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HEFTY RISE IN THE MPS' SALARY

Once more lays bare dirty face of bourgeois parliamentary democracy

Surfeit of scandal and corruption marks capitalist India today. There is not a single sector, be it financial, defence, parliamentary politics, sports, judiciary, bureaucracy or health, which remains unscathed from the 'regal touch' of mega scam. To this long list is added another item—legalized profligacy. And that too by no men from common pool but by the lawmakers of the country! At a time when price hike is devastating common men, unemployment, retrenchment, wage cut and wage freeze are making life a nightmare for the toiling millions and the government has made it a habit to go on repeating the refrain of being starved of funds, — at such a time this is when a Bill seeking a three-fold hike in MPs' salaries and doubling their allowances was

cleared by the Lok Sabha in the recently concluded monsoon session of Parliament. This has caused severe resentment among the toiling people. The way people are bursting forth in anger over this most reprehensible move is unprecedented in recent time. But, the self-styled servants of the people who find in the post of MP a lucrative career are unfazed. So is the government giving indulgence in their importunate demands and finally acceding to the same.

Degeneration of bourgeois politics

The first question that arises and needs to be understood properly is why has the arena of bourgeois politics become so murky today? Is it something incidental, accidental or has it a root in the socio-political

reality? If one studies history, it will be evident that parliamentary democracy evolved in the phase of rising capitalism as its political superstructure. The protagonists of parliamentary politics were then guided by the spirit of bourgeois democracy which in those days of its advent sought to replace outmoded reactionary feudal monarchical system by a progressive political structure that would be "by the people, for the people, of the people". The rising bourgeoisie was then a progressive force and so strove to establish the new democratic system with a new content and necessary check and balance. It was envisaged that while the judiciary and executive including police-military, the two wings of the bourgeois state, would receive emoluments for their service

as interpreters and enforcers of law, the legislature which would frame laws for the country should comprise democratically elected people's representatives who would be spurred on by their lofty selfless ideal of patriotism and hence could not be categorized as salary-earning employees. Patriotic service to the nation was never viewed to have any economic value. Politics, it was then argued by the exponents of bourgeois democracy like John Stuart Mill and others ought to be a form of selfless social service. Only men of impeccable honesty, fervent patriotism and unquestionable integrity of character who would rise above petty self interest to serve the nation should come into politics and constitute legislative body. This standard was seen in many of the

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Present political situation and armed struggle

Provash Ghosh

[This is a free translation of an article in Bengali by Comrade Provash Ghosh, General Secretary, SUCI(C), published in "Aneek", a Bengali magazine. The responsibility of translation error as well as inadequate representation, if any, solely lies with the Editorial Board of Proletarian Era.]

In India there is serious difference of opinion among the different political parties that call themselves Marxists, on determination of the class character of Indian state and its economy and also on what should be the course to revolution. In that context, the initiative of the *Aneek* magazine for a polemic on this issue, we think, is timely and commendable. Such discussions and criticisms will

certainly help every one to understand each other and be understood.

In our opinion, the CPI-CPI (M) line on the question of determining the stage of revolution in India is self-contradictory. They claim that the Indian state is independent and sovereign and having parliamentary democracy in operation. But, while determining the strategy of revolution, the CPI characterizes the

revolution as National Democratic Revolution (NDR), and the CPI (M) defines it as People's Democratic Revolution (PDR). In fact, there is no fundamental difference between the two views and in both the cases, a progressive role of the national bourgeoisie is acknowledged. These two strategies of revolution are applicable to colonial or semi-colonial and feudal or semi-feudal states. According to Marxist-Leninist approach and methodology of analysis, if a state is independent and sovereign and has a parliament operating there, it is bound to be a capitalist state. In such a concrete

situation, the thought of applicability of PDR is totally erroneous. No colonial or semi-colonial or feudal or semi-feudal state can be independent and sovereign, nor does it have a parliament of its own.

Let us examine the character of the Indian state and its economy. As far back as in 1925, when India was still a colony of British imperialism, Great Stalin had related his observation on India in the following language : "The fundamental and new feature of the conditions of life of colonies like

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Estranged from its declared objectives, parliamentary politics has now become abode of self-seeking corrupt people

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legislators in the days of advent of bourgeois democracy. Receiving even a paltry honorarium was considered below the dignity of a people's representative. This was the righteousness that bourgeois democracy upheld in those days of its emergence.

But, today capitalism is in its death throes, frantically trying to prolong its moribund life which is obstructing social progress. As a body, however beautiful it might have been when alive, pollutes the environment when dead and left to rot, so is capitalism today. Naturally, as the political superstructure of dying capitalism, bourgeois democracy has also lost all its vitality and like a decaying decomposed body, is spreading effluvia to poison the atmosphere. Estranged from its declared objectives, parliamentary politics has now become abode of self-seeking corrupt people who help sustaining a façade of parliamentary democracy which, instead of upholding people's cause, only serves the vested class interest of the ruling exploiting bourgeoisie. As dying capitalism has become reactionary, it does not need to nurture any higher ideology today. Rather, its has been an endeavour today to trample underfoot even the barest precepts of the lofty ideals it had once preached fearing that even slightest preservation as well as cultivation of democratic values, ethics and morality might foster a spirit of protest against its oppressive, despotic rule. So, ruling capitalism is systematically destroying the very edifice of bourgeois democracy that it itself once created. More is it becoming decadent, more accentuated is the process of this demolition. The situation has turned so much worse that those who still have some honesty and conscientiousness left in them are keeping themselves at arm's length from political or state activities. On the other hand, capitalist rulers also fear induction of honest and selfless persons in the seats of governance. What they need and nurture is a bunch of yes-men who will obediently carry out their dictates and in return receive undue privileges and out-of-the-turn benefits. As ruthless exploiters, the ruling capitalists stand totally isolated from people. So, it is

impossible for them to win people's confidence in the normal way. Hence, they are merrily tampering with the system and allowing all kinds of distortions, aberrations and subversions to make decisive inroad into it. That is the reason why there is progressing erosion in all three wings of the state, legislature, executive including police-military-bureaucracy, and judiciary. Rampant corruption, violation of norms and moral turpitude has become so common in any of the wings. So long, only bureaucrats and police were known for taking bribe and implicating innocent people in false cases. Now, kickbacks, embezzlement of funds, fake encounters, etc., have become regular features of the military. Judges are being accused of graft and pronouncing doctored judgments. This bare truth must be understood.

