule the country for another term of 5 years. The ministry was sworn into office on 22 May with Manmohan Singh as the Prime Minister once again.

State wise analysis

A glance at the results will reveal some notable features. In Rajasthan, the BJP had swept the polls in the 2004 election. But this time, the Congress has totally reversed the tables, leaving BJP far behind. In UP, the four main contestants were Congress, BJP, SP and BSP. The Congress showed a considerable increase in the number of seats won, at the cost of SP. In Bihar, Lalu Prasad Yadav's RJD which swept the polls in the last election, has been humbled. BJP also could not fare that well in the states of Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh where it is running the state governments. Nor could it improve its prospect in Assam by tying up with Assam Gana Parishad (AGP). In Kerala, the CPI(M)-led LDF won 18 out of 21 seats in 2004, while it has come down to 4 in 2009, being trounced by the Congress-led UDF.

In West Bengal, CPI(M)-led front have come down from 35 in 2004 to 15 this time. According to the poll experts who analyze the election results purely based on number, percentage of votes polled, typical upward or downward swing in vote share, the mandate has gone decisively in favour of the Congress thereby proving that people have overwhelmingly rallied behind the Congress for its good performance in the previous government and ensuring stability at the centre. Some have gone to the extent of discovering a 'Congress wave' sweeping across. It is not that the known bourgeois analysts or political figures are only putting forth this argument. Even Prakash Karat, the CPI(M) General

Secretary, in his article in People's Democracy dated 21-05-09 available on its election website, has observed that "despite the neo-liberal predilections of the Congress-led government, some of the measures adopted have had a positive impact on the people. These are the NREGA, the Tribal Forest Rights Act and the increase in the minimum support price for rice and wheat, the loan waiver scheme for farmers and some such measures, many of whom were brought under the pressure of the Left parties. Despite the agrarian crisis, such measures provided some relief to the rural people. Along with this should be seen the measures taken by some of the state governments

Contd. on page 2

Cyclone-ravaged West Bengal people needs the countrymen to stand by them

A severe cyclone named *Aila* hit the state of West Bengal on 25 and 26 May last. Gusty wind blowing at 120km per hour accompanied by heavy shower lashed out at the state particularly the coastal areas of the districts of North and South 24 Parganas as well as East Midnapur. The districts of Howrah, Hoogly as well as the city of Calcutta were also not spared. The natural fury wreaked havoc in people's life through massive destruction and devastation rendering lakhs of family destitute. Already 130 people are reported to have lost life being either washed away by the torrent of water or crushed under falling trees. Lakhs have been rendered homeless. Deadly cyclone and high tide in the sea have destroyed thousands of houses. Hundreds of miles of river embankments have been razed to rubbles. Just as mighty current carried off cattle and other belongings, so also tidal spate of salty water destroyed thousands of acres of land with crops, ponds and fish. Innumerable villages have been submerged in water with lakhs of people marooned. Their cries for loss of near and dear ones, all belongings as well for food and drinking water are rending the sky. While the affected millions are languishing in utter distress, fighting for life, the role of the government notwithstanding all promises in media glare and pretentious concern for the calamity-struck people is of utter disgust and criminal callousness. While the customary lethargy, incapability and corruption are stalking the government administration, the common people are standing

Contd. on page 8

SUCI wins Joynagar Parliament seat in West Bengal



Comrade Tarun Mandal

Comrade Tarun Mandal, SUCI nominee, has won from Joynagar Parliament constituency in West Bengal defeating his nearest CPI(M)-front candidate of RSP by over 53, 000 votes. Comrade Mandal was a candidate of the SUCI-TMC combination that emerged in the process of conducting people's movements including the historic Singur-Nandigram movements against the anti-people policies of both central and state governments.

Lok Sabha Polls

Opportunistic alliances, casteism, communalism marked the electioneering

Contd. from page 1

such as the Rs. 2 per kg of rice scheme in Andhra Pradesh and the Re. 1 per kg scheme in Tamilnadu and other social welfare measures.” In other words, he also agrees that Congress has won because it has in many spheres worked in the interest of the common people.

Do poll results reflect genuine people's interest?

Naturally, the question that arises first is whether the poll results do reflect the genuine interest of the people or the mandate has to be understood in a different way keeping in mind the perspective and objective conditions obtaining in the country today. Mere number crunching or the bourgeois media-sponsored euphoria should not obliterate the path to unravel the truth. What must guide us is correct method of analysis based on scientific reason, proper interpretation of the given objective reality and above all, the people's point of view in the true sense of the term, not gimmicks or pretensions.

It should be remembered that this election came at a time when the globalization policies, adopted to serve the interest of Indian and foreign monopoly capital, pursued for over one-and-half decades, have intensified ruthless capitalist exploitation of the people plunging them into a new depth of misery.

Large sections of the people go hungry or are half-fed, the countrysides teem with landless peasants and agricultural labourers vast masses of whom are unemployed or semi-employed, peasants are denied even the minimum support-price for their crops and are driven by want and debt-trap to commit suicide in flocks, thousands of mills, factories and offices are closing down all the time throwing a myriad of workers-employees on to the streets whereas the few new factories that are being put up being hi-tech ones, employ small work-forces, dire poverty and destitution of the people are on the rise, education and health services are in shambles and there is a general moral-cultural degradation enveloping the country. Need of the hour is to find out the root cause of these burning problems and to chalk out policies and plans of action to mitigate these. National election to determine who will govern the country for the next 5 years is a very important political event when these burning issues need to be addressed. But none of the parliamentary parties in the election fray, all serving the ruling capitalist class, bothered about these vital questions in the people's life notwithstanding showering of customary pre-poll promises, shedding crocodile tears at the penury and misery of the myriads and flaunting self-created

pro-people credential with the help of pliant media and paid advertisements. Instead, they engaged themselves in devising ways and means to win anyhow through unprincipled and opportunist alliances, by whipping up communalism, casteism, regionalism-parochialism, riding on massive money power, flexing muscle as well as mafia power and pandering to corruption of every sort. These, along with motivated and orchestrated propaganda in the powerful monopoly-controlled media, have conditioned, influenced and manipulated the election to produce a result acceptable to the ruling class.

