

# Proletarian Era

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## Iraq Election :

### A Mockery of Democracy

Over the last half a century or so, no anti-imperialist struggle has been so intense, fierce and protracted as the present one in Iraq except the struggles by the Vietnamese and the Palestinian peoples. The present struggle by the Iraqis began in 2002 and is still continuing. Despite the heaviest price paid in terms of human life and wealth of the country, the heroic freedom fighters of this country are not yielding any ground to the US occupiers and their stooges. The fighting is on in the streets and lanes, and house to house, against the imperialist mercenaries. In fact, when the US imperialists and their British accomplices were overjoyed at occupying this disarmed small country in a short time through demonic attack applying menacingly mass destructive missiles and bombs, they could least imagine in dream that they would have to face such stiff resistance from the people of the occupied country. To liberate their motherland, the Iraqis are no doubt sacrificing lives (so far about 100,000) including infants and old people. But at the same time, many lives of the imperialist raiders are also being lost. This has left the imperialist occupiers bewildered as also mortally frightened for the price they have been paying as 'messiah' to deliver their own cooked up 'democracy' and 'freedom' to the Iraqis. And this heavy price is being paid by none but the lone superpower in the world possessing deadly armoury. The situation in Iraq is so volcanic for the imperialist occupiers that their soldiers do not dare to come out of the barracks, many of them are even refusing to go to war,

some are committing suicide out of despair; nor do their Iraqi stooges take courage to patrol the streets openly. Even their political props are being killed. Already several UN representatives, Mayor of an Iraqi city, and the Vice-President of the US installed interim government have fallen to bullets of the Iraqi guerrillas.

#### Imperialist motive behind holding election

Having realized that it was impossible to suppress the Iraqi freedom struggle by either bullets or bribes, and in the face of mounting loss of their soldiers, the US-led imperialists floated the call of elections. Actually behind the much trumpeted and noisy slogan of fulfilling their so-called pious wish to introduce 'democracy' after delivering 'freedom' to Iraq, what these imperialists had in their hidden agenda was to legitimize their occupation of this country in the eyes of the world. This is the process with which the US imperialists may hope to hoax the world, but this is nothing but replica of what they attempted in Vietnam in the sixties, in so many countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America in the preceding decades, and in Afghanistan, Yugoslavia and Ukraine in the recent years. They bombarded and destroyed the countries killing innocents in thousands, occupied them, and then imposed puppet governments through show of elections steered and controlled by them.

With this end in mind the US-UK imperialists put up Iraq on the same agenda. After this country was devastated, the US imperialists hand-picked the CIA fostered Iyad

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## Central Committee Condemns

### Usurption of power by the King in Nepal

Comrade Nihar Mukherjee, General Secretary, SUCI, in a statement issued on February 4, 2005 expressed deep indignation at the imposition of emergency and assumption of all powers by the autocratic king in Nepal. This, he said, is a blatant attack upon the mounting people's movement for restoration of democracy in Nepal. Expressing his solidarity with the struggling people of Nepal, Comrade Mukherjee protested against the way the Government of India, in connivance with the autocratic royal king, has been opposing this just struggle of the Nepalese people. He called upon the people of India cherishing fraternal relationship with the fighting people of Nepal to build up mighty protest movement against this butchering of democracy and urged the CPI(M)-CPI to prevail upon the government of India running on their support, to rescind such anti-democratic move and sever all diplomatic ties with the monarchical ruler of Nepal.

### US threat to Iran

Comrade Nihar Mukherjee, General Secretary, SUCI, in a statement issued on February 4, 2005 expressed strong indignation at the way the US imperialists in the name of preventing Iran from developing nuclear arms, is threatening to use force against this sovereign country and thus nakedly interfering in its internal affairs. While the opinion of the world people is for total nuclear disarmament, the US imperialists, instead of destroying its own nuclear weapons, is thumping round the world in display of worst brigandage.

Comrade Mukherjee called upon the people of the world to immediately rise in protest against this nefarious machination of the US imperialists to re-enact an Iraq-like episode in Iran and demanded of the government of India to create effective pressure on the US regime to scuttle the move. He also exhorted the people of India having glorious tradition of anti-imperialist struggle, to develop a countrywide massive protest movement against this heinous crime of the US imperialists.

### India Government's attempt at diplomatic relation with Iraqi puppet regime

Comrade Nihar Mukherjee, General Secretary, SUCI, in a statement issued on February 7, 2005 severely condemned the reported contemplated move on the part of the Government of India to establish diplomatic relation with the stooge Iraqi government and build hospital and embark upon such other plans in US-occupied Iraq to appease the US imperialists. The Government of India for quite sometime was trying to trigger some activity that would please the US imperialists and serve their interest in perpetuating the illegal occupation in Iraq but could not succeed so far because of strong opposition from the people. The farce of election that the US imperialists orchestrated to continue its rule through a puppet regime provided a ready ploy to the Indian government to fulfil that intention.

Comrade Mukherjee warned the Government of India that freedom loving Indian people will not tolerate such bootlicking of US imperialism and called upon the CPI(M)-CPI to waste no more time in prevailing upon the Congress-led central government running on their support and force it to give up such policy of appeasing the US imperialist rulers.

# Farce of 'election' by puppet government

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Allawi and smuggled him into governmental power of Iraq under supervision of the US administrator Paul Bremer. Bremer then prepared a set of more than 100 US interest-bound rules and regulations for administration, handed them over to Allawi and left Iraq. Fortified with these rules and regulations, in service to his US masters, Allawi declared election and then held on 30th January last under armed dictation and surveillance of the imperialist army.

## How the election was held

The elections were held not under the Iraqi sovereign laws and rules but under Bremer-framed rules and regulations irreversible in any way, with active monitoring by the US-British and Iraqi soldiers. This is totally contrary to the international Geneva Conventions which the US imperialists and their British associates blatantly defied. These Conventions say that no occupying force has any authority to change the law of the occupied country thereby rendering the elections violative of international law.