Similarly, the legislature, too, is being stripped of all its normative essentials and degenerating to the core. All the doctrines of John Stuart Mill, Jeremy Bentham and other exponents of bourgeois democracy have been thrown in the gutter. The election process is being reduced to a mockery. As against people of honesty, integrity and high moral altruistic character, it is self-seeking, corrupt and highly immoral persons who are making it to the legislature with the backing of the ruling bourgeoisie. In course of that, the highest lawmaking body has become an abode of persons having not even an iota of obligation to the people and society but continuously on the lookout for ways and means towards self-aggrandizement. The coveted position of people's representative has been brought down to the level of a money-making profession where no scruple but tricks and plans, plots and schemes are key to accomplishment. As anybody clinging to a rotting dead body contracts deadly disease, so is the case today with anyone intending to serve bourgeois class interest as its pliant agent in Parliament no matter what is the colour of his/her political affiliation. It is for this reason that the ruling bourgeoisie is keeping its pet lot happy with all kinds of monetary and non-monetary benefits, absolving them of culpable crimes, abetting all their undemocratic, anti-people and corrupt activities and

ensuring that right from reforming the election process to framing of other rules and regulations as well as granting media support, the entire system should be so revamped as to keep the doors of Parliament open to these ever-obliging dubious characters only. Reactionary capitalism today dreads the kind of legislators who will fearlessly point out any fault, deviation, unlawful or illegitimate activities of anyone connected with governance and administration, and boldly expose any incident of crime and corruption on the floor of the House.

That is why, every effort is made to prevent entry of men of worth, selfless patriots, honest individuals and more particularly the genuine revolutionary party to the legislature. In its moribund stage today, capitalism cannot survive without breaking the moral backbone of the nation. Attempt to purchase a section of people with money and other undue benefits and thereby turning them into bootlickers of the ruling capitalist class is a part of that heinous conspiracy. With such questionable characters abounding in the system, scams and scandals have become so rampant in all the capitalist-imperialist countries including India. A berth in legislature is now viewed as a thumping career of quick money making with alacrity. One is reminded of Marx's prognosis of capitalism hundred and fifty year back: "The bourgeoisie has resolved personal worth into exchange value....stripped of its halo every occupation hitherto honoured and looked up to with reverent awe. It has converted the physician, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the man of science, into its paid wage-labourers...has torn away from the family its sentimental veil, and has reduced the family relation to a mere money relation." (*Manifesto of the Communist Party*)

Saga of MP salary hike

In this background of history, the episode of recent hike in the package of monetary benefits to the 795 odd Members of Parliament (MPs) of capitalist India is to be viewed and examined. First of all, we take a glance at the bare facts. Hitherto, the MPs were receiving Rs 16,000 per month as salary, Rs 1000 as daily allowance (when Parliament is in session) and a plethora of other

perks, benefits and amenities. In fact, the best of facilities were being enjoyed by them. Just their pay, for example, was 68 times more than what the average Indian earns annually. According to an estimate, the amount paid from the public exchequer to each of the MPs was around Rs 45 lakhs per year. But the MPs cutting across party lines were not content with that. For long, they were pressing for substantial raise in their 'emoluments'. In order to elicit an admissibility of this most unjustified demand of theirs, the Congress-led UPA government constituted a tailor-made Joint Parliamentary Committee under the chairmanship of Charandas Mahant, Congress MP from Chhattisgarh. In its report submitted on 5 May, 2010, the Committee, inter alia, recommended to increase the basic salary of the MPs from Rs 16,000.00 per month to as high as Rs 80,001.00 per month on the argument that they must be paid "one rupee more than that of Secretary to the Government of India". Moreover, they ought to be granted "Dearness Allowance" as per the Central Government rates from time to time." Steep hike in all other perks and allowances including 100% increase in daily allowance and constituency allowance was also stressed upon. The Committee also desired that its recommendations be implemented retrospectively from 1 January, 2006 and "criterion enumerated in the report be adopted for periodic review of salaries and allowances of members of Parliament in future". If one gleans through the Committee report, it will be evident that the recommendations have exactly been in the format of a pay revision proposal of top level executives of a government office or commercial establishment.

The Government accepted most of the recommendations of the Committee and cleared a 300 per cent salary hike, from Rs. 16,000 to Rs. 50,000 per month, for the Members of Parliament, doubled their constituency and daily allowances as well as pension, granted substantial raise in other perks, and also provided substantial benefits in other areas like free upper class air and train travel, telephone calls, four-fold increase in the limit for interest-free loan for

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Self-serving bourgeois politicians have relegated the seat of lawmaker to a money making device

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MPs for buying a personal vehicle, hike in road mileage rate for vehicles used by MPs, etc., and agreed to make the revision effective from May, 2009. Under the terms approved by the Cabinet, the cost to the government—by extension, ‘cost to the taxpayers’—for maintaining an MP would be around Rs 61 lakhs per annum, more than 10 times his annual basic salary. Just for arrear payment, Government will have to shell out an additional expenditure of Rs 118 crores.