The alliance politics

Another feature in today's bourgeois vote politics is of formation of various alliances and combinations. The recently concluded election has also been marked by that. There can be no objection to a group of political parties forming alliances for fighting elections or running government. But the question is whether these alliances should be based on some principle or could be as arbitrary, opportunistic or a matter of convenience for the alliance partners to meet their petty sectarian interest. Unprincipled alliances, it goes without saying, cannot be supported by the people since anything devoid of any principle can in no way be conducive to the people's interest. We know that since long has election in the country ceased to be a battle on the basis of principles where the ideologies, policies and proposed programmes of work of the contending parties are debated, discussed and placed before the electorate for their verdict at the hustings. But this time, the utter lack of principle in forming electoral tie-ups during electioneering has perhaps reached a new high. The motto seemed to be that tie-up, pre-poll, or post-poll, with anybody is justified if that provides any advantage. Instances of this are so many, that we can but mention a few here.

The Congress takes pride in its secularism, but it is common knowledge that it has been adopting a line of “soft” Hindutva as a counter to BJP's strident Hindutva in order to sway Hindu communal

feeling in its favour. This was witnessed during campaigning for the present election too particularly in the Hindi heartland as well as Gujarat. On the other hand, it knew that among the Muslim community, there is a strong anti-BJP feeling. The Congress was also aware that the minority Muslim community being persecuted, subjected to organized killings and meted out inhuman treatment particularly by the fanatic Hindu communalists are being continuously haunted by a fear-psychosis. Cunningly, the Congress played on the fear-psychosis of the Muslims, posing as their saviour, to gain electoral advantage of the so-called ‘Muslim vote-bank.’ It also did not hesitate to romp in The Indian Union Muslim League, a Muslim communal outfit, as a senior partner in the UDF led by it in Kerala. In Bihar, the Congress made overtures to Nitish Kumar, the JD(U) leader and state chief minister, whose party was in the BJP-led NDA and was fighting the election on that basis, for a possible post-poll tie up towards forming government. In Tamilnadu, the Congress was in alliance with DMK but still tried to woo AIADMK which it was fighting for having joined hands with communal BJP. The Congress sent feelers to TDP, the party in Opposition, to switch to its side in the post-poll situation. Possibility of striking a post-poll understanding with even Mayawati's BSP, scuppering Congress now and then and keeping options to join anti-Congress combinations, was also explored. The BJP also did not lag behind in advancing olive branch to parties known to be unfavourably disposed towards it. It struck opportunistic electoral alliance with the parochial AGP in Assam, Chautala's INLD in Haryana and Gorkha Mukti Morcha (GMM) in West Bengal. Ajit Singh's RLD which was till the other day a part and parcel of Congress-led UPA was also lured to join NDA led by it. It was also seen that Telengana Rashtriya Samity (TRS) declared to be an alliance partner of the CPI (M), CPI shifting allegiance to it.

Not that the big bourgeois parties and the smaller bourgeois petty-bourgeois parties were only

Contd. on page 6

Endowment of capitalist globalization

- 1.4 billion people lives below poverty line
- Almost half the world — over three billion people — live on less than \$2.50 a day.
- At least 80% of humanity lives on less than \$10 a day.
- Almost two in three people lacking access to clean water survive on less than \$2 per day, with one in three living on less than \$1 a day.
- More than 660 million people without sanitation live on less than \$2 a day, and more than 385 million on less than \$1 a day.
- The poorest 40 percent of the world's population accounts for 5 percent of global income. The richest 20 percent accounts for three-quarters of world income.
- 25,000 children die each day due to poverty. And they “die quietly in some of the poorest villages on earth, far removed from the scrutiny and the conscience of the world. Being meek and weak in life makes these dying multitudes even more invisible in death.
- Less than one per cent of what the world spent every year on weapons was needed to put every child into school by the year 2000.
- 1.6 billion people — a quarter of humanity — live without electricity.

Lok Sabha election in West Bengal

Gave vent to people's wrath-indignation against CPI(M)'s non-left, pro-capitalist misrule

Lok Sabha or parliamentary election presents some significant variation from the national scenario in the state of West Bengal. It is marked by a major debacle of the CPI(M)-led so-called Left Front, which has been ruling the state for the last thirty-two years and till the other day, which was an ardent benefactor of the Congress-led UPA government at the Centre. Even amidst the usual fiery exchanges during the whole electioneering process this time, both CPI(M) and Congress were airing sweet-worded expressions like 'nobody can be sure of post-poll equations' and others that pointed to their eagerness to get back to their old alliance, if and when necessary. However, Front's tally slumped down from 35 out of 42 in the 14th Lok Sabha to a meagre 15 (out of the same total number of 42; of these CPI(M) had a share of only 9) from West Bengal in this 15th Lok Sabha election. TMC (Trinamool Congress) which had Mamata Banerjee, their leader, as their single representative in the last Lok Sabha, is going to be represented by 19 members this time. Our party SUCI, which fought this election in a combination with TMC, has 1, BJP has 1 and Congress 6 MPs in the present Lok Sabha. With this turn-table result from West Bengal, TMC overtook CPI(M), as Congress which were sending clear messages to revive the ruptured alliance with CPI(M) till the election was over, became less and less interested in earning the favour of CPI(M) support in the parliament, as soon as the results were out. But the CPI(M) leadership, particularly its West Bengal counterpart, unable to digest their debacle, got busy with finding out some make-believe theory to cover up their shameful retreat. In tune with a section of the media run largely at the beckoning of the capitalists- monopolists, CPI(M) ascribed this result to the effect of a nation-wide Congress wave which they had failed to gauge or even detect. However, it was such a 'wave', they now hold responsible for their defeat, about which, nobody, neither the media, nor any political party, nor any expert, not even Congress themselves were aware of, even after the polling and

