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Bhopal verdict

Unravels cruel despotic corrupt face of moribund capitalism

The recent Bhopal verdict that virtually let off the guilty and reduced the worst 'industrial disaster' ever, to the equivalent of a mere street accident – a deadly gas leak that killed over 20,000 people and afflicted more than half a million people — has deeply shocked the people throughout the country and created a storm of indignation. The verdict has made a mockery of justice, a mockery of the sufferings of gas victims, maimed, disabled and diseased. After a long wait for the gas victims, after a delay of 26 years, the Bhopal judgement has pronounced UCIL chairman Keshub Mahindra and six other officials guilty and sentenced them to two years in jail with a fine of 1 lakh each. The guilty have immediately been released on a bail of Rs. 25,000. It is sure they will appeal against the sentence and ultimately pay neither the fine nor serve the prison sentence. None of the far more guilty personnel of the parent UCC were sentenced.

Disaster strikes in Bhopal

The name Bhopal has come to stand worldwide for an industrial disaster – an unspeakable tragedy for people – its horrific memory etched in the survivor's mind. It is well-known that on the fateful night of December 2, 1984, when the gas leak happened, the people of Bhopal were caught unaware in their sleep. The factory's sirens had been turned off. There was no one to warn them, no one to give advice, no semblance of an administration. In that night of horror people did not know what had happened when an exploding tank of over 40 tonnes of MIC (methyl isocyanide) in the Union Carbide pesticide's factory, located in a densely populated area, sent a cocktail of poisonous gases gushing into the air that silently spread into their homes. People did not know what to do as the dense cloud of poison gases was burning the tissues of their eyes and lungs, and attacking their nervous systems. Writhing in pain from its searing and suffocating effect they tried to escape, to run to safety, anywhere, following others, amidst total chaos. Some vomited uncontrollably, went into convulsions and fell dead. Others choked to

death. Many died a horrible death. When dawn broke over the city, thousands of human bodies and animal carcasses lay in heaps in the streets. How many died, no one knows. Union Carbide talked of 3,800. Municipal workers, who picked up bodies with their own hands, loading them onto trucks for burial in mass graves or to be burned on mass pyres, estimated that they shifted at least 15,000 bodies. More than half a million people have been exposed to the gases. They are still suffering from the deadly after-effects, some blind, others half-blind, disabled and diseased, their offsprings maimed and diseased. Many succumbed years later, and still do, from multiple organ failure and cancer. According to Rashida Bai, who survived the gas but lost five family members to cancers, those who escaped with their lives "are the unlucky ones; the lucky ones are those who died on that night."

Union Carbide plant at Bhopal was accident prone

But this disaster was not an accident that came, so to say, like a bolt from the blue. It came as the culmination of a series of minor accidents, for the Bhopal factory had a long history of safety violations. On December 26, 1981 one worker at the Union Carbide India Ltd. (UCIL) plant in Bhopal — a subsidiary of the US multinational Union Carbide Corporation (UCC) — died due to a phosgene spill, and two were seriously injured. A fortnight later 25 workers were hospitalized from another phosgene leak. Again in October 1982, there was a leak of MIC gas, which badly affected people residing nearby, many of whom had to be hospitalized. Wherever any industrial factory is engaged in the hazardous production of poisonous and toxic materials there must be adequate safety measures and monitoring system to arrest any possible accidental disaster. But conditions that prevailed at the Union Carbide plant are simply beyond imagination.

Warnings of workers at Bhopal ignored

After the 1982 gas leak the workers union of the factory, who had in vain demanded better

Contd. on page 2

SUCI (Communist) Protests against petro price hike

Strongly protesting the Congress government's petro price-hike decision SUCI(C) General Secretary Comrade Provash Ghosh in course of a statement issued on 25 June last said :

The Central Congress Government while giving thousands of crores of rupees to the capitalists as monetary help, has thrust upon the people another bout of petro price-hike, not sparing even the poorest, for whom kerosene oil is the only fuel to cook and to light their huts. The Congress government has resorted to this shameless act only to bridge the budget deficit and to help the oil companies to reap super profit. Because of prevailing huge government duties, when the prices of petro products are already high in India, this further hike will push the people who are reeling under the burden of high food price inflation, into more miseries.

This again shows that the present Congress government by sacrificing the interests of the common people is actually serving the interests of the capitalists and oil companies. We demand immediate withdrawal of the decision. Our party will continue the protest and agitation against this utter anti-people decision of the central Congress government.

SUCI (Communist) calls All India 12-hour general strike on 5 July, 2010 in protest against oil price hike, increase in coal cess and government's role in Bhopal gas disaster

Calling upon the countrymen to observe an All India 12-hour general strike and hartal on 5 July, 2010 in demand for immediate roll back of the steep hike in the retail tariff of petrol, diesel, kerosene and cooking gas as well as annulling the decision of imposing additional cess on coal, stemming the spiraling of prices of essential commodities and in protest against the central government's reprehensible role in the Bhopal gas disaster and inaction to prevent rise of prices of essential commodities,

Contd. on page 8

Bhopal was not an accident but crime

Contd. from page 1

working conditions and safety measures, printed and distributed hundreds of posters among people of the vicinity that warned: "Beware of Fatal Accidents", "Lives of thousands of workers and citizens in danger because of poisonous gas", "Spurt of accidents in the factory, safety measures deficient." A local journalist, Raajkumar Keswani who had interviewed worried staff at the Union Carbide factory, wrote several exposure articles with headings such as: 'Bhopal sitting on top of a volcano'. He wrote to politicians warning of the dangerous state of the factory, but it was a cry in the wilderness; the powers that be paid no attention. And yet it is not that they were not aware how deadly the chemical materials involved in previous accidents were. For, phosgene is a highly poisonous gas commonly known as war gas and was used by the rulers of Germany during the First World War. Again MIC was one of the chemical substances once tested as a possible weapon in chemical warfare by the US. In our article in Proletarian Era, dated March 15, 1985 we had raised the question of whether research carried out at the R & D (Research and Development) Wing, which every MNC has, had anything to do with the disaster or what kind of gases had escaped with MIC. To this day the Union Carbide Corporation has refused to divulge the composition of the cloud of poisonous gases that had escaped in the great disaster in 1984.