But, that did not satisfy the MPs. Led by Laloo Prasad Yadav and Mulayam Singh Yadav, the two known bourgeois politicians having dubious track record and currently seeking to regain their considerably lost clout, they stalled the proceedings of the House asking for increasing their monthly salary from Rs50,000 to Rs 80,000. Mulayam went to the extent of holding onto the Speaker’s desk as he sought to make a point that the House could not be allowed to function as long as the government did not respond to their demands. Those who made their political careers by aggressive show of championing the downtrodden and social justice, thus willingly presented themselves as the most brazen faces of the ‘unscrupulous avaricious privileged lot’ solely concerned with self-aggrandizement. What was noteworthy was that the members belonging to the CPI (M), CPI and their associates who call themselves Marxists-leftists and often pretend to be staunch non-approvers of all such nuisance in media glare, were all through indulgent onlookers to this ruckus and fracas inside the House. This is quite understandable because they really do not have propriety to do so either as they too use the same set of aberrant logic to unhesitatingly grant periodic raise in salaries and perks to their legislators and ministers in the states ruled by them. In any case, ultimately, floor managers of the Congress party equally eager to raise the monetary benefits swung into action, struck a deal with the Opposition and placated the MPs by agreeing to raise monthly allowances of MPs by another 10,000 per month. With that, the constituency allowance of MPs will now stand at Rs 45,000

per month in place of Rs 20,000 earlier and will be totally exempt from income tax as well.

Who are these MPs?

There is nothing, of course, to be surprised about it. Affidavits submitted in 2004 by those elected to the 14th Lok Sabha revealed that 125 of the 538 MPs had criminal charges, including murder, rape, extortion, dacoity, kidnapping and corruption, against them. Ten such “pearls” adorned the Central Council of Ministers as well. The Union government, in an affidavit filed in the Supreme Court, asserted in December 2004 that there was no constitutional bar on inclusion of tainted persons in the Council of Ministers! Out of these great 125, at least 96 could have been sentenced to a minimum of two years’ imprisonment — a disqualification sufficient for contesting elections under the Representation of the People Act. Ten members from the Lower House as also one from the Upper were expelled in 2005 for accepting money for raising questions in respective Houses. Parliamentary history was created when the two Houses expelled them for the “cash-for-query-scam. One would recall that Shibu Soren, the JMM leader was accused of receiving a trunkload of currency for extending support to Narasimha Rao-led Congress ministry in Parliament in the 1990s. Two years back, the Parliament was converted into a virtual shopping mall when all major parliamentary parties indulged in worst form of horse trading and bribery to rustle up number of MP’s in their favour centering round the confidence motion moved by the Congress –led first UPA government. Price for support sky-rocketed to the tune of tens of crores of rupees, even Rs 50 crores for each MP. In the land with overwhelming bulk of people reeling under poverty-unemployment, the figures were not just fabulous; they were vulgarly beyond any perception. The Prime Minister’s Office was termed the biggest “bargaining counter” and “patent promoter of horse trading”. Three BJP MPs barged into Parliament with fat bundles of currency notes to the tune of crores of rupees and claimed they were offered those amounts by a leader of

the UPA-SP combination, with a view to abstaining from themselves from the confidence- motion. Many of the MPs who were in Parliament then are in the current House as well.

Further, assets of those elected MPs were not quite meager either. Over half of them had a declared asset value of Rs 50 lakhs each. The Public Affairs Centre (PAC) of Bangalore who made a comprehensive analysis of the affidavits observed that a Lok Sabha MP had an asset of Rs 1.66 crores on an average. While MPs with graduate and post-graduate qualifications had assets valued at Rs 1.37 crore, those with lower qualifications had Rs 1.93 crore. Twenty-one percent of the former and 30 percent of the latter group of MPs have criminal antecedents. It goes without saying that the candidates did not make full disclosures but only an insignificant part of their assets and that too grossly undervalued because they knew they would get away with it. Despite all suppressions and manipulations, over 58 per cent of the members in the present Lok Sabha have declared assets of more than a crore: the average asset holding of a Lok Sabha MP is Rs 5.33 crores. Both lower and upper Houses of Parliament have billionaire industrialists also as members. So, the elected representatives’ is a club of millionaires and billionaires that’s clamouring for more, at a time of high inflation and economic distress tormenting the electorates.

Moreover, the self-proclaimed servants of the country who have relegated the seat of lawmaker to the level of a money making device, have arrogated to themselves the sole right to fix their emoluments, as per their fanciful assessments, for ‘serving the country’. Where is the propriety for that? The Committee in defence has referred to article 106 of the Constitution and “Salaries, Allowances and Pension of Members of Parliament Act, 1954” derived from that. Even if such a clause which itself is immoral and subversive of fundamental tenets of bourgeois democracy, is in existence for whatsoever reason, is it mandatory to invoke the same if the Members of Parliament imbibe the very spirit of the enshrined

principles of bourgeois democracy?

SUCI (C)—lone voice of crusade in Parliament

While the bourgeois politicians and their pseudo-Marxist friends waved green signal to the proposal, it was the SUCI (C) MP who voiced opposition to the proposal in no uncertain terms, of course, much to the chagrin of all others present in the House. So exceptional was the role of the SUCI (C) MP that even a section of bourgeois media, sensing the defiant mood of the people, could not suppress it. Under the caption, “The Lone Ranger against fatter pay cheques for MPs”, *Economic Times* in its Calcutta edition of 23 August, 2010, wrote: “At a time when most parliamentarians are demanding bigger hikes in salaries and allowances, Tarun Mandal is a heartening voice in the wilderness. He is the lone SUCI MP from West Bengal who has opposed the hike vehemently, claiming that the very idea of MPs as peoples’ representatives demanding fatter salaries was ‘highly unethical’, especially, when large swathes of people, who each MP represents, live below the poverty line.” This is the clear distinction between vote-based, power-oriented, self-seeking bourgeois politics and genuine revolutionary politics on the edifice of higher proletarian ethics and morality. This incident once again corroborated the invaluable teaching of Comrade Shibdas Ghosh, our leader, teacher and guide and one of the foremost Marxist thinkers of the era that although outwardly there appear to be many opposing forces in politics, and the press projects so many contending forces, but viewing the situation from the context of ultimate struggle, there are only two contending forces in politics—one for revolution, the other opposing revolution—in whatever nomenclature might it be posed.