This apart, democracy in a country presupposes the sovereignty that the country must possess. And this sovereignty in turn presupposes independence. So without independence, this sovereignty is a misnomer, likewise the talk of 'democracy' without this sovereignty is not only meaningless but a hoax as well. Viewed from this angle, in Iraq which is groaning under domination of the US-led imperialists, the country where there is no independence of the people, not to speak of sovereignty, can any democracy worth the name be established? No amount of imperialist harangues can justify this, no high voltage media hype of theirs can make the world believe this.

Bremer-framed rules and regulations had two objectives. One was to ensure exploitation of all major enterprises of Iraq including oil and other resources, and the other was to choose and appoint a purchased puppet ruler like CIA-trained Allawi to secure the US interest even through elections. After these laws were imposed, the US imperialists announced elections to establish their 'democracy' and deliver so-called 'freedom' to the Iraqis.

It is quite imaginable, therefore, how free and fair were the elections held under such rules and regulations. This is why, even the US observers had to admit that there was no climate for election in Iraq. The bourgeois press too held the similar view before elections. That it was simply a farcical election was evident from the fact that no groups or political parties controlled by the Shias or the Sunnis contested in this so-called election, though the imperialists desperately tried to divide the Iraqi people in order to weaken their united anti-imperialist struggle. All the parties or groups like Iraqi National Foundation Congress, a broad-based civilian political group having influence over large number of Iraqis outside the religious groups, the Association of Muslim Scholars, the Islamic Party of Iraq totally boycotted the elections. Not only this, all of these groups and parties called upon the people of Iraq, the youth and students to fight a heroic battle against the US-led imperialist mercenaries. It was such bizarre an election that there were no candidates or political parties, save and except the US puppet Iyad Allawi and his party on the field! This US lackey who got huge fund from the CIA was alone screened on TV, displayed in advertisement, in the street posters for publicity. The names of other candidates about 7,700 in number were said to be available only in the lists on the last days of campaign and that too on websites inaccessible to most Iraqis. It requires noting that these lists were prepared and approved by the US Administrator Bremer-appointed High Commission of Election. Hence, names of many a such candidate were not found in the list. What is more, the locations of most of the 5,300 polling stations were 'secret' even 12 hours before the polls. To these mysteriously 'secret' (or non-existent?) polling stations the ghost "voters" were carried by the US tanks and trucks. In many places both the US soldiers and the US-controlled Iraqi police dragged the unwilling voters to the booth with one hand on their arm, and the other on AK-47 rifle. There were no presiding officers in those 'secret' polling stations, nor were there any international observers. Still those who dared to cast votes having been ill-influenced or forced by the US-British occupiers' media and the mercenaries with life in hand, did so

without knowing who were the candidates they voted for. They were ghost candidates with phantom policies! These US-chosen candidates, even if elected, would not have the power to alter US plans to colonize Iraq.

Such amazing 'election' was held in Iraq kept under domination of US imperialist troops since declaration of election date. All its borders were closed, traffick was banned, curfew was clamped on all the 18 districts with order of shoot-at-sight from the day prior to the elections till they were over. This is how the elections on the 30th were held! This is what US-imported "victory of democracy" meant, in which the imperialists wanted that the Iraqis must not seek independence! If this is democracy, it is democracy in a military straitjacket, as noted by a Western columnist.

After such "elections" were over, the imperialist chieftain George W Bush asserted that it was fair and free. The imperialist dominated media also reiterated this in refrain. But how 'fair' had they been was amply clear from the above. Such 'fairness' certificate is quite appropriate from a US President, like Bush who himself was elected, through a completely rigged election in 2000. Notwithstanding this certificate, it was a stark fact that 30th January Iraqi elections were thoroughly manipulated, led by US Ambassador to Iraq, John Negroponte. Who is this Negroponte? It is he who as Ambassador to Honduras (1981-1985) became a menacing embodiment of terrorism and death squads and was famous for unleashing violent attacks on people of Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala. And Negroponte too performed his responsibility efficiently. He employed National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NFI) and International Republican Institute (IRI), the two infamous CIA-funded organizations set to destroy the democratic processes in the countries world over and have exactly done this in cooking up pre-calculated election results in Iraq.

## Iraqis rejected the election

As regards the tale of 'overwhelming' polling of 60 to 72 per cent votes, the US-appointed High Commission for Election itself

provided the best answer. The Commission which first supported Bush and his media hype, came back to senses and said that its reaction immediately after elections had been wrong, such conclusion had been reached at on simply verbal estimate and guess. The UN adviser to the Election Commission, Carlos Valenzuela too confirmed the above observation.

The fact is, notwithstanding the imperialist claim, the turnout of voters was very low. Over and above all the Sunni areas drawing totally blank, in many areas of the country even dominated by the Shias, the polling centres were closed or deserted. Ignoring the imperialist-laboured division between the Sunnis and the Shias, the people of Iraq as a whole refused to take part in voting to mark their opposition to occupation. This is also evident from the turnout of Iraqis abroad. About 80% of the eligible voters abroad did not vote even while they had no security concern. In the violent situation in Iraq where there were constant attacks of the guerrillas, the myth of the US claim of large turnout is easily exposed. It is to be noted that, as many as 260 attacks and nine suicide bombings took place on the election day killing six candidates and several US soldiers. The biggest attack was inflicted on the British soldiers since the invasion. About 100 of them (officially 15) were killed when a helicopter carrying them was destroyed by a missile strike which, according to 'Daily Mirror', was an act of the Iraqi guerrillas. And these were apart from the daily average of 70 attacks on the occupiers and their lackeys.

In reality, through this hoax of election, the US imperialists wanted to make their occupation perpetual, usurp the natural resources and fill the country with military bases. In Iraq the US imperialists have already built up as many as 14 military bases. These bases would serve as forces to keep Iraq under knees and also would bring the oil-rich West Asia within their target and grip. That this was a dire necessity was audaciously advised by a former US Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger long back while outlining the US policy in the Middle-East. He said, "Middle-East Oil is too important to be left to the hands of Arab". This is also what

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## Transport fare hike spree round the country

# Slaying the slain

As apprehended, within months of another steep hike in the prices of petroleum products, different state governments, irrespective of political hue and colour, have announced increase in the transport fares. Since 1980, petrol-diesel prices have been raised 76 times and following the trail have been several escalations in transport tariff. And the sequence of events and array of arguments have always been in the same pattern. The international oil cartel headed by the US imperialists arbitrarily declared increase in the fuel price. Immediately, the central government informed that in order to maintain parity, domestic oil prices would go up. As domestic prices were raised upwards, the various state governments made that a plea to grant largesse to the transport owners including owners of public conveyance, both private and government, in the form of increased fare structure. As if, this were a chain reaction — inevitable and irresistible — and the people suffering under ruthless capitalist exploitation, were bound to tamely accept this additional burden as a natural occurrence. This is how the crisis-ridden ruling bourgeois class and the governments subservient to it, are fleecing the people to the hilt, deceiving them totally.