The fact remains, that to the multinational companies aiming solely at extracting maximum profits by exploiting people, human life has no value, least of all in developing countries. So they do not care to install adequate safety system, neither for the workers within the plant nor for the people living outside. In western countries, where the relatively strong pressure exerted by public consciousness and opinion keeps government and administrative machinery alert, these companies are obliged to keep within the bounds of the prescribed rules and acts, and follow some safety standard. But ours is a country, where the poverty stricken people struggling hard for their bare existence, do not have that adequate level of consciousness regarding industrial hazards, environmental

pollution, and where the government has least concern for the lives of hapless poor workers, and hence is also least concerned whether the companies obey the safety rules or not.

This is also glaringly illustrated the way the government dealt with violation of the industrial zoning law in case of Union Carbide. The UCIL factory, that was producing several pesticides involving hazardous and toxic chemicals, was located in a densely populated area, which is illegal. But as far back as 1975 when the then town planning and administrator issued notice to Union Carbide to shift its plant from the populated area, it was he who lost his job, but the plant remained where it was. Again, following the gas leak in 1982 when the proposal for shifting the plant once more came up, the then Congress (I) Labour Minister stated in the Assembly that "Rs 28 crores have been invested in this unit. The factory is not a small stone that can be shifted elsewhere." Even at that time the level of the environmental pollution caused by the plant exceeded the limit allowed by the Indian Standards Institution (ISI). The Air Pollution Act stated that if the ISI limit is crossed by any factory, the government has the authority to revoke its licence. But neither the state nor the central government took any steps against Union Carbide. And how could action be taken against the Union Carbide when the latter acted as a consultant to the central government in matters relating to chemical industry? Moreover, more often than not someone from Union Carbide would sit on the subcommittee preparing the codes of safety in handling and storage of each industrial chemical, published by ISI. The company, of course, like any other multinational never failed to reciprocate for such kind of patronage. Union Carbide had kept a plush guest house at the disposal of the ruling party, with a suite reserved for the Chief Minister. In the company's roster there were relatives of several ministers and senior bureaucrats of the government. In the dossier published by Raajkumar Keswani these facts found mention. So did the fact that Bhopal's former Inspector General of Police was employed by Carbide as its security advisor, that the company gave jobs with titles like 'sports advisor' to

sons and relatives of politicians and civil servants.

The very setting up of the additional MIC-producing unit within the Bhopal plant came in violation of the 1974 FERA regulations requiring foreign equity holdings in Indian companies to be no more than 40%. Union Carbide, however, was allowed to retain a majority of 50.99% from its earlier holding of 60%. It had proposed to the Indian government that it would start producing MIC at Bhopal in return for an exemption from FERA on the grounds that MIC production, a Union Carbide speciality, needed high-technology inputs not available in India. It is the exemption granted by the government that allowed the US multinational to keep majority control over the company.

Instead of advanced technology UCC installed cheap unproven technology in Bhopal

Immediately after the disaster the UCC, the US parent company, claimed it had no authority or control over the plant's ultimate design or operations, and thus could bear no responsibility for the disaster. Through its powerful Public Relation (PR) machinery it missed no opportunity to spread misinformation. First it circulated the theory of sabotage. When laboratory tests proved the theory to be absurd, it claimed that the 1984 gas leak disaster was a failure of its Indian subsidiary, UCIL, aided and abetted in its negligence and incompetence by the Indian government.

Many details of confidential Union Carbide documents obtained via the 'discovery' process during a "class action" brought by survivors against Union Carbide in a Manhattan court, including excerpts of some memos, have been circulated on the internet by the International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal. These prove that the UCC — the parent company was not only desperate to retain majority control, but, in fact, the documents reveal its control and authority over the plant. These provide evidence that a series of minor accidents in the Bhopal plant, many of which were suppressed, were due to the fact that the US Union Carbide had installed an unproven technology, in other words it used a cheap

unproven method to produce the ultra-hazardous MIC liquid instead of the advanced technology it was supposed to install. The decision was described in a board minute as an 'acceptable risk'.

The recovered documents show that safety audits at the Bhopal plant were performed by UCC's American engineers, and after the 1981 phosgene leak it was the management committee in New York who decided what should be done. A 'business confidential' safety audit in May 1982 identified 30 major hazards, including 11 in the dangerous phosgene/MIC plant. As a result, safety measures at UCC's plant in West Virginia were improved, but not in Bhopal, where safety measures were more primitive, anyway. The factory was running at a loss and Carbide was anxious to sell it. However, as an internal memo reveals, it had used unproven technology in the design of an important unit and it would be 'impossible to sell.' So, the company went on a cost-cutting spree. The cost-cutting measures were directed by the Danbury Headquarters of Union Carbide. These included slashing the crew of the MIC plant to half and maintenance crew to one third. Safety training for operators of the MIC plant was cut from 6 months to 15 days. In the control room, there was only one operator who was expected to monitor 70-odd panels, indicators and controllers, which often failed.

Moreover, in plants dealing with corrosive chemicals such as MIC, experts want fortnightly inspections of valves, pipes, and pumps, with new replacements every six months, but in Bhopal inspections were rare and replacements were not made for two years. In case of repairs, the use of new parts was curtailed. Old ones had to be recycled.

A glut of deadly MIC

As MIC is a particularly reactive and deadly gas, all over Europe the maximum permissible storage limit for MIC is half a ton. UCC's West Virginia plant too only stored minuscule amounts of MIC. But at the Bhopal plant, the storage capacity was held hazardously high at over 90 tons. On the night of the disaster, 67 tons of MIC were stored in two tanks. Moreover, the huge tanks of MIC had to be kept, as per the Carbide safety manual at zero

Contd. on page 5

Latest powerful people's movement in Thailand

Sad end exposes want of correct fighting leadership

Thailand, the country which became infamous as a military air base of the US imperialists during their aggression upon Vietnam and as an entertainment centre during that war for the demoralized US soldiers and which is presently popularized rather stigmatized as a glamorous tourist centre of the South East Asia, hit media headlines during March to May last. It was rocked by a people's movement in which hundreds of thousand protesters, mostly urban and rural poor, including women, children and elderly people assembled on the streets of the capital Bangkok, in demand of democracy and end of inequality. They also demanded removal of the Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva, who was known for his undemocratic, oppressive rule and who had been acting for the elites and the military without any concern for the poor and common people. In the same vein, they demanded dissolution of Parliament and holding of election. The movement was characterized by such massiveness, zeal, determination and militancy of the participants, that it could have earned the distinction of being slightly short of a people's uprising against a despotic ruler of a capitalist state. Naturally, it drew the attention of both the freedom-loving common people as well as the reactionary rulers of different countries of the world, the latter being reflected in the Reuter warning that if this movement was not crushed, the problems so far pushed under the carpet would start coming out. The protesters put up barricades even in Bangkok's upscale central shopping and tourism district, created a protest zone around this part of the city, held their posts firm for nearly two months, but were finally brutally suppressed and dispersed by the army at the cost of heavy casualties.