Flawed arguments in favour of the hike

Coming back to decision of pay packet hike, it is felt necessary to deal with some of the queer arguments advanced in support of the same. One of the benefitting MPs was as blunt as making a

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Pseudo-Marxists covertly allowed safe passage to such a pernicious enactment

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comment that this would somehow clear their image in public and the media, and receipt of a fatter pay packet would also make them accountable to the job of an MP. Almost on the similar lines, some others have said that an enhancement of emoluments would reduce corruption among the MPs. This is preposterous! Even in the figment of imagination, it cannot be believed that the tainted characters who are ready to go to any extent to secure pecuniary and other gains by using their status and position would overnight turn into monks when the whole system has become a money-spinner. Now, each MP gets as high as Rs 20 million per annum under the MPLAD (Local Area Development) scheme. The demand now is to raise it to Rs. 50 million p.a. It is an open secret that this fund instead of being used for necessary public welfare activities is usurped for financing people or projects, the concerned MP receives commission or cut-money from. What is doing round the corner is that the rate of this commission is often as high as 40%. Apart from that, arranging permits, licenses or realty contracts against monetary consideration is common with these self-styled servants of the nation. Will these folks withdraw from such underhand dealings just because of salary enhancement?

Another MP was found whimpering on television about how they get paid less than government clerks. The Joint Parliamentary Committee also held that the salary of the Members of Parliament should be hiked to Rs 80,001/- which is one rupee more than the maximum salary of Rs 80,000/- recommended by the Sixth Central Pay Commission to the topmost civil servant in India. What a height of idiosyncrasy!

Going by the basic principles of parliamentary democracy, how can the honoured voluntary service to the nation supposedly by selfless persons rank *pari passu* with the paid service of an employee? Who other than those subverting the governing principles of bourgeois democracy and defiling the position of legislator for buttressing an agenda of self-prosperity argue like this? On the other hand, does a government clerk or for that matter

a civil servant get to live in flats in Delhi's green and plush Lutyen's zone, with paid for staff, free travel, medical expenses and such other facilities? Are they exempt from footing the bills of water, electricity, telephone, even internet? As Times of India estimated in a report way back on October 16, 2005, a Lutyen's zone bungalow is worth about Rs 100 crore on an average.

If all these are monetized, would the actual benefits to an MP be of any comparison to those of paid government staff? Moreover, the MPs can continue to enjoy lucrative law careers, operate or run into the ground airline companies (within or outside government), run industrial conglomerates, beedi companies, agricultural cooperatives or newspapers. MPs are prevented only from occupying offices of profit under the Government, and here too there is now a long list of exceptions, but are otherwise free to conduct their businesses as they see fit. These facilities are not available to civil servants. How can then the two cases be analogous?

Questions are being posed as to how would the MPs then fend themselves. Whereas the question that should have been raised is that what had been the practice in the past as per the very concept of classical parliamentary democracy. If the legislators had functioned in accordance with the true spirit of self-less patriotism and altruism, they would have been held in high esteem by people. Those who had viewed political activity as a sacred, self-sacrificing and noble service to people and attained through struggle the height of character to discharge that service fearlessly, automatically, emerged as people's leaders from within. All their needs were then happily and willingly looked after by people at large. This is history. These leaders were revered for their sacrifice and genuine concern for welfare of the common people. It is also relevant to mention here that many eminent persons pursuing different professions like legal, medical and teaching often volunteered to become legislators not for receiving anything in return but purely from their sense of obligation to society. In such cases, the very political system saw to it that they could discharge this higher social

responsibility with least inconvenience to their professional activities. Never was this service envisioned as venal then.

This current lot of greedy MPs must take into account where they rank in the perception of the citizenry. Enraged at the supposed logic in support of the hike, one auto driver of Delhi commented: "After all the frills, a cavalcade of motor cars, free accommodation, travel, etc., what do our MPs need a hike for?" He is absolutely justified in giving vent to his rage. This huge benefit is showered on the MPs when in the country, approximately 77% of India's population earns Rs 20 per day. Daily earning of 38% population is not even Rs 9 a day. Nearly two lakhs of peasants have committed suicide unable to make both ends meet. Just in a year, millions are reported to have lost jobs because of closures and lay-offs. Despite thousands of tons of foodgrains rotting in the godowns, the Government is declining to distribute the same to the poor free of cost. On these pressing problems of life, there is no din, no commotion, and no ruckus in Parliament. But come the question of garnering monetary benefits for the self, it supersedes everything to become the most important issue before the country. Incredible indeed!

Absence of democratic movement – boon to the rulers

The bourgeoisie and its pliant legislators dare doing all this because of absence of organized conscious democratic movement in the country. Had there been a sustained people's movement in every nook and corner of the land on burning problems of life including subversion of democratic rights and principles, flouting of democratic norms, values and principles, it could have acted as a deterrent to such despotic moves and machinations of the oppressive rulers. Unfortunately, the desired growth of countrywide democratic movement of the people could not take place because of abject betrayal of the pseudo-Marxists like the CPI (M), CPI and their associates. These parties calling themselves leftists have also become an inseparable part of the dirty bourgeois power politics and hence have forsaken the path of movement to endear

themselves to the ruling class. In fact, in the states they are in power, democratic movements are being crushed ruthlessly with the help of police-administration as well as hired criminals. Their sole concern is to win elections and be in the corridor of power by hook or by crook. No other consideration motivates them in politics. Hence, they are extra cautious to ensure that under no circumstances, they incur displeasure of the ruling capitalist class. So, despite feigning occasional opposition to this or that government policy merely for public consumption and sustaining the camouflage of 'leftism', these pseudo-Marxists and their bootlickers cunningly acquiesce in every wrong move of the central government. In the instant case also, they never raised any genuine opposition in Parliament. Only, they, as a part of their continued deceptive exercise to fool people, feebly questioned the method of increasing the pay and perk of the MPs and suggested that recommendations should have come from a non-Parliamentary body. As if, that would have entailed all justification to such a shameless move. Otherwise, they made no issue of it on the floor of Parliament and covertly allowed such a pernicious enactment a safe passage.