### Oil price-rise — the imperialist manipulation

Time and again, we have exposed in the columns of *Proletarian Era* the falsity of the argument on the part of the government in justifying the decision of increasing transport fare as a corollary to international oil price rise. US imperialists in order to protect their depleting domestic oil reserves and capture the oil fields overseas to further their hegemonistic aspirations and overlordism throughout the globe, are employing arm-twisting strategy and even mounting armed aggression on the oil producing countries. The illegal occupation of Iraq is purported towards that only. Most of the oil rich countries under capitalist rule are surrendering to the dictates of US imperialism. Absence of the socialist camp has made the US imperialists much more unbridled and bragging in the brigandage. At will the US imperialists are manipulating demand and supply of oil and

forcing other oil rich nations to follow suit. Then they are manoeuvring the price to swell their coffers. There is abundance of oil but the imperialist machination regulates its availability to create artificial scarcity, push up the price to amass superprofit. So crisis-ridden is world capitalism-imperialism, now in its death throes, that plundering through rampant speculation is now a major source for it to usurp super profit. Neither the Indian government nor any other government in any bourgeois country is raising any voice against this nefarious act of the US imperialists and their associates. Rather they as inalienable part of world capitalism acquiesce in the move and take advantage of this to raise domestic oil tariff. This is what we witness in India as well. Repeatedly, the people are forced to bear the brunt of such escalated price.

### Wretched beyond limit are the people

Which people by the way? The toiling millions becoming wretched day by day because of skyrocketing of price-line, growing unemployment, loss of job, rapid fall in real income and even squeezing purchasing power. Somehow they are struggling to eke out a subsistence level living, dispossessed of any capacity to shoulder any further load of increased expenditure. As per Planning Commission report, unemployment rate has gone up from 5.99% in 1993-94 to 7.32% in 1999-2000. Inflation is soaring. 26% people are below poverty line. Per capita consumption of the rural poor, constituting around 80% of the population, has drastically gone down in last 10 years. Percentage of landless peasants has shot up from 41.6 to 49.8 per cent in last three years. Rural proletariats, agricultural workers have no work. Thousands and thousands of factories are being folded up throwing lakhs of employees and workers out of job. Posts are getting abolished, vacancies arising out of retirement are extinguished. In the name of downsizing, huge chunk of people are made to retire prematurely. Wage freeze, falling interest-rate, denial of superannuation benefits are further squeezing the spending ability. While such is the plight and extent

of impoverishment of the majority of the populace, the owning class and its periphery are making huge fortunes by trading in the hunger of millions. It is this people, the deprived majority, the rural and urban have-nots, the retrenched workers, the unemployed youth, the starving housewives, the poverty-afflicted daily wager, the distressed slum-dwellers, the devastated middle-class who are now asked to pay more for commuting from one place to another so that imperialist sharks, the capitalist owners, the profit-seeking transport operators could thrive, the rich become wealthier, affluent become yet more opulent, the servitors of the ruling class prosper further. What else is it other than slaying the slain?

### Falsity of government's argument

The governments who are criminally callous to the peril of the common people and instead of giving any relief to them, impose additional burden on them through fiscal savagery, raised transport fare and so forth, are however excessively concerned about the "inconvenience" of the transport owners. Just as they are so generous to the ruling bourgeoisie, the foreign capital, the MNCs and monopoly houses in waiving taxes, granting amnesty for tax defaults and inability to repay loans, allowing to retain huge black money. It is not that the governments are just "protecting" the transport owners against the rise in fuel cost but seizing the opportunity to enable them earn several times more than the present level. Take the case of West Bengal. Here, the price of diesel has gone up from Rs.26.51 to Rs.28.72 per litre in November last. The CPI(M)-led government here has ordered a flat increase of Re.0.50 in the bus fare tariff which was upwardly raised in September last. Assume that a bus gives five trips (to and fro) a day on average and on a very conservative estimate 600 passengers are carried per trip, an increase of Re.0.50 begets Rs.1500.00 extra per day to the owner while he spends just Rs.170.17 to purchase 70 litres of diesel to make five trips. This is the fraud committed on the people.

Equally defrauding is the argument that rise in international oil price automatically triggers domestic price rise. There is heavy

impost of tax and cess on petrol-diesel that has made the price level so high. Central Petroleum Minister Mani Shankar Iyer confessed in the Parliament that if all cess and taxes are withdrawn, a litre of diesel costing Rs.28.72 a litre would be available at Rs.18.07. Similarly, the price of a litre of petrol would come down from Rs.40.89 to Rs.17.46 a litre. Moreover, the government of India purchases oil from international market not at the declared price but at a discount of around 15% (at Rs.37/- per barrel when the stipulated price is Rs.42/-). The profit of the oil companies have been soaring. They booked an additional profit of Rs.370 crore just in fifteen days in December last. Indian Oil Company has made a mind-boggling profit of Rs.7004 crore in 2003-04. Yet, neither the central nor the state governments have shown any inclination to roll back even partially the tax and cess on petro-products and instead thrust more pressure on the people by raising the price on the pretext of spiralling movement of international oil price.