till the end of counting! Rather, during the whole course of electioneering process, Congress were frantically searching for prospective partners for a coalition government from amongst all kinds of parties, because they were never sure of win or margin. It was such a 'wave' which in many parts of the country could not make people vote enthusiastically in massive numbers for the Congress! Rather, the percentage of polling was in the main on the poorer side, indicating people's negative response to the whole process. It was such a 'wave' for Congress, that it dumped the party to a miserable performance in a few states including those major ones like Orissa, Bihar, or Jharkhand! In West Bengal, it was such a 'wave' which could not help Congress increase its tally of seats won; they had six MPs in the 14th Lok Sabha, and will also have the same number of MPs in the 15th Lok Sabha. That too, from the same districts from which the Congress candidates were returned last time. There was neither any increase, nor any spread for Congress in that so-called 'wave'. So, however hard may the CPI(M) leadership try, people can not accept their attempt to create a Congress 'myth', a veiled gesture to the ruling party for future reconciliation. People of this state know why they voted against CPI(M); we will come to that shortly; they also know that they did not vote for any 'social welfare measures' adopted by the Congress that had a 'positive impact on the people' (Karat, *ibid*) or 'stood the Congress in good stead' (CPI(M) Polit Bureau in their May 18 statement). Rather, they know it well what Congress rule has brought to them.

Ruthless rule of capitalism in independent India, marked by exploitation and oppression, could only bring to common people of the whole country nothing but soaring unemployment, sky-high price rise, abject poverty, all-out attack on democratic and trade-union rights and shameless promotion of all sorts of vices like sex-perversion, violence, drug addiction, drinking even at tender age etc. only to cripple specially the youth to a spineless, self-centric life. It has

produced some of the richest monopolists in the world, but has itself bogged into the quagmire of insurmountable economic crisis. As one of the most trusted representatives of the ruling Indian capitalist class, it was the Congress, in single or in any combination, that have been largely in charge of running this rule of capitalism from the seat of Union governmental power during the sixty-two year stretch in independent India and barring only a few years in between. It was the Congress which, to the benefit of Indian and foreign monopolists and with able supports from parties like CPI(M) and others, has been implementing most enthusiastically, the policies of imperialist globalization causing nothing but severe suffering for people that is bringing devastation in their life. Added to it, has come the recent 'great depression' or recession of the world capitalist-imperialist system, of which Indian capitalism is an inalienable part and partner. All attempts to stave off the crisis early are proving futile. And in spite of verbose assurances from the Indian capitalists-monopolists and the governments serving them, devastating effect of this global recession is manifesting in Indian economy with full stings. Naturally, such economic crisis, Indian or global whatever it be singly or together, uproot people from their life and livelihood and thus generate fast increasing discontent, indignation and wrath among common people. This, in turn, is reflected in ever-deepening political crisis in the country characterized by instability, corruption, criminalization of politics and all sorts of such vices. The ruling capitalists-monopolists which themselves generate these crises, can not, at the same time, carry on long with such uncertainties. So, for the sake of a consolidated governance necessary to combat the crisis, the ruling class preferred a government of one party, or at least, of a combination with a single party having a deciding majority in it. A hotchpotch coalition studded with unscrupulous career-seeking politicians, mafia dons and criminals or parties with shady brand of politics with mutually

conflicting interests, might have been only a source of uncertainty and, thus, stood a lesser choice. The attempt towards a 'third front' that initially earned a support from the class and the media, gradually fizzled out. Between the two major bourgeois parties, the high-pitched arrogant pro-Hindu, rather communal brand of politics of BJP was refused by people. It prompted the ruling class to withdraw its favour from behind that party at the fag end of the rat race for power, and, of course, for the present. Congress with its record of unstinted loyalty to the ruling capitalists-monopolists with a deceitful politics of slogan mongering to hoodwink people, managed to find a slight edge in the race for winning the blessings of the ruling class, its media, muscle and money power. With these arsenals, Congress, like all other major or regional bourgeois parties, sailed on casteism in some constituencies, in some others on politics to appease minority communities apparently pitting against BJP's communal brand of minority bashing, somewhere they did not refrain from harping on parochial feelings to cash in some major vote-chunk; of course, there were always a liberal flow of money and muscle power as well as rigging with the help of mass-stamping, booth jamming, tampering with EVM programming etc. However, all exit polls and write-ups- analyses, showed that even after the polling had been over, hardly anybody was sure of who was going to win. There was no wave for any party, including Congress at all.

In fact, in West Bengal, the ambience was significantly different. The 32-year long rule of the CPI(M)-led Front has been unmistakably characterized by shamelessly anti-people, pro-monopolist attitudes and measures of the ruling parties, particularly CPI(M). In the name of development, capitalists-monopolists of the land and abroad are cordially welcomed only at the cost of life and livelihood of common, poor people. The professed leftism is trampled unhesitatingly by the party with a

Contd. on page 4

There was no Congress wave at all in the country

Contd. from page 3

Marxist tag in the signboard. Naturally this earned CPI(M) and its allies, disapproval and wrath from the common people, more so the left-minded population. Secondly, the three-decade long CPI(M) rule has made the entire administration a paradise of rampant organized corruption. All fields of social activities, from education, health, trade unions and associations of government and even commercial institutions, even local bodies or committees for residential areas, are loaded with incompetent, self-seeking characters who only serve to maintain the party rule of CPI(M) and its allies in their respective fields. Any voice of disagreement or opposition is simply suppressed by means of a so-called brute majority. Common men can not find any inroad with their views or complaints, until and unless they tap the party channel to the centre of power. They seem to have been made convinced that you can not get any work done without bribe, cut-money, levies without receipts or such others. Local, even family feuds are vitiated by interference of party cadres and leaders, often accompanied by extortion of money. In the name of Salishi Sabha, i.e., local peoples' court, what goes on is nothing short of oppression and exploitation by the local party bosses. Administration or governance has thus been reduced to shambles at one and all levels. Thirdly, the relative minimum neutrality that the police maintains even in a capitalist country is blatantly wiped out by CPI(M). Virtually every police station from the state headquarters down to the local ones has become centre of arrogant, high-handed, power-crazy personnel. With this, is added a rule of goons of all stature, in payroll or under cover of the party. In fact, the nexus of police and goons, running at the behest of and under the full protection from the party bosses of different levels, has simply let loose a reign of terror, corruption and arrogance, with a typical 'don't care' attitude to fulfill the organized or individual interests of party bosses. With that they reflected the same high-handed, arrogant and autocratic attitude, the party bosses themselves bore at all the levels, right from the topmost state leadership down to the local or institutional ones. Any honest, neutral officer is made to face