Distinction between vile bourgeois politics and noble revolutionary politics

As we have mentioned at the outset, people throughout the country are expressing strong indignation against this orchestrated raid on public exchequer for a glaringly immoral purpose. Seizing the opportunity, the bourgeois media in a bid to suppress the festering sores of rotten bourgeois politics has unleashed a scathing attack against the political community as a whole for this shameful act so that people develop a general apathy towards politics itself. This has severe ramifications on revolutionary politics.

People of the country, therefore, will have to be aware of the sinister design of the ruling class. Today it is clear that the outmoded bourgeois politics which is sullied today, is polluted and dispossessed of rudimentary ethics and values in the

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People spontaneously support 7 September All India General Strike

Throughout the country the working people responded overwhelmingly to the call by eight central Trade Unions, including AIUTUC, for an All India general strike on 7 September to press long-standing legitimate demands of the working class like containment of price rise, concrete measures for job protection, strict enforcement of labour laws, creation of National Fund for Social Security for unorganized sector workers, abolition of contract and casual labour system and stopping of outsourcing and disinvestment of Public Sector Undertakings. It is known to all that for quite a long time, the working people were conducting movements in various forms over these demands. But the central government did not care to pay any attention to that. So, from the necessity to organize a higher form of movement, the call was given for such a countrywide strike.

Though the call was for a general strike, it virtually assumed the character of an all out bandh because the common people strongly stood by these justified demands and spontaneously lent their total support to the strike call disdaining all anti-strike propaganda

by the ruling class, government and their pliant media. It is quite understandable that the government will not yield to these demands so easily because it is wedded to the class interest of the ruling bourgeoisie. So there is no other alternative but to go for a long-drawn, well-organized and widespread movement. This wholehearted response of the working masses shows that the objective situation is ripe for developing such a movement. For that, it is essential to undertake necessary preparatory activities by gearing up the organization, cementing the unity of the working

class, building up innumerable workers' struggle committees and creating appropriate struggling mentality among the workers. All endeavours should be made to secure support of the broader sections of the suffering people behind the movement. This is the need of the hour.

But, the biggest impediment before developing the desired surge of movement is the compromising attitude of most of the other central trade unions including CITU and AITUC. Experience is that they are not eager to scale up the movement to such a height from where it is possible to achieve the demands

because of their compromising social democratic character. They only want to remain confined within some occasional, token, agitational programmes and covertly opt for and often end with compromises with the government or the capitalist owners under this or that plea surrendering the interest of the working class. Since the various state governments are also equally trampling underfoot the rights of the working class, violating labour laws, crushing legitimate trade union movements, undertaking unfair labour practices and protecting the class interest of the exploitative owners, it is also necessary to build up movements against them as well. But the CITU, AITUC and their associates are averse to conduct any movement against the state governments run by the political dispensations they are in support of, even if such governments are guilty of subverting the interest of the workers. It is incumbent on the fighting workers to create adequate pressure on the leadership of these central trade unions to agree to building up such a sustained, organized, intensified movement to bend the government to accede to their demands.



Joint rally on 7 September in Gujarat in support of all India General Strike

Cult of higher revolutionary politics alone can stem the rot

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given socio-economic context for definite historic reasons. While the bourgeois politicians constitute a self-serving greedy lot involved in a series of scam, corruption and wrongdoings, the torchbearers of revolutionary politics represent the rising trend in society based on the edifice of higher proletarian ethics and culture. That is why, when the bourgeois politicians who make a 'career' in parliamentary politics was hankering for lucre throwing away all norms, values and even decency, the singular voice of protest of the SUCI (C) has upheld the nobility of revolutionary politics which is not a 'give and take' business but a life of real honour and dignity that flourishes the various sides of human essence and guides action in accordance with that.

Bourgeois politicians enter into parliamentary politics for pelf and power. But the genuine revolutionary party participates in parliamentary politics from a totally different outlook and purpose. So

long as there is illusion among people about parliamentary democracy and essential conditions are not fulfilled for overthrowing capitalism, the root of all evils, through revolution, the revolutionary party participates in this politics based on mass revolutionary political line. It views the electoral battle as a part of democratic mass movement, it engages itself to build up as conducive to revolutionary struggle. In course of participating in the elections, it exposes before the people the hollowness of the bourgeois parliamentary system and tries to free them from parliamentary illusion. If elected, the representatives of a revolutionary party, reflecting higher ethics and morality, honesty, integrity and spirit of sacrifice par excellence, consistently endeavour to espouse the cause of people's movement inside the legislature and thus coordinate parliamentary struggle with extra-parliamentary struggles as well as bring to the fore the utter degeneration of the system

as has been the instant case.

People's conscious action — only deterrent

In the circumstances, our people must realize that in order to thwart all the pernicious moves and designs of the ruling class and its governments, there is no other way but to exert pressure of a country-wide, powerful, organized, long-drawn people's movement under correct revolutionary leadership. The cultural environment of such democratic movement would foster cult of higher values and culture, increase political consciousness of the masses and thus act as a restraint to all filthy, shameless and notorious acts of the degraded bourgeois politicians and their mentors. More intensified is this people's movement, more number of self less dedicated political workers would surface to take up and pursue people's cause in right earnest. In this connection, we have repeatedly emphasized that at the time of elections, courageously overcoming

all impediments, people must come forward to elect such persons in as many numbers as possible whose honesty, integrity, and selflessness are tested and tried in democratic movement. Even if they are not a majority in the House, their very presence and assertive role would work as strong deterrent against crime, corruption, venality, malfeasance and misfeasance of the bourgeois politicians, all wrongdoings of the bourgeois government and its friendly Opposition.