In this game, everyone is a beneficiary. The government nets more profit from tax and cess, the oil companies book more profit from the increased price and the transport owners pocket more profit by recovering enhanced fare. The only casualty are the people. They have no other alternative but to travel in public conveyance. They are made to pay more and commute bereft of minimal convenience, if not safety. Buses run packed, much in excess of capacity. Passengers even are forced to travel on the roof top. And less said about the dilapidated condition of the vehicles, the better. Seats are short in size, cushions torn, handles broken, floors damaged, pedestals hamstrung. Over and above that, the road condition is horrible. Sometimes it appears as if herd of animals are being ferried in congested cages. They name it public transport system in the country. The governments feel no obligation towards improvement of travel condition but only go on escalating fare at regular intervals.

### Abandonment of welfare state concept

It may be recalled in this context that after the historic November revolution in Russia and establishment of Socialist Soviet Union, there was a wave of

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# Heroic Iraqi people will have the last say

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the US imperialists call "democratization" of the countries which are obviously not in their good books, which do not want to fall in line with their imperialist design. It is immaterial if the ruling cliques backed and bolstered up by the US are autocratic, fascist, militaristic, fundamentalist, feudalistic, or monarchic, so long as they follow the US imperialist dictate. Who does not know that the rulers in Saudi Arabia are worst religious fundamentalists ruling the countries with all medieval laws and hence most undemocratic; Pakistan, Haiti are under military junta; Uganda under Idi Amin, Indonesia under Suharto, Chile under Pinochet and so on, are countries ruled by butchers of democracy, sworn enemies of democratic norms and principles but they ruled their countries for long years in close relation with the so-called champions of democracy, the US imperialists. The US imperialists had intimate friendship with them, lent all support to these rulers in extorting the people, in torturing the people with repressive Acts. These countries even got military help from the US-led imperialists. Why? Because these rulers served or have been still serving the imperialist end. But Iraq had to be devastated by falsely blaming it of possessing weapons of mass destruction or having links with the fundamentalist Al Qaeda and its terrorism. But the US-British imperialists could prove none of these allegations even after rummaging the nooks and corners of Iraq. In this context, it cannot but be noted that although the Iraqi ruler Saddam Hussein was a bourgeois nationalist and there was many a controversy centring round his rule, still he maintained a secular administration as admitted by the whole world, as distinct from many of the neighbouring medieval rulers, noted above. In fact, Iraq, the land of one of the most ancient Mesopotemian civilizations with rich heritage was ruined and occupied because apart from the greed of the imperialist vultures to usurp its oil resources, this country led by Saddam Hussein had been emerging as a centre against imperialism in general, and against US imperialist international gangsterism, in particular. Noticeably, after the imperialist occupation of Iraq, the religious fundamentalism is rapidly

raising its ugly head there. In other words, the US-led occupiers have been instigating to get it implanted in that country, a fact nakedly exposed to the world.

Hence this drama of elections, this import of 'democracy' in Iraq with so many claims about its success. Every independent reporter and analyst outside the control of Pentagon in Iraq held a completely different view. The people of Iraq, these independent observers realized, refused to accept that these imperialists from thousands of miles away, have any right to foist on and dictate the elections in their country, or could speak of 'democracy' or 'freedom' for them. It is the Iraqi people who are the sole deciders of their destiny. The US-British imperialists have no right to speak for these creeds as they themselves are the worst transgressors of them, even in their own countries. The American people especially are engaged in a struggle against their imperialist rulers to retain their hard earned democracy and freedom and civil rights which are being systematically trampled and snatched away one after another by means of draconian Acts like Patriot II.

This also demonstrates the tragic outcome of this one-time bulwark of democracy and freedom now being turned into a butcher of democracy.

The Iraqi people are engaged in valiant fight to throw out the imperialists and their local hangers-on. In spite of the imperialist conspiracy to divide them communally, merciless killing of innocent people, inhuman tortures and repression under the open sky and in dark prisons like Abu Ghraib and such in Basra, the Iraqi people are firm in unity and have been putting up all-out resistance against the US imperialists and their lackeys, hundreds of them. This is encouraging to the freedom-loving people of the world. The bewildered US imperialists and their British accomplices have been forced to air a view that after the elections, if the Iraqis wanted them to leave Iraq, they would do so. But at the same time they have expressed the hope that the Iraqis might prefer them to stay back in their country, to be looted, exploited, enslaved and tortured more!

In conclusion, it is to be mentioned that this anti-imperialist

freedom struggle which the Iraqis are valiantly waging is not their own struggle alone. It conduces to the fulfilment of the urges and aspirations of the freedom-loving toiling people of the whole world. In this sense it is the struggle of the people of the whole world. They must pursue this struggle to the end as the Vietnamese did inflicting a crushing blow to the imperialists led by the US. They shall win. At the same time they are to realize that any consistent and protracted anti-imperialist freedom struggle in the present era, let alone reach its desired goal, cannot even be led successfully under the nationalist bourgeois leadership. It is only with the Marxism-Leninism as the guiding ideology and genuine communist leadership at the core that its true culmination can be achieved, as we witnessed in China

and Vietnam. So, the people of Iraq who are commendably carrying out this struggle against the US-UK imperialists should come to this realization and gear up their organization on this basis. Meanwhile, we, the toiling millions of India join the world humanity in support of this valiant fight of the Iraqis. We condemn at the same time the Indian ruling capitalist class and their political hangers-on who, along with other capitalist rulers of the world are brazenly praising the US imperialist imposed farce elections in Iraq. We pledge to organize vigorous movement in the country to force our rulers stand by the anti-imperialist freedom struggle of the Iraqis in tune with the anti-imperialist tradition of the Indian people.

[Source : International Action Centre and *The Statesman*]

## SUCI supports struggle of Nepalese people

In commemoration of the tenth anniversary of people's freedom struggle against feudal and autocratic monarchy in Nepal, the Nepal Jana-Adhikar Suraksha Samiti, Bharat organized a rally at Saheed Minar, Calcutta on 13 February, 2005 with pledges to fight against autocratic onslaught of King Gyanendra, as well as Indian expansionist and US imperialist interferences.

Comrade Provash Ghosh, member, Central Committee and Secretary, West Bengal State

Committee, SUCI, on invitation from the organizers addressed the meeting. He paid homage to the scores of martyrs of Nepali struggle, the common working people of Nepal and expressed full solidarity and fraternity, on behalf of the Indian people and SUCI, to the ongoing struggle of the Nepalese for democracy. Central leaders of the organizing Samiti elaborated different aspects of the Nepalese struggle. Other speakers also addressed the meeting.