punitive measure, including transfer to remote, troubled places, if and when, he may step into the party-boss dominated acts or situations. Obviously all this, which only strengthened and worsened through these decades into an oppressive suffocating situation throughout the state and for all sections of people, made people completely disgusted and disillusioned with the CPI(M)-led rule. They longed for a change, though they lay unorganized and hence numb with fear and indecision. Our party has been striving to develop massive organized movement against this rule ever since the Front came to power. We launched a statewide movement against the language and education policy of the Front government and carried it for 19 years through to victory; here we fought against abolition of English from the primary level of schools and abolition of 'pass-fail' system in examinations up to class eight of the secondary level. We fought against charge-hike in hospitals, fare hike for public transports, price rise including rise in fuel price and imposition of a cess charge on fuels in the state, or in demand of preventing flood or river erosion assuming menacing form in some parts of the state or of solving oft-recurring draughts in some other parts, or in defence of hard-earned democratic rights and many such burning issues of people's life. The TMC founded in 1998 by Mamata Banerjee who came out of Congress charging the latter for working hand in glove with CPI(M), also carried on movements in their own style and with their own Gandhite visions and ultimate parliamentary objectives. Movements led by the two parties ran independently and parallel to each other. On one side, there were the movements organized by us from the Marxist revolutionary angularity of developing sustained organized mass movement which were to step up into class and mass struggles against the prevailing capitalist system of the country. On the other, there were the movements led by TMC. There had been differences; for instance, when on January 22, 2009 we called for a West Bengal bandh against anti-people policies of the centre and the state, TMC did not support it, as they stood against any call of bandh or general strike. People of the state, however, unequivocally and widely

acknowledged that SUCI was a genuine force of movement without whose initiative and leadership, movement against CPI(M) rule could not have reached a formidable shape. They supported our call even if we were left out single-handed.

All these movements were, however, gradually crystallizing people's opinion against the CPI(M)-led rule, which latter in its turn, was becoming more and more oppressive, exploitative and high-handed. This was finally expressed at Singur and then at Nandigram where the government came out with their naked attempt to implement the policies of globalization in the interest of monopolists of the land and abroad. They let loose brute force of police-administration along with hired goons under the cover of CPI(M) to grab fertile farmlands as well as thickly populated fairly prosperous villages, ostensibly for industries but with hidden agenda of promoting real estate business or recreation centres like holiday resorts etc. But this time they faced a different situation. At our initiative, the peasants, along with village people of all sections of society as well as leading intellectuals of state and common urban people, came out to defend the cause of the farmers. Movements cropped up; at Nandigram SUCI and TMC combined to form a joint committee (Bhumi Uchchedh Pratirodh Committee) which drew people in thousands to join the movement to defend their life and livelihood. Such struggle committees of people cutting across political parties, were formed at Singur, Lalgah and other places, organizing fighting people into a massive determined force to overwhelm the beastly attacks of police and the CPI(M) controlled goons. As resistance mounted, the CPI(M)-led government became still more ruthless and fascistic. Brute killing of even women, children and old, rape of women involved in the movement to crush their morale, rampant loot, arson of opponent's household etc., surpassed all previous records. At the same time, organized resistance of people united across political opinions and shades, made the audacious government eat their words and withdraw their schemes of land grabbing at Nandigram and erection of motor-car plant of Tatas

at Singur. Elsewhere too, the government was pushed increasingly on the back foot. What is of most fundamental importance is that, the Nandigram- Singur and other movements, helped unorganized, fear-struck people suffering mutely for decades under the CPI(M)-led rule, to win back courage, determination and power. One after another, people started to send fatal blows to the fascist forces of CPI(M), its police and goons. However, increasingly fascistic attack of CPI(M) called for further stepping up of resistance. This demanded a statewide combination of forces and parties which were ready to stand against the fascist attacks of CPI(M). We took initiative, first, to form such a combination of the forces, that claim themselves as leftists. We approached RSP, Forward Bloc and different Naxalite parties and forces. RSP and Forward Bloc though apparently showing their disapproval of the CPI(M) attitude, could not ultimately dare to come out of the Front with CPI(M), for fear of losing their electoral prospects. Naxalite forces also did not respond with any required intent. We then approached the TMC leadership and finally SUCI-TMC combination was founded at the state level which rapidly developed as a massive force to catch imagination of struggling oppressed people to launch and carry on democratic movements on different issues. The combination ultimately also became a force to fight elections. Panchayet election involving the vast rural populations was fought by the combination to inflict inevitable ignominious defeat to the Front and then finally came the ensuing parliamentary election. People's wrath and indignation against CPI(M) and their longing for a change found a mainstay in the SUCI-TMC combination; it provided them with courage and drive to speak out against the oppressive fascist CPI(M) rulers, their administration and the bands of hired goons under their protection. The result was decisive.

It must be added here that while recognizing the role of the TMC in building up movement and the importance of coming into a combination with them, we made it clear, that, first, such a combination must be directed against the anti-

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Singur-Nandigram let people speak out against CPI(M) misrule

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people policies of both the state and the central governments, the latter under the Congress-led UPA combination; second, the TMC-SUCI combination must maintain equal distances from the Congress and the BJP and it must not attack leftism and Marxism. Though a Gandhite party, the TMC agreed to these propositions and maintained this stand, in the main, all along since the combination was formed. TMC leadership also recognized the role of SUCI in developing movement against CPI(M) and drew a clear distinction considering and announcing it in public that SUCI was a genuine leftist, while CPI(M) represented bad or pseudo-leftists.

On the other hand, as the combination gathered strength and led movements one after another, it became a nightmare for the ruling capitalists and monopolists and their subservient political forces like the CPI(M). They started taking all means to break apart this combination, to bring TMC out of it. They knew that sustained mass movements under this SUCI-TMC leadership will ultimately help class and mass struggles against the capitalist system of the country to nucleate and gather momentum. But the massive support the combination attracted from people foiled their attempts to a great extent.