While that ought to be long-term action, the immediate task is to crystallize people's legitimate wrath and grievance against the illegitimate hike in the salary and allowances in well-knit sustained resistance movement. Otherwise, the same set of MPs, just after a year or two, might again screech for higher emoluments. And the bourgeois government like today would again accept all their criminal demands by draining public exchequer in order to keep them ever subservient to the ruling class and its aggregate interest.

CPI-CPI (M)'s determination of stage of revolution in India is self-contradictory

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India is not only that the national bourgeoisie has split up into a revolutionary party and a compromising party, but primarily that the compromising section of this bourgeoisie has already managed, in the main, to strike a deal with imperialism. Fearing revolution more than it fears imperialism, ... it is forming a bloc with imperialism against the workers and peasants of its own country ... the communist party can and must enter into an open bloc with the revolutionary wing of the bourgeoisie in order, after isolating the compromising national bourgeoisie, to lead the vast masses of the urban and rural petty bourgeoisie in the struggle against imperialism." (*Tasks of the University of the Peoples of the East*, Collected Works, Vol.7) But the then leaders of the communist movement of this country did not pay heed to Stalin's advice. Though the scope to forge unity with Subhas Chandra Bose, the representative of petty bourgeois revolutionism, had come up on several occasions, these leaders did not avail of that scope. On the contrary, they helped strengthen the rightist Gandhite leadership, representative of the compromising big bourgeoisie within the then Congress, which was then a platform of anti-imperialist movement. Had the then CPI leadership attempted to lead the freedom movement of this country forging desired unity with Subhas Chandra Bose, as it had been the case with Sun Yat Sen in China, the outcome of the Indian freedom movement could have been different. Since this did not happen, it was the Indian big bourgeoisie who was at the helm of the Congress leadership, captured state power of India in 1947.

On the character of the Indian state, CPI (M) says 'it is a bourgeois-landlord state headed by the big bourgeoisie.' Who are these big bourgeoisie? Once, the very same CPI (M) used to raise slogans of fighting against the monopoly capital. According to the teachings of great Lenin, national capital at the highest stage of its development gives birth to monopoly capital and these monopolists are none other than the big bourgeoisie. It is the same very monopolists who

provided leadership to the freedom movement in this country and assumed state power after independence. Who are the landlords the CPI (M) is speaking about? Are they feudal landlords or capitalist landlords? To dispel the prevailing confusion among the so-called communists on determining the character of agricultural economy in relatively backward countries, Lenin showed that in the era of imperialism or decadent capitalism, – to determine whether capitalism has infiltrated in the agrarian economy of these countries— it has to be judged if land, rural labour power and crops have turned into commodities of the national market, if an owner-labour relationship has been established in agriculture and if land is getting concentrated in the hands of a few. Many Marxists in our country as well as in other countries cite instances of the existence of remnants of sharecropping and other ancient methods to assert that feudalism persists in agriculture. On this issue, Lenin in 1920, observed in his speech at the Second Congress of Communist International on '*Preliminary Thesis on Agrarian Question*': "...in all capitalist countries, even the most advanced, survivals of medievalism still exist in the form of semi-feudal exploitation of the surrounding small peasants by the big land owners, as for example, the *Instleute in Germany*, the *metayers in France*, the sharecroppers in the United States ..." So those who seek to prove the agricultural system of our country as being semi-feudal, have failed to grasp properly this teaching of Lenin. Following Lenin's elucidation, there remains no scope of controversy over the fact that capitalism has been established in agriculture of India. Not only that. Capitalism in India having reached the stage of monopoly capitalism and having given birth to finance capital and financial oligarchy through merger of banking and industrial capitals, is exporting finance capital to other countries. Despite being backward in comparison with the big imperialist countries, India has acquired imperialist character. In such a situation, Comrade Shibdas Ghosh, Founder General Secretary of our Party and a foremost Marxist

thinker of the era, in course of his brilliant analysis, showed long back that the character of the Indian economy and the state is capitalist. Presently, Indian capitalism has gained further in strength and given birth to multinationals – so much so that US imperialism is seeking alliance with India as against its other competitors in the global arena.

A question is raised by many people: with such a huge amount of foreign capital invested even in India, can it be really independent? In this context, I would like to recall a well-known observation of Lenin: "...finance capital is such a great, such a decisive, you might say, force in all economic relations that it is capable of subjecting, and actually does subject, to itself even states enjoying the fullest political independence." (*Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*). This way Lenin explained how to understand the independent character of a state in the era of imperialism. From this teaching of his, it is also clear that the concept of the independence and sovereignty of a bourgeois state does no longer bear the same meaning as that of the pre-imperialist era of world capitalism. Also when Stalin in his book '*Economic Problems of Socialism in USSR*' said that after Second World War, taking advantage of the Marshall Plan, United States turned the war ravaged Western Europe including Britain and France into 'adjuncts of the United States economy', certainly he did not consider Britain and France to be in the colonial stage because of their dependence on US capital. And then again, presently in keeping with the imperialist design of globalization, capital of one country is being exported to another country even more extensively. So this should not be the basis of judging the issue of political independence and sovereignty of any bourgeois state.

Even if, for argument's sake, it is assumed that feudalism persists widely in agriculture in India, still now, that does not negate the capitalist character of the Indian state. On this question too, Lenin has left behind invaluable teachings. After the February Revolution in Russia in 1917, a host of Marxist pundits had opposed Lenin to say

that since capitalism was still underdeveloped and feudalism persisted in agriculture there, it was then not the time to give the call for socialist revolution in Russia. While answering them, Lenin said in his famous *April Thesis*: "State power in Russia has passed into the hands of a new class, namely the bourgeoisie and landowners who had become bourgeois. To this extent the bourgeois democratic revolution in Russia is completed." Moreover, Lenin and Stalin had taught that the stage of revolution is decided on the basis of which class is in state power and which class is going to wrest power from it. Judging on the basis of this historical teaching of Lenin, it can be held unhesitatingly that India is now in the stage of anti-capitalist socialist revolution.