*Comrade Provash Ghosh addressing the rally of Nepalese people on 13 February, 2005 at Calcutta*

Telecom and Provident Fund**Anti-people UPA and CPI(M) doublespeak exposed**

The latest act of the Congress-led UPA and the CPI(M) drama is still being enacted in full vigour. In the Cabinet meeting of the UPA government at the Centre, held on February 2, first the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) rate in the telecom sector was hiked from 49% to 74% and the Employees' Provident Fund Interest (EPFI) rate was raised to 9.5% from the current 8.5%.

Reportedly the first decision incensed the left parties of the parliament, viz., the CPI(M), the CPI, who were apparently against any increase in FDI in the Telecom, the Insurance and the Civil Aviation. The decision on PFI rates, on the other hand, was claimed by those lefts as their victory. Quite reasonably, a drastic cut in the PFI rates by the BJP-led NDA government did give rise to strong resentment among employees, government or not, and the CPI(M)-CPI did not hesitate to cash in this resentment to gain benefits in the last parliament election. However, when their 'friendly' UPA government did stick to the same reduced rate, it naturally caused them embarrassment. Present decision of increasing EPFI rates thus came as a relief-gift to them offered by their bourgeois friend, particularly when it was preceded by the decision of FDI step-up in the Telecom.

But the perfect time-matching was quite revealing. Simple day-to-day experiences make people increasingly aware of the second-fiddle role these big lefts are playing in Indian politics. And it was clear that the cabinet could not have decided either of the two issues without knowledge, if not consent, of these parties. Media, too, hinted about the understanding between the UPA and the CPI(M) and its allies behind this carrot and stick incident. So CPI(M) - CPI leaders had to cry hoarse a make-belief attempt that such allegations of behind-the-curtain understanding was unethical or that they did not fail nor would they in future to protest against UPA policies that might turn out to be against people's interests. But they themselves knew that only their words would not cut much ice for them now. So they decided to hold a few programmes that eventually turned out to be more symbolic than real. Even there, they cunningly avoided a critical point in this issue of FDI. An increase of FDI to 74%, i.e., beyond the limit of 51%, would simply mean that the government loses control and the sector is left to the imperialist and private capital.

At the same time, however, they

took it as their bounden duty to see that no wrong message was conveyed to their 'friendly' Central government and the master, the ruling capitalist class. So, immediately the West Bengal Chief Minister, trying to shape out to be the icon of accomplished trustworthy caretaker of owners and capitalists, emphatically assured the industrialists in the FICCI that his CPI(M) Front government was not against FDI. But the drama did not end there. Even some time back, CPI(M) used to carefully maintain a distance between their party and the government. Thus once and often, we would have found while from the government levels they assured the capitalist class of their service, they spoke differently from their party forum, to pose their pro-people, anti-establishment stand, Now with days, even that distinction is marred. In the present case, in the West Bengal State Conference of the party itself, the state Labour Minister, Nirupam Sen placed a proposal for consideration. There he emphatically submitted a cordial welcome to investment from capitalists, both foreign and indigenous. It thus leaves no doubt that whatever they may profess to people, CPI(M) from its party platform and the government will stand solid in favour of capitalists, even FDI. The semblance of opposition, they may be staging now and then in trade unions or other fora, will merely aim at hoodwinking their rank and people, that are sure to suffer a big jolt to see their party so cordial to the FDI.

If on the investment issue the CPI(M) is explicitly and shamelessly capitulating to capitalists, on the PF issue it is treacherously doublespeak. Contribution to the provident fund is neither an investment of the employees, nor its interest is profit fetching. The corpus is a safeguard for their senile age and the 12% interest was demanded by all responsible trade unions and was actually awarded as a well-calculated means to protect against

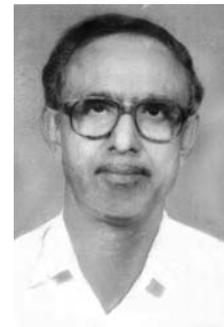
**Red Salute Comrade Swapan Mullick**

Comrade Swapan Mullick, member, West Bengal State Committee and Secretary, Darjeeling District Committee, SUCI, breathed his last on 12th February, 2005 at Siliguri Hospital following a sudden massive heart attack. He was 58.

Coming in contact with the revolutionary thoughts of Comrade Shibdas Ghosh way back in 1969, Comrade Mullick engaged himself in the arduous struggle of developing as a revolutionary worker and in the process emerged as a distinguished organizer of revolutionary mass movement. Through painstaking efforts he succeeded in spreading party thoughts and organizations among all segments of toiling people in the Darjeeling district including the distressed Gorkha people of the hills. He took leading role in developing movements on demands of different sections of the toiling people. In the process he had to face arrests and police torture a number of time.

Comrade Mullick took a leading role in making administration arrests the murderers of Comrade Tanmoy Mukherjee, a leading AIDYO and UTUC-LS organizer, who was killed by the tea garden owners, land sharks and vested interest. He was endearing to all for his charming behaviour, helpful nature and higher ethical and cultural standard. He was associated with many welfare activities, educational institutions and clubs. With his demise the party has lost one of the most able and leading organizers.

Comrade Swapan Mullick's body was laid at district party office on February 13 morning, where on behalf of Comrade Provash Ghosh, member, Central Committee and Secretary, West Bengal State Committee, Comrade Sunil Mukherjee, member, State Secretariat and also leaders of different political parties of the district paid him tribute.



erosion and devaluation of the hard-earned money at the end of their career-life because of ever-mounting inflation in the meantime. Since it is basically a social security measure, the corpus is placed in the safe custody of Special Deposit Scheme specially formulated by the government of India for this purpose. Following the policy of liberalization, which is nothing but liberally opening avenues and floodgates of profits and earning for capitalists, the governments have been constantly trying to reduce their commitment to the employees by slashing down interest rates and to allure them with earning quick money through investing their corpus in the quicksand of scam-studded share market. BJP-led NDA government had set the ball rolling and Congress-led UPA government followed suit. Now the latter, obviously with the nod from their friends, CPI(M) or its allies, raise the PFI rates to 9.5%. CPI(M) and its trade union, CITU, call it a victory, concealing the history behind. In the past few years, the governments have gradually brought down the PFI rates from 12 to 8.5%. The NDA government once made it 9.5%. The UPA government first reduced it to 8.5% and now under

pressure raise it to 9.5%, nowhere near the mark of workers' legitimate demand of 12%. So it is no restoration by any means, a restoration which the parties of the UPA as well as the CPI(M) or its allies themselves demanded in their last election campaign. Yet the CPI(M) and the CITU term it a victory and cover up the hard fact that it is an eyewash meant to counteract the simultaneous move of raising FDI in the Telecom. They are also mute about the government tricks of playing with this fund by investing even a part of it in the ever uncertain domains of share market.