The pathetic end of this massive movement of Thai people which held its militant mood alive for nearly two months even after betrayal of leadership, brought pain and anguish to democratic-minded people of the world. It calls for a scientific analysis of why could not such a movement that held prospect of further heightening and deepening develop to the desired end. The present write-up will attempt at that

in brief.

The ruling capitalist system of Thailand, through implementation of the imperialist policy of globalization and liberalization is wreaking havoc in the life and livelihood of common people, just as anywhere in other capitalist countries of the world. Behind the façade of high-tech growth with capital-intensive industries, characterized by jobless economic development, there has developed a handful of unbelievably rich elite, plunged in vulgar wealth, sustaining the economy of fabulously profit-making capitalists and with accompanying debauchery, corruption, malice, power-mongering yet securely protected by the laws, the army, the security forces, police and the government etc., of the capitalist state of Thailand. On the other hand, both urban and rural common poorer people find nothing but mounting unemployment-underemployment-barely paid casual employment, poverty, lack of proper educational, health and dwelling facilities staring starkly in their face. Added to this is Thailand's notoriety for dependence on tourism industry which means providing the high-earning rich with unlimited legal or illegal, normal or immoral means and avenues of making merry, pushing the common people to a life of earning quick money at the cost of all senses of morality and ethics.

Such was the social-economic-cultural backdrop on which there developed the present movement of people of Thailand. Quite understandably such a backdrop fraught with exploitation, disparity, cultural-moral degeneration only generated discontent and wrath in common poorer people. The movement was vigorous expression of these sentiments of people. It was led primarily by the UDD (United Front of Democracy against Dictatorship) or more popularly known as "Red Shirts" and its participants included supporters of Thaksin Shinawatra, who was elected Prime Minister in 2001 and was ousted in a 2006 military coup. Both Thaksin, and as reports go, the UDD leaders, were bourgeois petty bourgeois politicians confined to their parliamentary political aspirations. Thaksin Shinawatra, himself a tycoon, was an ardent

advocate of neo-liberal economic policies that were the forms which the ruling capitalism depended upon in these days of imperialist globalization. As the Prime Minister, Thaksin had adopted certain populist measures like healthcare for poor and cheap loans for peasants etc., apparently to water down the simmering discontent of the have-nots and deprived. However, as a defender of capitalism, he had to take anti-people measures and was also inevitably drawn into the vortex of shameless corruption. These generated discontent in a section of people against him, his party and followers. The present Prime Minister Abhisit played upon it and launched movement against him and ultimately had him deposed by the military on charges of corruption and violation of human rights. He was sent to exile, from where he dissolved his party, but did not lose his link in the country, made manipulated moves to launch movements, including regrouping his supporters to form a new party which won election. The new Prime Minister from that party was also ousted by the military and with their support the present incumbent Abhisit Vejjajiva rose to power without going through any election. Both Thaksin Shinawatra and Abhisit Vejjajiva were subservient to the ruling capitalist class in their ardent advocacy of neo-liberal economic policies. Vejjajiva depended largely upon the military for governance and nakedly adopted pro-capitalist pro-elite measures writing off the earlier pro-people steps of Thaksin. He crushed opponents and steam-rolled any outburst of discontent and protests. Shinawatra and bourgeois petty bourgeois leaders, in their turn, waited in the wings, and occasionally manipulated movements to cash upon the rising discontent of people with a view to making road smooth to rise to power again, as they did in the present case. In addition, the US imperialists had, and still have, a strong influence over the socio-political situation of Thailand, since the days of their war against Vietnam. All the governments, including those of Thaksin and Abhisit were notorious for their pro-US leanings. Quite obviously that influence of the most arrogant, war-monger, power of the

totally decadent world capitalist-imperialist system, which was also the standard-bearer of the filthiest imperialist culture leaves immense effect on the society of Thailand. On such a background, even if people were fuming with rage and were ready to stand up firmly against exploitation and suppression, they had to rest content with bourgeois petty bourgeois leadership which always dreamt of parliamentary power and pelf, sailing on people's genuine sentiments against the prevailing misrule.

Such murky trends of parliamentary politics was evident in the chronicle of events, the movement went through. The protesters in hundreds of thousands gathered in Bangkok on March 12. They set up barricades on streets, erected protest zones and steadily spread out their area of influence earning active or tacit support from a vast section of people from all over the country. On April 7, the government declared state of emergency in Bangkok area and used the emergency Act to close many websites and a television channel. But the protests snowballed further. Remarkably, during this early phase of protest, it remained peaceful showing no signs of wearing down. Rather it tended to reach such spread, depth and resolve that the government seemed at a loss in controlling it. Towards the end of April, with a view to inciting a section of people against another they pushed in opponents of anti-Abhisit protesters into the movement, which might have included agent provocateurs too. Though it generated some group clashes, but, in the main, the trick did not cut much ice and protesters remained firm. Finally the government decided to deploy the Army for final crackdown.

On May 3 Abhisit had offered elections on 14 November if the Red Shirts ended occupation of commercial centre. Going by the record, it was hardly possible to trust upon the offer made by the Prime Minister. However, the UDD leaders set four conditions like a clear date for the dissolution of Parliament paving way for the 14 November poll, stopping of all types of intimidation etc. They also suggested