We are of the firm opinion that the idea of revolution in a peaceful way and through parliament is totally against Marxism-Leninism and is nothing but a revisionist thought. Having witnessed the advent of bourgeois democracy in Britain in its early days, the great philosopher Marx once spoke about the possibility of peaceful revolution in that country, but not in respect of other countries. Afterwards, having witnessed the workers' armed uprising in France and its failure during his life time, he also observed that the working class after capturing power through armed revolution would have to smash the old bourgeois state machine and then establish a new working class state. Later, dwelling on the characteristics of the era of imperialism, Lenin said that compared to the pre-imperialist era, capitalism was then "more attached to militarism and bureaucracy". So in his book, '*State and Revolution*' he said: "The supersession of the bourgeois state by the proletarian state is impossible without a violent revolution." Whatever little of democracy remained in the capitalist system at the time Lenin made this observation in 1917, has been wiped out during all these long years, be it in any developed or any undeveloped capitalist country. In all those countries, it is fascism that has been operating in one or the other form. Consequently armed revolution has become even more

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Both 'right' and 'left' social democratic politics are hindering development of revolutionary movement

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inevitable. Still relevant is what Stalin said late in his life in answer to a query about the possibility of a peaceful revolution. He said that contrary to the present-day capitalist-imperialist encirclement, that is capitalist-imperialist countries encircling socialist countries, if socialist encirclement eventuates centring round a few capitalist states, then the rulers of those few capitalist states might give up power in a peaceful way. On this question, Comrade Shibdas Ghosh said that in such a situation even if the revolution is peaceful, it cannot be accomplished through parliament – the latter being a part of the bourgeois superstructure. Parliament must be peacefully dissolved to establish a socialist superstructure. If such be the case, those who nurture dreams of gaining a majority in parliament in a mighty capitalist country like India and thereby of peacefully achieving people's democratic revolution, are sure to be entrapped, willingly or not, in the grip of parliamentary politics by coming into alliance with some or the other bourgeois political parties. In reality, this is happening time and again, as you can see for yourself.

A question may crop up as to why should the communists after having accepted the indispensability of armed revolution, participate in parliamentary elections? Criticizing a group of ultra left leaders of the then Germany, Lenin in his classic writing titled *Left Wing Communism an Infantile Disorder* had stated: "For the communists in Germany, parliamentarism is of course 'politically obsolete', but ...we must not regard what is obsolete for us as being obsolete for the class, as being obsolete for the masses...that participation in parliamentary elections and in the struggle in parliament is obligatory for the party of the revolutionary proletariat precisely for the purpose of educating the backward strata of its own class, precisely for the purpose of awakening and enlightening the undeveloped, downtrodden, ignorant peasant masses. As long as you are unable to disperse the bourgeois parliament and every other type of reactionary institution, you must work inside them..." This is why, despite calling a bourgeois

parliament a 'pigsty' Lenin nevertheless participated in Russian parliament – Duma, before revolution and retained the bourgeois parliament even after revolution till 1918. Because he said that a small section of the people still harboured illusion about parliament. Hence following Lenin's teachings, Marxists do go to parliament not for increasing the illusion but to intensify the extra-parliamentary class and mass struggles and in the process remove the illusion. If a Marxist party under a particular circumstance achieves majority in the elections either singly or jointly with other opposition parties based on a common minimum programme, what should it do? This question did not crop up at the time of Lenin. In our country, this question came up in Kerala in 1956, when the then undivided CPI after gaining majority formed the government there and opened fire on striking workers, in the name of "maintaining law and order". At that time Comrade Shibdas Ghosh, based on Lenin's teaching, had shown that in case a Marxist party does gain majority, it will not give up the responsibility of forming a government if there is an opportunity to do so. But its objective will be to expose the limitations and the class character of the bourgeois state and the Constitution, intensify class and mass struggles outside. For that, it will not hesitate to embrace confrontation with the ruling class as well, if need be. As a result of that, if the ruling class topples the government, there will be no harm caused since in the process, the class character of the state will be exposed before people. He further said, so long as a Marxist party will be in governmental power, it will try to provide relief to the common people to the extent possible depending on mass movement instead of relying on the bureaucracy. A government of this type must declare as its objective that the police will not be allowed to interfere in the legitimate democratic movements on the pretext of "maintaining law and order". In West Bengal, serious differences cropped up between this approach of our Party with those of CPI (M)-CPI and other parties during

conduction of the United Front Governments in 1967 and 1969.

So our Party participates in the parliamentary election from the clear objective of disillusioning people about parliamentary democracy and provide fillip to the extra-parliamentary struggles as per Lenin's teachings. Referring to the countries where bourgeois parliamentary democracy is in operation, Great Mao Zedong in his pamphlet 'Problems of War and Strategy' said: "Internally capitalist countries practise bourgeois democracy... because of this characteristics, it is the task of the party of the proletariat in the capitalist countries to educate the workers and build up strength through a long period of legal struggle and thus prepare for the final overthrow of capitalism". In the same writing, he mentioned that there was no question of their participation in the parliamentary democracy since it was not in vogue in China. To quote his words: "...we have no parliament to make use of and no legal right to organize the workers to strike." Both the erstwhile Naxalites and the present-day 'Maoists' who talk of boycotting parliament, are speaking against the very teachings of Lenin and Mao Zedong. In the Indian context, their theory of people's democratic revolution and the strategy of organizing sporadic armed attacks with a view to forming liberated zones in the villages are also totally opposed to the teachings of Mao Zedong. It has already been shown that the theory of people's democratic revolution is wrong in respect of this country. For the same reason, it is not possible to build up scattered liberated zones in the villages here. Explaining why it was so possible in China, Mao Zedong remarked in *Why is it That Red Political Power can exist in China* that, "The long term survival inside a country of one or more small areas under Red political power completely encircled by a white regime is a phenomenon that has never occurred anywhere else in the world... Two things account for its occurrence, mainly, a localized agricultural economy (not a unified capitalist economy) and the imperialist policy of marking off spheres of influence in order to divide and exploit. The prolonged

splits and wars within the white regime provide a condition for the emergence and persistence of one or more small Red areas under the leadership of the Communist Party amidst the encirclement of the white regime".