Performance of the NDA government was ample proof of their anti-people character. The UPA government, too, has already exposed its teeth. In addition, we unveil this skeleton of CPI(M) to bring home to the people the simple fact that the party, still going by its left placard, is fast shedding off even the semblance of its pro-people stance to stand by the policies of the bourgeois parties, its friend or foe alike, Congress or BJP, with a view to serving the masters, the capitalists more efficiently. In the process, it is equally hastily putting on more and more treacherous garbs.

# No money for public welfare : Yet concessions to capitalists galore

It is often heard these days that the Indian government is short of funds, how would it find the money for public welfare measures? The questions of paucity of funds is not raised when it comes to running the top-heavy administration, providing new cars, all amenities of luxury and frequent foreign trips of the ministers, bureaucrats and MPs or for pushing up the military expenditure sky-high. But whenever the question of expenditure on food, fertilizer, education, public health and other measures in the interest of the people is raised, the Indian government pleads inability due to lack of funds. The situation was not like this even 20 years back. The government used to spend some money under these heads at that time, although far short of the requirement. Why this sudden shortage of funds, especially since 1991 when the new economic policies were introduced? It was because the new policies resolved, among others, that firstly, the government would not subsidize anything for the people, everything would have to be procured at market prices — even education and medical and health facilities; secondly, tax relief and exemptions would be provided to the big industries and business enterprises in the interest of “industrial development”.

That lack of government funds is a lame excuse is now quite apparent to people. The successive governments in Delhi have been providing unbridled tax relief and exemptions to the owner-capitalist class, resulting in dwindling of government funds. But, in the midst of this, the huge expenditures on top-heavy administration, providing luxuries to the ministers/bureaucrats and the military forces have not been curtailed, but stepped up. So, the pressure on the government funds has been increasing, and the government has been drastically reducing expenditure on public welfare measures. Whenever the government and the newspapers have pleaded as an excuse that the government lacks funds we have categorically pointed out the tax relief and exemptions provided to the owner-capitalists, to prove the falsity of the plea. Some have raised the questions: What do the tax

exemptions and relief provided by the government amount to? Is it so much that some significant work in the people's interest could have been funded by this money?

Although the answer to this cannot be directly found from the government statements, it is not difficult to make an assessment from the government statistics provided. The government always announces any tax relief or exemption as a percentage of the turnover from which the monetary amount of the particular relief and/or exemption cannot be ascertained straightaway. In the annual financial reviews or budget speeches, too, the government does not provide a clear account intelligible to the people. Rather, while announcing a particular exemption in terms of percentage figure, the government takes pains to stress that the exemption would not result in a decrease of the total revenues. There is an element of deceit in this, because even if it is assumed that the total government revenues do not decrease in terms of money, the income of the government decreases in real terms, in the perspective of the ever-increasing government expenditure and erosion of the value of money, unless the government revenues go up in keeping with the increase of production in the country.

## It is the capitalist class that is benefited by tax-exemption

From the figures for the total domestic production of the country (GDP) along with the percentage figures of government taxes and duties, a fairly reliable assessment of the amount of exemptions can be obtained. Leaving aside the various complexities and trickeries of GDP calculation, it can be stated simply and roughly that the GDP represents the monetary value of the total production in agriculture, industry and service sectors, etc. in the country including the “income” from the loans received. So, if the GDP increases, the total revenue of the government should increase even if the percentages of tax and duties are not raised. But even if the percentage rates are decreased, the total government revenue may not go down because of the additional revenues collected due to the increased production — but the

increase in government revenues that could have been possible, does not come about. Let us view the matter on an arbitrary example. Let us consider the total GDP to be Rs.1000/-. Let us also assume that the government collects Rs.100/- as taxes, that is, the tax rate is 10% of the GDP. Let us further assume that the GDP increases to Rs.2000/- next year. Now, even if the government decreases the tax rate to 5%, the government revenues remain at Rs.100 as before, and the government can claim that the revenues have not decreased. Or else, if the percentage is decreased from 10% to 6%, the government can claim that the revenues have increased to Rs.120/- from Rs.100/- during the last year, despite a reduction in the tax rate. But the truth is that the government revenues could have jumped up to Rs.200/- if the old tax-rate of 10% had been continued, but that did not happen. That is, the tax-payers (mainly, the capitalist class) reap the harvest.

Let us now pass on to actual figures. In 1980-81, ten years before the so-called liberal economic policies were introduced, policies liberal to the capitalists but harsh upon the people, taxes amounted to 14.9% of the GDP. More or less the same rate continued for the next ten years. During 1990-91 tax was 15% of the GDP. (Source : *Indian Economy* by Mishra and Puri) Just after this, doling out enormous tax-exemptions started under the new economic policies. In 1997, the United Front Government in Delhi supported by the CPI(M)-CPI even outdid the earlier Congress ministry in the matter of providing tax exemptions to the capitalists. The budget placed by the Front government finance minister Chidambaram was termed as the “dream budget” in favour of the liberalization policies by the capitalist circles and the newspapers controlled by them. Under the so-called liberalization policies, exemptions have been provided mainly in corporate tax, duties on import-export, income-tax in the higher slabs, capital gains tax, tax on dividends, etc. — all benefiting the owners of capital. In the past, an exemption of indirect taxes used to result in some decrease in market prices of commodities. But that

does not happen any more; the owners generally keep the prices unchanged and usurp the benefit of tax reduction. This practice has reached to such a stage that a finance minister, while placing the budget, commented that if the owners did not reduce prices corresponding to tax reduction, the tax reduction would be withdrawn. But that did not make any difference because the owners knew well to what extent the finance minister, dependent on them and indebted to them for his position, can go. So, these days, the benefit due to a reduction in even an indirect tax like excise duty, is pocketed by the owners.