And what was the role of the Congress during this rule of the CPI(M)-led Front? Excepting for some verbose opposition particularly during the election campaigns, the Congress leaders and their party did never try to develop or support any movement against the CPI(M) government of West Bengal. Rather, both the parties maintained close ties between themselves, CPI(M) ensuring that the Congress remains in the Union government and does not disturb its own government at the state and the Congress confirming the same process other way round. In fact, as mentioned earlier, TMC was founded largely and primarily on the charge that Congress leadership was capitulating to the CPI(M)-led Front government. The TMC leaders even nicknamed Congress as the B-team of CPI(M). Even when in the recent past the whole state was simmering with anger and disapproval of the

brute suppression of the movements at Nandigram, Singur and elsewhere, the Congress leadership unequivocally supported the government stand of grabbing peasants' land. Only when they sensed a stiff peoples' opinion against their stand, they tried to mellow it down and pose some support to the struggling peasants.

Now, as the Lok Sabha election drew close and the anti-CPI(M) mind-set of people became stronger and stronger with the SUCI-TMC combination gaining firmer foothold among the masses, there was mooted a cunning move with the idea of forming an alliance of TMC and Congress to fight the parliamentary election. The innocuous argument dished out, was that only a grand combination of TMC and Congress may keep the anti-CPI(M) vote undivided. But the real motive was to break the SUCI-TMC combination which had already caught people's imagination and won their support. People of West Bengal were well aware of SUCI stand against Congress, the trusted representative of the ruling class. The ruling class also knew it fully well that SUCI will not join any combination with Congress and so the SUCI-TMC combination will be frustrated. With the tacit support of the ruling capitalist class and a large section of the media, Congress, a discarded force in West Bengal jumped into the fray. TMC, after all a bourgeois party with parliamentary aspirations as their ultimate source of sustenance, was trapped by the argument of vote-division and thus, got interested in the alliance with Congress. SUCI strongly objected on the ground that Congress was nothing but the trusted representative of the same capitalist class which CPI(M) has also been serving at the cost of peoples' interests. Besides, Congress never stood effectively against the CPI(M)-led government. All along the whole election campaign, they maintained close ties with CPI(M), with the latter reciprocating equally to this gesture. In face of SUCI opposition, TMC leadership could only go for seat sharing with the Congress. Depending on support and interest, SUCI put up candidates against both CPI(M) and Congress and extended fullest support to TMC candidates in several constituencies. TMC

accepted the stand and extended their support to SUCI candidates, for instance, in the Joynagar (SC) constituency in South 24 Parganas district. Dr. Tarun Mandal, a leading organizer of our medical front and an ardent fighter for the cause of poor and downtrodden people specially in their health issues, came out victorious from that constituency.

The result has been, as mentioned earlier. CPI(M) and its Front faced a debacle; Congress remained at the same position where they were in the 14th Lok Sabha. However, people voted unambiguously in favour of the TMC-SUCI combination. The support was overwhelming. Constituencies known as the bastions of CPI(M) were won over by great margins. Even the few winning candidates of the CPI(M)-led Front, found their margins drastically reduced to the extent of to half or one-third, of the margin they had maintained in the previous election. Attempts of the infamous election machinery of CPI(M) to carry on rigging, forcible voting, threatening genuine voters were foiled in the main by the determined mass of common people. The notorious motor-bike squads of hired goons under the cover of CPI(M)'s protection were largely thwarted from making any inroad into the process. True, there were still pockets where such attempts at rigging by CPI(M) goons could not be prevented. Thus at places like Keshpur in the Ghatal constituency or Arambagh constituency no election agent of the opponents were allowed to enter the booths; CPI(M) goons voted at their sweet will. There were instances of tampering with the EVM; in some cases five time pressing button for an opponent candidate recorded only one; in some others whichever button was pressed, the record went in favour of the Front candidate and so on. A few presiding officers themselves persuaded voters to vote for the respective front candidates. Even then, the result was disastrous for the CPI(M) and its so-called Front.

On the other hand, the changed situation arising out of the outcome of the election led to a fresh attempt at striking at the root of the force of democratic mass movements that had developed in the recent past in

the state. With fullest support of the ruling class and the media, print and electronic, and taking full advantage of the parliamentary aspirations of TMC, a bourgeois parliamentary party in the ultimate analysis, Congress leave no stone unturned to hold their ally tight. Offer of ministerial berths and other privileges are the means to that end. The ulterior motive of this hectic move to rope in TMC to the Congress-led ministry, is to exploit the parliamentary character of TMC, break apart their unity with SUCI as a force of movement in West Bengal and thus weaken the prospect of any movement in future, which are imminent to grow with Congress ready to implement so-called reforms to the benefit of the capitalists-monopolists with their renewed strength in the parliament. On their part, TMC also could not refrain from joining the ministry of the Union government. Here again our party SUCI reiterated that, since Congress as one of the most trusted representatives of the ruling capitalist class, is responsible for the ever-increasing plight of common people and is thus the main enemy towards which the mass movements must be directed, there is no question of SUCI supporting the Congress-led government. So, in the Parliament House its MP has decided to sit in the opposition bench, not sharing the same block with TMC MPs in the Treasury bench. Further, as a representative of a revolutionary party, the SUCI MP will look ahead to raise people's voice in the Parliament venting out peoples' democratic demands with which the extra-parliamentary movements would go on.

Besides, what appears more alarming is that the Congress-TMC combination will derail the people's movement in West Bengal against pseudo-leftism, with real leftism involved in it. It will also step up dangerously the chances of resurgence of rightist politics with pro-capitalist outlook. On the other hand, it will make the possibility of people's alternative instrument of struggle to emerge through series of democratic movements under the leadership of SUCI-TMC combine to recede fast into the background. People must come forward to stall and frustrate this heinous conspiracy of the capitalist class.