Is there any semblance of similarity between the centralized market economy and administrative system of India with the economic-political system obtaining in pre-revolution China? Is it that in India today, there are separate 'spheres of influence' and 'warlords' under different foreign imperialist powers as was the case with China? Marx-Engels-Lenin-Stalin-Mao Zedong have all repeatedly said first of all, people's political power has to be created by way of educating, inspiring and organizing the oppressed working class and other sections of toiling masses through instruments of struggles like the Soviets in Russia or Revolutionary Committees of China. Only after that, proletarian revolution under the leadership of the working class party can be accomplished. Revolution will not come about if the revolutionary party or some of its leaders and cadres simply jump with arms keeping people politically unconscious and unorganized. In the resolution on the historic great Proletarian Cultural Revolution conducted by the Communist Party of China, Mao Zedong, way back on August 8, 1966, remarked: "To overthrow a political power, it is always necessary first of all to create public opinion to do work in the ideological sphere. This is true for the revolutionary class as well as for the counter-revolutionary class". The Communist Party of China could successfully achieve revolution because this painstaking task was undertaken by it under the leadership of Mao. The erstwhile Naxalites and the present-day Maoists have not understood the immense importance of this teaching of Mao Zedong at all. This is why, no matter what their objective is; only some stray individual killings are being perpetrated and the bourgeois state by giving wide publicity to such incidents of individual assassinations is seeking to denigrate the nobility of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought

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Delhi Conference called for intensifying Bank Employees' struggle

9th Bipartite Settlement signed between the Indian Banks Association (IBA) and United Front of Bank Unions (UFBU) after a long spell of negotiations, have caused widespread grievance amongst the bank employees of the country. In general, they are putting the UFBU leaders on the dock. In fact, employees feel to have been deceived and cheated by the leaders on all issues such as wage settlement, Pension issue and others. In protest, All India Bank Employees' Unity Forum and Akhil Bharat Bank Karmi Jagaruk Sangharsh Sangh jointly organized a convention on 8 August last at Gandhi Peace Foundation Hall, Delhi. Participants from almost all the states joined it which was presided over by Comrade Rajiv Mohan, President, Jagaruk Sangharsh Sangh. Comrade Krishna Chakraborty, Member, Polit Bureau, SUCI(C) and President, AIUTUC, was the main speaker.

In his address, Comrade Chakraborty, *inter alia*, said that in all the capitalist-imperialist countries including ours, social security schemes are being systematically curtailed, hard-earned democratic and trade union rights are being snatched away. Whether it is Congress-led UPA or BJP-led NDA or CPI(M), CPI supported coalition governments — all have been implementing the sinister policies of globalization. Bank employees for long have been fighting for pension for all. Though under pressure of movement, the

management has agreed to the demand, the pension scheme has been modified to be applicable to new optees and with revised conditions. The UFBU leadership in abject betrayal to the cause of Bank employees nodded to this proposal giving away hard earned rights of the employees. The same is true for the pay structure agreed for the Bank Employees which is far less than what has been recommended by the 6th Central Pay Commission for the Central Government Employees. UFBU leadership have acted against the interest of Bank employees and helped the IBA and Central Government, meekly surrendering to the management in the 9th bipartite settlement. It is heartening to note that the organizers of the convention have raised their voice of protest against this black agreement. The entire burden of the present recession and acute unprecedented crisis of capitalism is being squarely passed on to the workers. The Bank Employees must develop powerful, sustained, organized and intense movement against all these aberrations and anti-worker policies. The organizers of this convention must fulfil this pressing need.

Present and erstwhile leaders of Bank Employees' movement and Comrade Tarun Mandal, SUCI (C) MP, were present. A joint Action Committee of Bank Employees and Officers was constituted with Comrades Jagannath Roy Mandal, S. K. Mahendra and R. P. Purohit as conveners.

Present political situation and armed struggle

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and using this again as the pretext, is crushing democratic mass movements. Has the realization dawned upon the present-day Maoists that such activities of theirs are, in effect, helping the state to demolish the legitimate struggle of the poor tribals and other sections of the exploited masses that surged forth in Lalgarh in West Bengal with immense possibility and bearing tremendous significance at the all-India level? Whether they are doing it knowingly or unknowingly, the result is the same. Have they ever thought why the same bourgeoisie who had deliberately not allowed any publicity to the great revolutionary struggles of Russia, China and Vietnam lest world people should draw inspiration from that, is giving them such a wide publicity in the media?

Many leaders and cadres of the

erstwhile undivided CPI as well as of its various subsequent split factions despite having emotion, honesty, dedication and sacrifice, could not have proper grasp of Marxist philosophy. Because of that, none of them could follow the Leninist principles of party building, develop centralism and collective leadership based on correct proletarian democracy, determine correct strategy and tactics of revolution and above all, have correct understanding of proletarian revolutionary culture. As a result, while the principal section has plunged into revisionism-reformism, the honest and over-emotional faction is practising, what Lenin termed, 'infantile disorder'. Both these 'right' and 'left' social democratic politics are hindering the process of developing revolutionary movement, class and mass struggles in this country.



10,000 workers in civil disobedience by AIUTUC on 30 August in Calcutta in support of all India General Strike on September 7 against anti-workers policy of both Central and State governments

All India Students' Parliament March



Massive all India students' rally marches to Parliament on 27 August to protest disastrous onslaught on education by union government ; (right) AIDS O leaders present at the rally along with Dr. Tarun Mandal, MP, SUCI(C)

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