## Amount of tax exemption

Let us now see how much the exemptions amounted to in the central budget of 2004-05. In the process of continued reduction in taxes, the taxes amounted to only about 9% of GDP. This reduction from the earlier 15% to nearly 9% means that the exemptions amount to about 6% of the GDP. The economic review by the central government for 2004-'05 put the total GDP at Rs.25,16,900 crore. Had the taxes been at the 1990-91 level of 15%, the government could have collected about Rs.3,77,535 crore as taxes. But as the present taxation rate stands around 9%, the government would collect only about Rs.2,26,521 crore. That is, as a result of tax reduction amounting to 6% of the GDP, the government has given up a possible earning of about Rs.1,51,014 crore in 2004-05 alone! When it is remembered that the present Congress-led UPA government cannot stay in power without the backing of the CPI(M) and its associates, it becomes crystal clear that the CPI(M) tacitly supports grant of such huge concessions to the capitalist class.

## The trickery of CPI(M)

However, in order to put up a pretence as if it is opposed to the grant of concessions to the capitalist class, the CPI(M), through its trade union wing CITU, has raised the demand that in the background of the huge tax and duty reduction/exemptions granted to the capitalist class since 1991, an additional revenue of Rs.30,000 crore can be generated by increasing the taxes by only 1½% of the GDP and if a further sum of Rs.20,000 crore can be provided by curtailing the military expenditure and other

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# Transport fare hike

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communist movement throughout the world. Afraid of anti-capitalist revolution, the decadent world imperialism-capitalism, in order to perpetuate its class-rule, introduced the concept of social security. It was said that it was incumbent on the bourgeois states to look after the welfare of the people by making available all essential services to them either free of cost or at a nominal price. The governments were supposed to bear the financial responsibility through providence of subsidy. Keynes, the spokesperson of capitalist economy, advocated in favour of pumping money in the hands of the people so that their capacity to pay increases and thereby sufficient demand, albeit, in relative term, is created in the capitalist market to revive the capitalist system then going through the phase of great depression. But now when international communist movement is at a low ebb and the socialist system dismantled, the capitalist rulers have abandoned the concept of welfare state and instead through the policies of globalization-liberalization are arguing that the government should have no responsibility in the economic sphere. It would only look after law and order, and thus virtually run a police regime. Hence, all the welfare service sectors like education, health-care, transport, etc. are being gradually handed over to the private owners for being run on commercial scale with the motive of earning maximum profit. So, government subsidies are also withdrawn from these areas. Same is the spectacle in capitalist India. In absence of a countrywide sustained democratic movement coupled with the temporary setback of world communist movement, the rulers here are continuously imposing more and more economic burden on the people, de-subsidizing essential services and bringing people on the verge of ruin.

## Deplorable role of pseudo-lefts

While such onslaught on the part of the governments run by known bourgeois parties like the Congress, the BJP or outfits of Lalu-Mulayam-Jayalalitha is understandable, the most treacherous has been the role of the pseudo-lefts like the CPI(M), CPI. While mocking opposition to

globalization-liberalization, they have been in the name of “reality” and “constraints of the set-up” are faithfully serving the bourgeois class interest and nonchalantly implementing bourgeois class design for being in the corridor of power. The CPI(M)-led government has entered 28th year of its uninterrupted rule in West Bengal. Instead of giving to the people whatever little relief is possible and encouraging legitimate democratic movement to surge forth, it has been nakedly pursuing policies to placate the ruling class and not only been holding the reins of people’s movement but ruthlessly crushing it like any other despotic bourgeois ruler. 17 times they have hiked the transport fare in the state under the same pretext of oil price rise and “saving” the private bus owners from the “distress” of shelling out more money on fuel. In fact, it has been taking lead in this regard. There is no concern for passenger safety or convenience. Instead of bringing the bus and other services under the government sector, the CPI(M) government, too, is on a spree of increasing privatization of transport system raising the same bourgeois logic of depleted exchequer and the necessity of the government to go out of the welfare service sectors. Calcutta State Transport Corporation (CSTC) was the first state-run transport system in independent India. Now over 90% of the city transport in Calcutta is in the private hands who play ducks and drakes with the life of passengers bleeding them white under repeated bouts of fare hike. The tariff in West Bengal is, in fact, higher than many other states. While in Andhra Pradesh, the minimum bus fare in city areas is Rs.2.50 and in mufussil areas is Rs.3.00, it is Rs.3.50 in Calcutta. The tactics adopted by the CPI(M)-led West Bengal government is extremely surreptitious. Every time there is an increase in domestic oil price, the private bus owners rumble for fare hike to, surprisingly enough, “minimize loss”. As if they are so charitable as to run the service by incurring loss – a lie, blatant lie on which the government makes no comment. Then the private bus owners work out an inflated fare structure and threaten to go on agitation including token strike if their demands are not conceded to. Immediately, state

government acknowledges “legitimacy” of increasing the fare but admonishes the owners for making such a huge demand. Then the government comes out with a revised proposal and wants the owners to accept the same. Both the sides then start exchanging belligerent utterances. A verbal duel in the media ensues. The people are stupefied because nowhere are they in this battle going on between the government and the bus owners. After some days truce descends from nowhere. The owners give in, become pliant to government prescriptions, accept a tariff, which is “loss making” according to them and begin charging the people extra fare. The government boasts that it is because of its “firm stand” that the owners have been compelled to accept the government’s proposal. What a dramatic enactment! The nexus between the government and the transport owners remains in the dark and the government champions itself as the saviour of the people. Moreover, in order to defuse the rage of the people, the bus owners, despite announcement of increased fare, do not implement their revised tariff across all the routes at a time.