Money-mafia-media sought to restrict choice between two principal bourgeois combinations

Contd. from page 2

party to this game of forging unprincipled opportunistic alliances solely to brighten their electoral prospects. Even the pseudo-Marxists like CPI (M), CPI, desperately seeking to appease the ruling bourgeoisie for pelf and power by forsaking even the last vestige of leftism, were also found to have joined the fray. In the name of floating a non-Congress, non-BJP 'secular' Third Front, they assembled an assortment of regional, parochial, corrupt and casteist parties like JD(S), AIADMK, TDP, BJD and BSP almost all of whom had been in close alliance with the BJP at one time or other, sharing governmental power with it. The message is simple and clear : whoever joins hands with us, is secular! As to the secular credentials of the CPI(M) itself, it is sufficient to note that in this election, it enlisted the support of Abdul Nasser Madani and his party PDP in Kerala although Madani stands accused of recruiting Muslim youths for terrorist activities. Moreover, though the election graffiti, hoardings, flexes and posters of the CPI (M) showed the party's staunch opposition to division of West Bengal state (in oblique reference to Gorkhaland agitation), its leaders in Andhra Pradesh had no qualms in joining hands with the TRS, a parochial outfit demanding carving out a separate Telengana state.

Selection of candidates

Even the aspect of selection of candidates need special mention. In selecting their nominees, the parties were usually guided by considerations of religious, caste and ethnic composition of the electorates of the particular constituencies and thereafter, vigorous election campaign was launched on the basis of religion, caste or ethnicity, as the case may be. Calculations made on the basis of division of the electorate into the various castes and sub-castes and their probable interactions were rampant, especially in the North Indian Hindi heartland. By this, the parliamentary parties, all serving the ruling capitalist class, besides trying to catch as many votes as possible by fanning communalism, casteism, regionalism-parochialism, also worked for furtherance of the design

of the ruling class to destroy the unity of the people through whipping up these divisive tendencies. The rupture with BJD in Orissa cost the BJP so much so that the BJD quit the BJP-led NDA. Undeterred, BJP stepped up Hindu communalism as its chief election plank and nominated Manoj Pradhan, the prime accused in the Kandhamal riots, currently in jail, as its candidate for G.Udaygiri, and Ashok Sahu, a rabid votary of Hindutva and president of Orissa Hindu Jagaran Samukhya as its candidate for the Kandhamal constituency.

Dominance of money power

Money power of enormous dimension was instrumental in shaping and manipulating the election results. Candidates of the established parties paid huge sums to their parties in order to obtain nomination as candidates. After being nominated as candidates, they spent huge sums of money in electioneering through costly festoons, banners, cavalcades, advertisements in the printed and electronic media including propaganda films, distribution of CDs, road shows, various entertainments provided to the voters and finally, by outright buying up of votes on a massive scale. In previous elections, votes of poor, needy people, were collected through such corrupt manipulation taking advantage of their distress. But reports from middle class sources suggest that this time, in a fierce competition to outbid others through money power, even the middle classes were sought to be involved in this nefarious game. The source of this huge money can only be the black money stacked up in the hands of the industrialists, businessmen, traders, black marketeers and mafia dons. By providing this huge money power, they control the political process, the election, in order to get MPs of their choice elected and ministers of their choice installed in power. Not that the known bourgeois parties only indulged in lavish spending. The CPI (M) and its self-declared left associates were equally demonstrative of their financial muscle. In perfect bourgeois style and moving away from the barest precept of leftism, they spent enormous sum of money in the

electioneering and in many places overtook their bourgeois rivals in this regard.

The candidates of the established parties were also found to be by no means poor. Most of them, including top leaders of the Congress and BJP, in the affidavits they placed satisfying the legal requirement while submitting their nomination papers, resorted to such absurdities in order to undervalue their properties and possessions as have only nakedly brought out the truth that they are multi-crorepatis. Through this election, the nation has been gifted with a new Parliament most of whose members are multi-millionaires, in this poor country of ours where a large section of the people cannot secure two square meals a day. Out of 543 MPs, 300 are crorepatris (owning over ten million of rupees). While Congress has 67 of them, BJP is little behind with 58. Of the 20 ministers who took oath on the first phase, 12 are crorepatris.

Criminals in the fray

One use of the huge money power in the hands of these candidates was to enlist organised criminal gangs to terrorize the people for swaying the election results. In many areas, particularly in the Northern Hindi heartland, the distinction between candidates and criminals was obliterated. Many of the candidates were criminals, many of the leaders were themselves mafia dons. The extent of criminalization of politics is shown by the fact that although 964 candidates with criminal background lost in the election, 150 of the tainted candidates still managed to get elected, 72 of them with serious criminal records, as compared with 55 such MPs in the outgoing Parliament. (The Statesman, 18.5.09) In such situation, there has been a general disillusionment of the people about the process of election itself, the faith that something tangible and beneficial can come out of election, has been eroded even among the educated middle class of the cities and towns who are knowledgeable and articulate, leading to a low percentage of polling.

Artificial polarization

This is not all. As being noticed of late, crisis-ridden decadent

moribund ruling capitalism seeking to dispossess people of the basic democratic rights is also pulling the strings from behind in many ways to curtail, to the extent possible, free and fair exercise of franchise. One of them, and a major one that should concern every democratic-minded person, is to cleverly restrict the people's choice within two major parties or combinations propped up by it and thus practically eliminate the chance of any third alternative to even feature in the consideration, let alone winning the poll. The monopoly-controlled media this time also created an artificial bipolarization by projecting the Congress-led UPA and the BJP-led NDA as the only two options available before the people with perhaps a little more emphasis on Congress-led UPA. Both the UPA and the NDA are tested and tried options of the ruling class, having earlier served it faithfully from governmental office. So, by preventing any other alternative from appearing before the people, the monopoly-controlled media ensured that whichever way the voting went, interest of the ruling class was secured. Besides, some publicity was provided to the so-called 3rd Front as well because, if elected, its MPs would also be at the disposal of the ruling class for safeguarding its class interest.