Contd. on page 4

Thailand movement

Reflects commendable zeal and determination of toiling people

Contd. from page 3

United Nations-brokered talks to end days of street fighting. The government rejected the UDD leaders' suggestion and the military crackdown continued. On May 12, the government withdrew election offer, let loose a hate campaign branding the protesters as anti-Thailand "terrorists" and simultaneously heightened the military offensive. The army cut off supplies of water, food and electricity to the protest zone and came down with severe brute attack on the protesters, not excluding women, children and old, on the one hand, and upon media persons covering the incidents, a few of whom were shot at and injured by the soldiers. Even Major General Khattiya Sawasdiaphol, an army officer who aided the Red Shirts, was shot in the head while talking to reporters in downtown Bangkok. In fact, the movement sent such waves of support in people and was assuming such dimension that those even penetrated the ranks of the army, even making some former or present officers join hands with the movement. It came to such a condition that at an earlier stage of the movement even the Army Commander-in-Chief, General Anupong Paochinda had hinted at 'reconciliation' to arrest the movement. However, later on the civilian Prime Minister and the Army Chief, came closer on the same platform of crackdown, as the ruling capitalist class of the country finally decided to crush the people's movement. The government declared 17 and 18 May public holidays in Bangkok, and extended the state of emergency to five more provinces, all of them strongholds of the UDD. In face of this combined civil and military offensive the UDD leaders gradually retreated and finally surrendered. Even Thaksin Shinawatra called on his supporters to seek "reconciliation". Without guiding the movement to develop step by step in a more and more organized form to a stronger shape, the leaders simply betrayed and fled the scene. But submission, betrayal and retreat of leaders did not distract the common people who were fighting for their life and livelihood. They stuck to their demands, continued their struggle and held their posts for a few more days, although in vain. Finally, on 20 May

last, blood-spattered streets of Bangkok were strewn with dead bodies of the downtrodden people, including defenceless women, children and old, who had only cried for democracy and end of inequality. The streets which had been reverberating with slogans marked with zeal, determination and militancy passed into the gloom of peace for the rulers and their henchmen of the so-called democratic Thailand state. A glorious movement of people met with a tragic end leaving a trail of death, officially calculated in thirties, but really rising to over hundred with thousand sustaining grievous injury.

Thus a powerful people's movement with great potentialities was brutally suppressed to a futile end, causing people looking for mass movements and exploitation and injustice in different countries to ponder what went wrong and caused such a debacle. Let us recall at this point that powerful militant mass-movements came up in the recent past in Indonesia against Suharto or twice in the Philippines against Marcos and Astrada respectively. In both the cases the movements virtually paralyzed the respective countries when people fought valiantly against the armies of the state and even the said despotic autocrats fully supported by their armies had to resign immediately. In several other countries like Myanmar, Bangladesh, South Korea etc., there were also massive people's movements. These movements often had specific demands as well, in cases demanded removal of this or that autocratic ruler. But also notable was the fact that in all the cases, over and above those demands people amply gave vent to their wrath and indignation against their respective exploitative-oppressive states, breeding disparity, discrimination, unemployment, poverty, illiteracy corruption and such other evils that bled them white.

But in all these cases, such bourgeois petty bourgeois political forces or individuals were in the leadership which did not pay any heed to these popular feelings against the system, rather cashed in upon people's genuine discontent, dragged them into movement that were designed to pave their way to power and pelf and ultimately, if and

when there was brute suppression by the state machinery, they deserted people leaving them helpless, directionless. Sometimes, as in Indonesia or the Philippines, people's entire wrath was channelized into resignation of individual autocrat without the system, the root of the evils having any effect upon it. It resulted in removal of one Suharto or Marcos, for example, to ultimately make room for another 'Suharto' or 'Marcos' to rise. Exploitation and oppression of common people continued in spite of their valiant fight to stage movements that had all the potentialities of developing into mass uprisings. Neither were people equipped ideologically-culturally-organizationally for further fights for uprising against the system. In Thailand too the present movement faced the similar fate with the leadership vanishing from the scene leaving fighting people helpless and radarless.

Naturally every right-thinking person would be bothered by the questions : why did such massive powerful movements fail so miserably; why could people be led astray in each case even when they were ready to fight for life to realize their demand. Unambiguously, it points to the fact that it is vital for any mass movement to be led by a correct political leadership. Only a correct leadership would guide people in the right direction till the end; would raise people's political-ideological consciousness to identify the real cause of their plight, their main enemy that perpetrates exploitation-oppression and would help people fortify themselves with cultural-moral-ethical standards that would help them develop a mental make-up for protracted struggle against powerful enemy and hundred odds and stand unwavering in face of severest repressions. Only a correct leadership would feel the necessity of developing iron-strong organization of people ready to carry on sustained struggle against the powerful state machinery. To that end, the leadership would give rise to struggle committees of people of various shades of opinion united for the common cause of movement and would raise volunteer forces to carry on the fight on actual fields. Who else other than a genuine Marxist-Leninist revolutionary party can perform these gigantic tasks? Can

bourgeois petty bourgeois reformist forces and leaders with petty goals to reach power within the system riding upon people's discontent can carry out these tasks? Will they ever want people to develop an iron-strong mentality for protracted struggle or will they always wish to distract people's movement into the blind alleys of bourgeois parliamentary politics?

Realization of these truths are brilliantly expressed in the valuable guidelines of Comrade Shibdas Ghosh, the eminent Marxist thinker of the recent times and the founder General Secretary of our party, who on seeing the sad end and dismal failure of many mass movements in India for want of correct leadership to people who stood bare-chested to face bullets of the mercenaries of the state and called for leaders to guide them, repeatedly raised this point of caution to mass movements and their organizers. Referring to the attitude of the leaders of the then democratic movement, he said : "...knowingly or unknowingly, the very interest of electioneering is becoming the overriding aspect of our politics, behind all our practice and behavior.... The main political outlook behind all these movements is mainly agitation oriented... their struggles are but struggles to whip up electoral fever..... the real object of struggle is to achieve people's emancipation — to hasten it up through struggle, to educate the people through struggles and gradually organizing people to ultimately decide the question of their emancipation" With reference to leaders again, he added : "Their objective is not to educate the people, but only to win cheap popularity. When people have to be taught about organization and inculcated with the ideology, when they have to be taught the tactics of the movement — how to fight, how to advance, how to retreat— at that very juncture, having aroused the people with harangue and winning cheap applause these leaders withdraw from struggle. This is the character of our leaders." While discussing the nature of people's committees as instruments of struggle, Comrade Shibdas Ghosh pointed out : "...If an organic link is to be established between the leadership and the people who join the movement and take part in

Contd. on page 8

UCIL authorities violated all safety measure norms

Contd. from page 2

Degrees C. But between 1983 and 1984 the safety manuals were re-written to permit switching off the refrigeration, among others, when the plant was not in operation. Consequently the refrigeration unit was turned off to save about \$ 40 per day on freon gas. A private memo from US Union Carbide's Eastern headquarters in Hong Kong, boasts of having saved \$ 1.25 million, but says that 'future savings would not be so easy.' At the time of the gas leak disaster not even one of the plant's safety systems – six in all – was operational, and the plant siren had been turned off.

Is this not criminal! – a crime no less than that of killing people in the gas chamber by hydrocyanic acid, so to say, as did the fascists during the Second World War! And such a crime has been reduced to the equivalent of a mere negligence in a traffic accident in the recent Bhopal verdict!

Treatment meted out to gas victims

After the disaster, Union Carbide as well as the Indian Government long denied that MIC and the other gases caused permanent injuries. In other chemical disasters where the nature of chemicals involved are known effective medical treatment starts immediately. But the suppression of vital medical information by Union Carbide Corporation officials prevented immediate proper medical treatment of the victims. Doctors were told to give eye drops and cough medicine. Even the UCIL which had manufactured MIC since 1980 apparently had no information on its toxicity nor did its medical officer know of any antidote in case of severe exposure. And when medical personnel in Bhopal administered the effective and non-toxic antidote (sodium thiosulfate) to cyanide poisoning to which autopsy reports pointed, the UCC officials began to spread misinformation and strongly discouraged its use. For, obviously, its use would have provided evidence about the serious nature of injuries and implicated them. But such criminal cruelty is but a normal practice for such MNCs. And the government, betraying a worst anti-people mindset, a typical colonial approach of bygone days, acted in connivance to protect corporate interest turning against its own people. At first even the medical

officer from UCC's West Virginia plant recommended the antidote but in the days to follow retracted and openly toed the UCC officials' line. This deliberate disinformation created confusion and controversy among Indian medical professionals, and in the event, the administration of this antidote was discontinued under official pressure. It was later determined through gas chromatography and mass spectroscopic studies of the tank residue and the blood of victims, autopsies of tissues and tests on the tissues of survivors, that the aerosol inhaled by the affected had contained a mixture of 21 chemicals, including cyanide, i.e. hydrogen cyanide. And only after seven months had elapsed, was the administration of above antidote resumed.

But suppression of evidence, of vital information that could have thrown light on the true nature and extent of the tragedy, and helped to nail down the culpability of Union Carbide, while bolstering up the claim for adequate compensation, did not end there. The only comprehensive survey of Bhopal gas victims, of the damage wrought by the gas leak ever to be undertaken, has yet to see the light of day 25 years later. The survey was undertaken by TISS (Tata Institute of Social Studies) just two weeks from the date of the leak in 1984, while the victims were still visibly suffering from the consequences of inhaling deadly gas. TISS conducted this survey at the request of the then Commissioner of Relief and Rehabilitation for gas victims, but at their own expense. 478 students drawn from different institutions and 41 faculty members – including present Director of TISS, Dr. S. Parasuraman, who was a member of the survey team — covered 25,259 households in a period of six weeks. Filled survey forms were handed over to the state government which promised to return them to TISS once they were processed for data. But nothing more was heard from the government. The survey findings included information about the number of people dead, orphaned children, pregnant women, lost domestic animals, injuries, breathing complications and blindness among other crucial data. Asked whether there was a political motive behind the concealing of data, Ms Desai, former Director of TISS concurred, "What else could it

have been since the survey findings were so crucial and complete? I even intimated Rajiv Gandhi about it when he visited TISS in 1985, but nothing came out of it", she says.

Similar is the case with comprehensive and long term medical studies that could have helped more accurate diagnosis and better medical treatment, besides establishing the case of victims more firmly. Since 1994, soon after which registration and categorization of gas victims was stopped, no comprehensive medical epidemiological studies to determine the long-term health effects of inhaling noxious gases have been carried out. And to the extent such medical follow-up studies were conducted between 1984 and 1994, under the aegis of the Indian Council of Medical Research, their results were withheld from public domain. It was only due to the perseverance of a few retired ICMR scientists that the study was made public a decade later in 2004. But, in the wake of the recent verdict, N R Bhandari who led these studies has alleged that the report did not include the results of some important studies on children.

Blind, lame, limbs twisted or missing, deafmute, brain-damaged — these are Bhopal's children born to gas victims. Even children of gas victims born years after the leak are diseased and suffer from birth defects. But they did not appear in official documents, for children under 18 years were not registered. Instead of taking effective remedial action to ameliorate their condition, instead of demanding justice for these children and proper compensation for the gas victims, all along we find a government-corporate connivance to hush up the actual crime, leaving the victims to their fate.

Victims denied proper registration and categorization

Not to speak of gas victims getting effective medical treatment, even proper examination, registration and correct categorization has been denied to the majority. In order to be eligible for compensation each claimant was to be categorized by a doctor. In court, the claimants were expected to prove "beyond reasonable doubt" that death or injury in each case was attributable to exposure. In the end, it has been found that most of the gas victims have been categorized

as having light injuries or temporary disablement, when in fact they remain incapacitated to varying degrees. Many thousand died since 1996 from the after-effects of the gas leak and the condition of diseased victims has worsened with time. Moreover, the pesticides and heavy metals present in the UCIL plant soil itself, as well as in the thousands of tonnes of untreated waste lying around scattered in its premises, have all leached into the groundwater. Even as far as 3 km from the factory, the concentration of six pesticides and heavy metals, including mercury, in the groundwater are 38.6 times higher than the Indian standard according to recent tests conducted by the Centre for Science and Environment. These are the same pesticides and heavy metals found in the plant's soil samples and waste samples in concentrations that are tens of thousands and even millions of times higher. No remedial action has been taken for all these years. And such groundwater has been consumed by poverty stricken people year after year, which has contributed to growing disease and increasing incidence of cancer compounding their woes. Though they are supposed to get free treatment, victims say, the hospitals often do not have the necessary medicines.

To prevent gas victims from initiating lawsuits themselves, the Indian Congress-led government made itself the sole legal representative for victims of the disaster, by passing the Bhopal Gas Leak Act in March 1985. Repeated demands of survivors' organizations to set up a Special Prosecution Cell for effective and quick prosecution were turned down by the government. In 1989 it entered into the out of court settlement with UCC, brokered by the Supreme Court, in which the government agreed to accept a paltry compensation of \$ 470 million instead of the \$ 3 billions originally demanded, and also agreed to the quashing of all civil and criminal charges against UCC.

But when such has been the condition of the gas victims all that they received was a mere trickle of financial compensation, and that too after long years of wait. The maximum those able to get registered as disabled have received is Rs. 25,000 – a mere pittance, a

Contd. on page 6

Government high ups connived to protect corporate interest turning against people

Contd. from page 5

ridiculous sum. It is under such conditions that Rashida Bai exclaimed that those who escaped with their lives "are the unlucky ones; the lucky ones are those who died on that night."