Trickery of electoral reforms

To stabilize this two-party system and expedite jettisoning other political parties particularly the genuine revolutionary party from the poll scenario, a host of measures have been announced in the name of making the electoral process 'free from aberrations' which, in effect, are increasingly making it more difficult for the voice of people to be projected through the election process. For example, the Election Commission has through phenomenal 20 times rise in the deposit money of the candidates, fixing of exorbitant price for procuring voters' lists, making the registration rules so stringent that only the parties showing allegiance to the ruling class can fulfill the eligibility criteria, denying permanent symbol and propaganda slots in the official electronic media to the non-registered parties, issue of symbols

Contd. on page 7

Pinning all hopes in parliamentary politics and shunning democratic movements is no remedial course

Contd. from page 6

to the non-registered parties only 11/12 days before the election date, restrictions on wall writing, display of banners and sticking of posters, raising of the official ceiling of a candidate's electioneering costs, etc., created a situation in which a party of the poor people, without financial backing of the industrialists, traders and black-marketers, which cannot afford commercial hoardings, cut-outs and propaganda slots in the commercial media, is virtually denied its basic right to reach out to the people with its message at election time. But still, it is remarkable how even in this election totally manipulated by money, muscle and media power, the people, wherever they got the opportunity, stood up and voted against misrule and oppression.

Why Congress stole the show

Keeping in mind all the above factors that have been making a mockery of the election in our country, we must ponder a little as to why Congress was preferred over BJP and others. Of late, the BJP has been rattled by internal squabbles so much so that their top leaders were found to air their differences in the open even on the issue of the party's prime ministerial candidate. Moreover, even in the bourgeois sense, the BJP leaders could not bring forth a single issue, national or international that could pose any serious challenge to the Congress. Unsuccessful, they again tried to resurrect the Mandir-Masjid issue and foment Hindu communalism. Varun Gandhi's vitriolic outburst against the minority community was an eloquent testimony. But it had, unfortunately, not many takers. Whatever revelations about the communal carnages in Gujarat and Kandhamal organized by the BJP and the Sangh Parivar have been there, turned the sober and sane sections of the people against the BJP. The internal pre-poll squabbles of the BJP, appearing in the media, tarnished BJP's image. The resultant electoral reverse of the BJP, however, does not mean that the communal danger posed by BJP's politics is no longer there or that the burning necessity of fighting it out has lessened anyway.

This provided a big handle to the Congress. The ruling class, it seems, did not find it prudent, in the

aggregate interest of capitalism, to opt for a regime change at the centre at this juncture. So it tacitly approved a concerted fanfare about, among other things, the Congress-led UPA government's so-called *susashan* (good governance), its promise to bring about development and progress which was able to confuse a section of the people, particularly of the minority community. In absence of a countrywide movement against the anti-people policies of the Congress-led UPA government to expose its character, mainly due to the treachery of the CPI (M), CPI, masquerading themselves as Marxists-Communists, the people in the larger part of the country were left practically disarmed. The CPI (M), CPI rather had supported the Congress government for 4½ years conferring on it a secular credential to confuse the people, particularly of the minority community. They thus became instrumental in the bourgeois conspiracy to help the Congress wear a pro-people mask. The pre-election hohnobbling of the Congress leaders with important personalities of imperialist powers were also noteworthy indicating whom the world imperialists-capitalists find most suitable at this point of time to serve best their counterparts in India. Above all, thanks to the incessant media propaganda which sought to create a notion that in the given circumstances, Congress is a better choice, the people were disinclined towards the BJP. This gave Congress a slight edge over BJP. So in effect there was no 'pro-Congress wind or wave' as is now being sought to be impressed upon. If there was any, even the Congress High Command was certainly unaware of it. Otherwise, why did it explore the possibility of striking unprincipled tie-ups with all and sundry in the hope of forming a government till the very last hours before the election results were out? As everyone knows, post-poll alliances were not ruled out by either Congress or the CPI(M), CPI though they fought each other in the polls. The 3rd front of the CPI (M), CPI was also a damp squib and in the language of Sitaram Yechury, CPI(M) polit bureau member, "a cut and paste job on the eve of elections" and "was neither credible nor viable" (Devil's advocate with

Karan Thapar, 24 May, 2009) Moreover, it is revealed that at all India level, Congress has gained merely 2% in vote share. In Andhra Pradesh, Vote share of Congress has gone down from 41.6% in 2004 to 39.5 this time. In Gujarat also, vote share of Congress dropped by 0.5%. (Times of India—18 May, 2009). So, where was the so-called wave in favour of Congress?

In West Bengal, there was a strong anti-CPI(M) swing. A series of movements against the CPI(M) government's anti-people role and misrule left such a deep impression upon the people of the state that they expressed their verdict against the CPI(M) in no uncertain manner through this election although this was not an election for the state legislature.

People's cause must be pursued

The people of the country had yearned for a real change. At least, through this election, they had expected some relief from the all round exploitation and oppression. But what have they got? It is the same old Congress that during its prolonged almost uninterrupted rule after independence (except some brief period in between) But that was not to be, in the absence of their own political alternative. Had there been a tide of united people's movement centering on the burning problems of life under the aegis of left-democratic forces, innumerable people's struggle committees and volunteer corps as people's own instruments of struggle would have emerged. In that event, elections could be fought in continuation of these movements and tested and tried soldiers of people's struggle could be elected as genuine people's representatives who could reflect the voice of mass movement inside the legislatures and acting in conjunction with the mass movement outside, could have tried to resist the attacks on the people as far as possible and provide some relief to them. This could not come about because the pseudo-Marxists

like the CPI(M), CPI who have crossed over to the side of the bourgeoisie and instead of building up people's movements, are in fact brutally crushing people's struggles as was blatantly seen in Singur-Nandigram. As a result, the Congress is now licensed to rule as it likes and the situation is such that it has no compunction in imposing fresh burdens of capitalist exploitation on the people. Those harbouring illusion of Congress bringing desired relief and respite from the strangulating situation will soon find the reality otherwise. In the name of reforms and in pursuit of the ruinous prescripts of capitalist globalization, newer attacks will descend upon the people with all virulence. In order to thwart this impending danger, what is imperative is to develop torrents of organized democratic mass movements throughout the country on the burning problems of life in which all sections of toiling people must participate in growing numbers. In this process only, the cardinal necessity of a left and democratic alternative in the country can be fulfilled. Pinning all hopes in parliamentary politics and hence shunning the path of movement is in no way an approved remedial course. The SUCI has been relentlessly trying to hold aloft this flag of left-democratic movement on the burning issues of people's life and even contested the election on that basis. SUCI is committed to reflect the voice of movement inside the parliament and thus coordinate parliamentary battle with extra-parliamentary struggle. We call upon the toiling people to come forward and build up sustained organized powerful conscious movement to foil the bourgeois conspiracy to dissuade them from the path of movement by the hullabaloo created over election results, ministry formation and customary dishing of false promises.