But several times when gas victims mobilized and marched to Delhi, trying to present their legitimate demands, including the demand for clean drinking water, to the government, they were lathi-charged and women and children alike thrown into jail. The same inhuman treatment they got in Bhopal, more than once. But for the guilty there was VIP treatment. To Warren Anderson, the then CEO of Union Carbide Corporation, who was responsible most of all for the leak, not merely was safe passage granted but a government plane was put at his disposal after the disaster, to reach Delhi and he was seen off like a state guest.

The situation was extremely favourable for surge of an intense left-democratic movement for unmasking the dubious role of the government and in demand for righteous claims of the victims. But that did not materialize because the CPI(M), CPI who call themselves Marxists and at the drop of a hat can disrupt Parliament by siding with this party today and that party tomorrow on this or that issue – did not traverse that course and refrained from building up an effective struggle that would have put pressure on the government. All these 26 long years, they practically observed a code of silence and thus acquiesced in the move of the ruling class to suppress the whole issue.

However, the victim's struggle in Bhopal, led by different organizations, has been going on undaunted. It has never stopped. There is a struggle for justice, they declare, so that other people do not have to suffer the same fate.

Deliberate delay and bungling of investigations under official pressure

In the immediate aftermath of the Bhopal verdict the Congress and BJP engaged in a veritable war of words as to who had allowed Anderson to leave the country, whether or not Rajiv Gandhi was involved, to divert attention from

other more pertinent questions, such as for example, why a request for Anderson's extradition, the then CEO of UCC, who was responsible most of all for the leak was only made in 2004, so many years after the ghastly disaster? In which period Congress and BJP-led governments at the Centre came and went, besides a United Front coalition. But none did anything to speed up the investigation by the CBI.

Today, after the Bhopal verdict, Mr B R Lall, former Joint director of CBI who was in charge of the probe from April 1994 to July 1995 alleged that the CBI probe was "influenced". He said that he was forced by the Ministry of External Affairs officials not to press for extradition of Warren Anderson, the CEO of Union Carbide Corporation when the gas leak took place 26 years ago. "CBI investigation was influenced and commanded by some officials", he said, "as a result the justice in the Bhopal Gas leakage case got delayed, hence, denied".

The delay in bringing charges, the inaction, and the deliberate bungling CBI resorted to all these years, are not much different from the way it 'handled' Bofors. But then Bofors is a case of corruption and Bhopal a matter of life and death for the victims. The list of failures that involve delaying tactics and deliberate bungling of the CBI that have led to the present mockery of justice is long. Among others, the CBI failed to present the documentary evidence available that demonstrate that UCC, and Warren Anderson were well aware in 1975 that the technology for the MIC plant in Bhopal was "untested", and that would have shown that the design of the Bhopal plant was substantially different and inferior in terms of safety when compared to the MIC plant owned by Union Carbide in Institute, West Virginia, USA. There is documentary evidence available that links each of the accused to deliberate acts undermining operational safety such as rewriting of operation manuals, decommissioning the crucial refrigeration unit and eliminating the maintenance supervisor from most work shifts, etc., - evidence that establishes that Keshub Mahindra and other officials knew or should have known about the

hazardous design of the plant and the additional hazards due to design modifications.

The CBI has failed to deliver summons and execute arrest warrants against three UCC officials despite being India's Interpol agency. It has failed to visit the Institute, West Virginia plant to document the design differences between the two plants that would show that the Bhopal plant was deliberately under designed. It has failed to stop accused Union Carbide Eastern Inc., Hong Kong – the regional headquarters of UCC directly involved in policy matters concerning Bhopal plant – from "disappearing". And last, but not least, it has failed to prevent the sale of shares of UCC, USA in UCIL in 1994 thus loosening the grip of the Indian court over the absconding corporation.

Nor did the CBI take any action when the Supreme Court in 1996 diluted the criminal charges against UCIL officials from culpable homicide (Section 304 II) that carries a 10-year prison term, to mere negligence (section 304 (a)) with a maximum 2-year sentence. CBI failed to appeal against such dilution of the crime, when there was need to actually press for a more stringent charge carrying life sentence. In return, the then Chief Justice A M Ahmed who headed the bench passing this order, became the chairman for life of the Bhopal Memorial Hospital Trust set up by UCC, soon after giving this order, when he retired in 1997. The Supreme Court action glaringly illustrates the fact that the judicial system in any capitalist country has been set up with a view to protecting and serving the interest of the ruling class, not that of the people. For after this earlier ruling of the Supreme Court no other verdict was possible than the one that has been awarded. The guilty have received the maximum sentence possible under this section. What a travesty of justice, what a mockery of long 26 years of wait and unbearable sufferings for half a million gas victims!

Bhopal verdict has given burial to justice

It is a conspiracy to protect and shield the guilty and cheat the

victims of their dues – proper medical treatment, proper compensation and rehabilitation, and most of all justice for which they have fought so long, and the assurance that such crimes will be sternly dealt with in future. Rather, by reducing the crime of deliberately gassing the people of a city with poison gas – for what else can the actions by Union Carbide be called – to nothing more than negligence in a traffic accident, this verdict has created a sinister precedent with perilous consequences for people in future.

Now, in the present situation, we find the government has suddenly sweet words of sympathy for the Bhopal victims, but it is at the same time pushing for the Nuclear Liability Bill, which clearly exposes its hypocrisy. For, this bill, if passed, will ensure that US suppliers of nuclear reactors, even if they are responsible for any nuclear accidents on Indian soil, will get away scot-free or with a monetary pittance. Surely the very real dangers this entails of opening up an even more calamitous scenario centring round the hazardous production of nuclear power, cannot be overstated. In this context the words of Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh to Sathya Sarangi of the Bhopal Group for Information and Action in 2006 that "Bhopals will happen, but the country has to progress", (*Outlook*, 21 June, 2010), are ominous, to say the least.

The Bhopal verdict that has let the perpetrators of the crime get away scot-free has deeply shocked people, who have reacted with indignation: how is this possible! This cannot be allowed to happen! Anyone with even minimum human element, irrespective of political or non-political views or allegiance is feeling indignation. It is this sense of indignation which is the only redeeming feature in this sordid chapter. It shows that all is not lost. Its deep implications have not been lost on the government either. Suddenly after all these 26 years, what a record the GoM (Group of Ministers) has scored! So much sympathy it has for the victims that its recommendations were ready even before the deadline of 10 days! And with those recommendations

Contd. on page 7

People's conscious movement only can stem the rot

Contd. from page 6

what it aimed at is to cap people's anger, to divert people's attention and media attention to the issue of 'compensation' to be disbursed from public exchequer. But what it has done in the name of compensation is adding insult to injury. Recommending now a sum of Rs. 10 lakhs for death, Rs. 5 lakhs for permanently disabled and 3 lakhs for temporary disabled, after 26 years of inhuman suffering – unable to work, incapacitated, lives blighted — what value does such an amount have in the prevailing conditions? Had they received that amount of compensation immediately after the disaster it could have carried some meaning for the victims. But all they got was a beggarly so-called compensation of Rs. 60, 000 for death and Rs. 25,000 for disability, all in all, and even that after many years of wait, completely destitute, unable to work. And the greatest hoax of all is that 91 per cent of the gas victims are not even eligible for the renewed compensation! For the Union Home Minister, P Chidambaram, was categorical: new claims would not be entertained. So, that leaves out, to be exact, 521,000 victims, according to Abdul Jabbar, convenor of the Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Udyog Sangathan, including offspring of the victims, who have inherited serious health complications from their gas-affected parents, some of whom can't even walk. Also left out are those whose injuries have now compounded due to progressive degeneration over time, and those who experienced complications after 1996, when registration of claims was stopped. Now they get a few 'crumbs' of relief accompanied by sweet words of sympathy, what humiliation for the victims! This is the kind of sympathy the government has for the victims.

Today, when the Bhopal verdict has given burial to gas victim's demand for justice, people are indignant that the Supreme Court could dispense such supreme injustice by blatantly obstructing the course of justice. And that the government could act so cruelly and inhuman from beginning to end!

Why this travesty of justice

It is only but natural that a

heartless merciless treatment of the kind to such a vast multitude of hapless suffering human beings, the judicial process and judicial verdict virtually working as a protector to the perpetrators of this horrendous crime and their accomplices, are agitating the thinking sensitive countrymen in whom still resides essence of humanism. Perplexed and shocked, they are having no clue as to how could such barbarity and palpable denial of rudimentary justice get a sanction of the governing authorities. We shall sincerely urge upon this saner conscientious section of the people that any attempt to seek an explanation of this apparent anomaly estranged from the obtaining socio-political system will ultimately prove to be abortive and hence purposeless. The answer lies in the very social order we are living in—a capitalist order. It is not a capitalist order of the days of advent of capitalism as a progressive force nor is it representative of the capitalist system even during its phase of development. As Karl Marx had shown, the bourgeoisie had been oppressing and repressing the working class and other sections of the toiling people right from the day it was saddled in power. And the oppression was ruthless as well and hence Marx gave call for overthrowing capitalism from power with a view to abolishing all exploitation of man by man. But even in those days, under pressure of people's movement, the ruling bourgeoisie had conceded many legitimate demands of the people and honoured many democratic rights of the workers. At that time, the bourgeoisie was not as irresponsible and despotic as it is today. It betrayed some sense of responsibility to the society and a minimum sense of obligation to the masses. At that time, conscious public opinion, awareness and vigil which were in place as a result of the progressive thoughts of Renaissance worked as a powerful bulwark against injustice, undemocratic acts or flouting of rules. But, once capitalism entered its decadent phase, became moribund, it is enmeshed in an acute insoluble market crisis. In a frantic bid to provide an extra lease of life to its moribund crisis-ridden class rule, it has stripped itself of all such obligations and sense of responsibility, is imposing one after

another unbearable burden on the people and is savagely slashing the very rights and benefits it had once conceded to the toiling people, trampling with impunity all democratic norms and values, violating long established rules. It has become so violent and cruel as not to hesitate even to suck out the last drop of blood of the worker. Whatever relative freedom it allowed to its state apparatus including judiciary is also being gradually taken away to make the state completely subservient to its dictates. Democracy is now virtually turned into autocracy and even the last vestiges of democratic norms, values and practices are given a burial. Though a façade of bourgeois democracy which is nothing but socio-political order of capitalism remains, it is hollow inside — a bare skeleton that bears mark of death and hence is dreaded if encountered with. So, in such a mockery of democracy, it is futile to expect that even judiciary would forsake the class interest of the bourgeoisie to uphold people's cause. Bhopal gas episode is a naked revelation of that. Unless capitalism is uprooted, such aberrations, injustice, savagery and travesty of democracy will manifest in swelling numbers. That is why, it has become utmost interest that the working class closes its rank afresh and develops movements with renewed vigour and determination and in fraternity with all other sections of the oppressed people to overthrow capitalism by revolution. All democratic movements against capitalist misrule must be so developed as to be conducive of anti-capitalist revolution. There is no other course left before people, no other way to assert their right or wrest their legitimate demands.

Build up movement for the cause of Bhopal victims

Coming back to the travesty of justice to the Bhopal gas disaster victims, the people are seething with anger. Mood of condemnation as well as an urge for a remedial action is prevalent throughout the country. So the situation is ripe for a countrywide massive movement over the issue in demand for rescinding the Bhopal Court judgment, stringent punishment of the guilty including corporate bigwigs and ensuring availability of

adequate compensation, medical treatment and other required facilities to the victims and their families. Even world people's opinion is in favour of such a movement. But as we have mentioned earlier, this extremely desired movement is not crystallizing with requisite might and intensity mainly because of the treacherous role of the pseudo-Marxists like the CPI(M), CPI. Often they are found to be vociferous on ticklish issues and stir up the political atmosphere. But what made them remain a passive onlooker to such a serious matter where the entire bourgeois system can be put in the dock and the cloak of democracy torn apart. We know why so and the people also are slowly understanding the same from their experience. Though they claim themselves to be Marxists-leftists and the bourgeois media also play a second fiddle to such a claim to make people nurture such an illusion, the fact is that these parties true to their social-democratic character have now completely placed themselves at the disposal of the ruling bourgeois class for pelf and power. They have a clandestine understanding with the class and hence are committed to keep the people away from the real path of anti-capitalist movement either by making a show of movement, at times under media glare for playing to the gallery and reap electoral benefits or quietly reducing important people's issues into insignificance or cunningly channelize people's wrath and ire along wrong line to fizzle out over time. But they will no more be able to keep their true face under wraps for long. We fervently appeal to the honest rank of CPI(M), CPI who still feel the pinch of conscience, are sensitive to the plight and misery of the oppressed and carry respect and emotion for leftism to prevail upon their leaders to abandon the path of doom and betrayal. There is still time for that. And to the people at large, we call upon to come forward and build up in every nook and corner of the country powerful movement in support of the cause of the Bhopal gas victims and unmask the vile face of moribund capitalism which is weighing down on the country like a dead weight. SUCI(C) is engaged wholeheartedly in building up these people's movements.