Footnote: - The significance of the poll verdict in West Bengal is discussed separately in this issue of Proletarian Era.

Corrigendum

1. Please read 'Elections to constitute 17th Lok Sabha' in the previous issue of Proletarian Era (dated 15 May 2009) as **15th Lok Sabha**. Mistake is regretted.
2. In the speech of Comrade Sukomal Dasgupta (P. Era dated 1 May, 2009, the sentence (40th line) should be read as "First category is applicant members who believe in Marxism-Leninism-Shibdas Ghosh and pay regular subscription to the party and **work under one of the party bodies.**" **Omission is regretted.**

AIDSO stalls imposition of fees for buying identity form in Darbhanga college

The Darbhanga district committee of AIDSO in Bihar launched a protest movement against the authorities of Darbhanga College for illegally charging a fee of Rs 25 from each student in the name of providing identity card while filling up form for Part I examination. It also demanded immediate holding of regular classes. AIDSO leaders said

that if this fee was not withdrawn forthwith, the students would step up their agitation. They also demanded immediate refund of the fees already collected. Under pressure of movement, the authorities bowed down and stopped collection of fees. This significant victory has created lot of enthusiasm among the students.

Criminal callousness of governments responsible for devastation

Contd. from page 1

together, assisting each other, distributing whatever little morsel they could avail from various sources. Both our MLAs from Kultali and Joynagar as well as our newly elected MP from Joynagar had rushed to the various spots alongwith other comrades and tried to reach out whatever little relief material could be collected so far. But the relief sent so far is meager compared to the need and it has also not reached all the places. Most of the distressed people have not received anything so far. If the situation continues unabated, severe loss of life will take place because of starvation, intake of polluted water and absence of medical treatment. Already rampant nepotism and corruption have started in distribution of relief. The pathetic loss of life and property can not be recouped. Those who are

missing may not come back. Those who are lucky to survive do not know how they will subsist in the days to come. Nobody knows how many lakhs will resort to beggary to eke out a living.

The devastation was not inevitable. At the callousness of both union and state governments – the dense mangrove forests of the Sunderbans have been illegally destroyed, age-old embankments are left without any necessary repairs, silted rivers are hardly dredged – all to the effect of weakening the protective measures and gears of the are. It ought to be appreciated that devastation of such a magnitude was not inevitable.

The people of the country are fervently called upon to rise to the occasion and lend a hand of assistance to the ill-fated cyclone and flood victims of West Bengal and help them to be rehabilitated.



*A woman in Gosaba block of the Sunderbans appeals for relief as an Indian Air Force chopper surveys the area to drop food packets
(Photo by courtesy : Hindustan Times, 28 May, 2009)*

SUCI protests Central government's move to deregulate oil price

Comrade Nihar Mukherjee, General Secretary, SUCI, in course of a statement issued on 31 May, 2009, expressed grave concern and anguish over the proposed move on the part of the newly elected Congress-led UPA government to abolish oil subsidy and deregulate oil pricing and thereby allow the bumper profit-making oil companies to arbitrarily fix the retail tariff of petrol-diesel in the name of keeping parity with fluctuating international crude price. Granting such exclusive power of retail price determination to the oil behemoths is a clear indication that the government will gradually move out of whatever public welfare it now formally undertakes and pave the way of large scale privatization of areas now in the government sector, observed Comrade Mukherjee. He further said that leaving the common people to the mercy of the oil sharks will cause continuous rise in the prices of petroleum products which in turn will further push up the already spiralling priceline causing immense hardship to the people bleeding white under ruthless capitalist exploitation. This, Comrade Mukherjee added, once again shows how the Congress is in hot pursuit of the brazenly anti-people policies of capitalist globalization and has no qualms in subjecting the suffering masses, whom it pretends to be so much concerned of, to further peril and pauperization. Comrade Mukherjee called upon the countrymen to build up countrywide powerful resistance movement to thwart the pernicious move.

SUCI criticizes Government of India's denouncing of reported Nuclear test by North Korea

Comrade Nihar Mukherjee, General Secretary, SUCI, in course of a statement issued on 26 May 2009 strongly criticized Government of India for denouncing the reported nuclear test by North Korea. When lasting solution of the problem arising out of possession of nuclear weapons by various states lies in total disarmament and destruction of all nuclear arsenals by all countries, it is highly condemnable that Government of India alongwith US and its other imperialist allies, instead of engaging themselves to the task, are indulging in such hypocritical denigration of socialist North Korea not amenable to the dictates of the imperialist warmongers, said Comrade Mukherjee. Such action by the imperialist bloc and Government of India is seemingly purported to sustain their monopolistic hold over nuclear armoury and hence exposes their sheer double standard and crass opportunism, he observed.

Comrade Tarun Mandal will sit in Parliament in the Opposition Bench

Strongly contradicting the highly distorted news appearing in a section of the media to the effect that the newly elected SUCI MP Comrade Tarun Mandal is extending support to the Congress-led UPA government, Comrade Nihar Mukherjee, General Secretary, SUCI, in course of a statement issued on 21 May 2009 emphatically stated that it was totally baseless. Recalling the fact that although the party fought the last Lok Shabha poll in West Bengal in alliance with the Trinamool Congress which developed in course of conducting people's movements, yet it also fought against the Congress candidates in West Bengal, as it stands firmly opposed to the Congress party and its government, it being the most trusted party of the ruling capitalist class. Comrade Mukherjee, made it emphatically clear that in pursuance of the party's consistent policy of opposing the Congress and its government, Comrade Tarun Mandal will oppose pro-capitalist and anti-people policies of the Congress-led UPA government and will, therefore, sit in the Opposition Bench in Parliament.

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