SUCI(C) calls All India 12-hour general strike on 5 July

Contd. from page 1

Comrade Provash Ghosh, General Secretary, SUCI (Communist) has issued the following statement on 29 June last :

The plea advanced by the central government in increasing fuel prices is a deceptive exercise in downright falsehood. From the published annual reports of the private and public sector oil companies, it will be evident that they are making hefty profits running into hundreds if not thousands of crores of rupees so much so as to enable them buy oilfields abroad. On the other hand, as a result of imposition of increasing doses of import duty by the central government and sales tax, excise duty and cess by the state governments, petroleum products are being sold in our country at a price almost double of the international oil tariff. The government is also withdrawing the paltry subsidy it was hitherto providing from the huge income it has been making by way of these multiple taxations which are recovered from the common people.

Side by side, by abolishing government control on petroleum pricing, the oil behemoths have been given a free hand to escalate retail petrol tariff at their sweet will under this or that pretext. In the days to come, diesel pricing will also be fully deregulated and in that event, diesel price will soar even further.

The main reasons behind the government's decision to shoot up prices are as follows —

1. There is substantial deficit in the exchequer created because of granting of a fiscal stimulus of as high as Rs 4 lakh crores to salvage the capitalists ridden by the acute insoluble market crisis following onset of the great depression endemic of the capitalist system as well as galloping increase in military budget and limitless expenditure incurred to finance luxurious life of ministers-bureaucrats-government high-ups. This deficit is now being met by imposing additional burden on the suffering people in the form of escalation of petro-product

prices and increased doses of taxation.

2. In the name of deregulation the entire market of petro-products is being handed over to the exploiting capitalists for reckless plunder in accordance with the prescripts of capitalist globalization.

Alongside jacking up the fuel price, the government has also enhanced the cess on coal and is going to introduce a new additional commodity service tax. There is possibility of state governments slapping 4% VAT on the additional coal cess. All these will entail further rise in transport fare, cost of essential commodities and power tariff. Already the common people is devastated by the unbridled price spiral which is due to the palpable indulgence of both the central and state governments in the massive hoarding, black marketing and price manipulation by the unscrupulous big traders. No effective step is taken by any of the governments to abate this gruesome artificial price rise. Deregulation of oil prices and enhanced cess will now wreak

havoc in the life of the immensely suffering masses.

It is also clear that thousands of innocent people have lost their lives and are infected with fatal diseases in the horrific Bhopal gas disaster that happened because the then central and Madhya Pradesh state governments allowed a big foreign multi-national to set up a factory in a populous habitat for manufacturing poisonous gas and took no necessary precautionary measure to prevent such a lethal eventuality. On the question of punishing the culprits as well as providing due compensation to the victims, the then central and state governments had practically acted as saviours of the concerned foreign multi-national. Questions have also been rightly raised about the role of the judiciary in this regard.

In this connection, we like to draw attention to the fact that the BJP had earlier run the central government. With the help and backing of the CPI(M), there have been governments led by the Congress or formed by combination of other parties. Both BJP and CPI(M) as well as other regional bourgeois parties had earlier run and have still been running governments in various states. All of them have hitherto been on the same boat in so far as escalation of oil price or spurt in general price line is concerned. They had not done anything in the Bhopal Gas tragedy rather maintained conspicuous silence over the matter. Because like the Congress, these parties are also for pelf and power working in the interest of the unabated exploitation and pillage by the domestic and foreign capitalists, hoarders, black-marketers and corrupt traders and thereby throwing away people's interest. So, when one of them being saddled in power takes an anti-people decision, others pretend opposition from their narrow sectarian electoral interest. In the circumstances, the only course left before the toiling people is to develop as conducive to anti-capitalist revolution united powerful sustained movement based on the correct revolutionary ideology and on the edifice of higher ethics and morality by forming people's committees and volunteer groups.

People's movement in Thailand

Contd. from page 4

struggle then it is necessary to build up people's committees consisting of chosen people possessing due qualities from among the participants in the movement at different stages" and not committees formed of "representatives of different parties." On the question of ideology he clearly enunciated that "... a struggle needs to be led on the basis of an ideology and well thought out organizational planning. A struggle does not materialize by resorting to just any means. Similarly, an organization can never be built up by taking recourse to just any means. An ideology will have to be upheld before it.... A distinct ideology is a must for movements. What is that ideology of ours? This is our ideology of socialism and proletarian internationalism. There cannot be any socialism, true socialism, without proletarian internationalism." (All quotes from *The Present Situation and Our Task*; Speech on 24 April, 1966; quoted

from *Shibdas Ghosh Selected Works*, Vol., 4, 2009) Then he further made it clear that democratic mass movements must have a genuine Marxist-Leninist revolutionary leadership established before them. Only a revolutionary leadership can build up the necessary organization, people's committees as instruments of struggle equipping these with correct ideology and politics as well as lofty cultural-moral standards, required for sustained struggle against powerful enemy. Only movements with a revolutionary leadership can help people not only realize their immediate democratic demands, but will also guide them in the right political direction of preparing for the struggle to overthrow the exploitative system at the stroke of revolution.

The present people's movement in Thailand bore in it the strength, zeal, militancy that could have helped people realize their just and immediate demands, making them

aware, as well of the necessity of overthrowing capitalism. However, having been led by forces and individuals that only hankered after power and pelf within the system itself the movement under their leadership ended in tragic futility. Hence along with the unnumbered dead bodies of freedom-loving common poorer people of that country left on the streets deserted by the leaders, Thailand people's movement has indelibly left the lesson that with all its potentialities the movement could not reach its desired end as it did not have the proper revolutionary leadership to guide it through.

Honest and sincere cadres and leaders of mass-movements must take proper lessons from these instances of real life in the annals of movements of toiling people of this or that country, latest of them being Thailand and must establish genuine revolutionary leadership before every mass-movement.

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