They adopt a staggering method and enhanced fare is recovered on different routes from different dates so that all passengers are not simultaneously affected. This is hoodwinking at its best. In fact, the CPI(M)-led West Bengal government has been acting as guide to other state governments as to how skillfully and cunningly the anti-people policies could be put into action by quelling eruption of public wrath — much to the glee of the owning class.

## Democratic mass movement — sole alternative

But the question is whether the common people back-broken by incessant capitalist assaults would continue to bear this exploitation by remaining silent or shall rise in protest, close their rank and take up cudgel against the ruling bourgeoisie and its proteges. There is no course but to unite, be politically conscious and build up massive movement on a sustained basis over the burning problems in life. Remaining confined within some doleful complaint or expressing stray resentment will not

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# Concessions to capitalists galore

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expenditures, a total sum of Rs.50,000 crore would be available which should be allotted for implementing public welfare measures. They are posing as if they are not sycophants of the Congress-led central government, rather they are pressurizing this government to secure Rs.50,000 crore in the people’s interest.

There are 3 points to be noted in this regard: (1) They are not raising the demand for imposition of income-tax on the big agricultural capitalists; (2) they have not demanded effective steps to recover the huge mass of black money that virtually runs a parallel economy in the country; (3) although during the past 13 years, under the new economic policies, the exemptions and concessions granted to the capitalist class amounted to 6% of the GDP, they are speaking about raising the taxes by only 1½% of the GDP. (Ref. *Ganashakti*, the CPI(M) Bengali daily, 2.2.2005)

Everybody knows that agricultural production constitutes more or less 25% of the GDP, that is, its value is over Rs.6,00,000 crore. 40% of this, that is, agricultural production worth

Rs.2,40,000 crore is owned by the rich peasants who number only 10% of the total peasantry and who pay no income-tax at all. It is not difficult to raise Rs.50,000 crore if a little tax is imposed on their income. But not to speak of the Congress or the BJP, even the CPI(M) is averse to it. Why is this so? Is it because the CPI(M) aspires to gain some advantage in elections in the agriculturally rich North Indian belt by currying favour with the agricultural capitalists, in league with the Congress? In reality, the CPI(M), too, supports the new economic policies whose essence is to provide relief, exemption and subsidy-subvention to Indian and foreign capital — not to the people but at their cost. In West Bengal and Tripura, being in government, the CPI(M) has been continually granting exemptions and concessions to Indian and foreign capital in the same way as the BJP and Congress-led governments in Delhi have been doing.

Thus, in short, it is the capitalists-monopolists themselves that reap the harvest from the deeds of all the big ruling political parties every time at the cost of people’s welfare.

## AIDSO observes All India Right for Education Day

All over the country, the All India Democratic Students' Organization has been conducting since long movements against the anti-people policies of central and state governments, particularly against commercialization, privatization and communalization of education. As part of this movement 28th January was observed as the All India Right for Education Day and programmes were organized in different states.

### Tamilnadu

In Tamilnadu, the State Organizing Committee of the AIDSO, submitted a memorandum under signatures from thousands to the Prime Minister of India — through the Governor of the state. Alongside demands against commercialization, communalization and privatization of education, the AIDSO demanded that both the central and the state governments should ensure rehabilitation and protection of the children made orphans by the devastating tsunami. Comrade P. H. Thilogar, Secretary, State Organizing Committee, AIDSO and Comrade D. Murali, member, State Organizing Committee of the AIDSO, submitted the memorandum at the governor's office.

### Uttar Pradesh

On 28th January again, a dharna was organized and a memorandum submitted to the Governor by the UP State Organizing Committee of the AIDSO in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh. Comrade Pushpendra Viswakarma, Coordinator, UP State Committee and Comrade Valendra Kathyar, President of the meeting, Comrades Mithilesh K. Maurya,

Secretary, Jaunpur District Committee of AIDSO, Indu Kr. Shukla, President, Jaunpur District Committee, AIDSO, Jayprakash Maurya from Sultanpur, Ajay Sharma from Allahabad and Hari Shankar Maurya from Pratapgarh addressed the meeting .

### West Bengal

In West Bengal, a Demand Day was observed on 7th February (owing to the programme of the massive rally by the SUCI held at Calcutta on 28 January itself). At Jadavpur University, Rabindra Bharati University, Vidyasagar University, Presidency College, Ashutosh College, City College and Calcutta University in Calcutta and elsewhere in the state, students agitated against privatization, commercialization and communalization. They also burnt replica of the circular related to capitation fees.

### Tripura

In Tripura, the State Organizing Committee of the AIDSO, submitted a memorandum to the Prime Minister, through the Governor under signatures from the common people. Comrade Sanjoy Chowdhury, President . Tripura State Organization Committee, Comrade Babul Banik, Secretary, State Organizing Committee AIDSO, Comrade Shefali Choudhury and Comrade Mihir Debnath submitted the memorandum to the Governor's office. The students protested with demands of privatization-communalization-commercialization, as also against nodal system, fees hike for establishment of Government medical college, and supply of text books to schools, Comrades Sanjay Chowdhury, Bhaboth De and Mithu Debnath addressed the gathering.

Similar programmes were also organized by the State Organizing Committees of the AIDSO of Orissa and Bangalore, whose photographs we published in the last issue of *Proletarian Era*.



On 28th January, students in Tripura rally demanding secular, scientific, democratic education. (above)

On 7th February, students in Calcutta condemn commercialization of education, particularly the capitation fee system.



## Transport fare hike

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stem the rot. Inaction or frustration on the part of the toiling masses will allow the rulers and their servitors to further intensify their blood-sucking exploitation. It was during the glorious days of international communist movement that the world capitalism and its political agents were visibly cornered so much so as to yield some concessions to the people. But once this movement became weak and democratic movements received a jolt, the capitalist forces returned to offensive, bared their tooth and claw and threw the people back to the

wall. It is only the impact of movement, conscious collective resistance of the people that the ruling class is afraid of. So the people must bounce back to create pressure of democratic movement on the governments to remain committed to the public welfare activities and roll back all price rises, tariff hikes and increase of charges. To resist this unjustified raising of transport fare, the common people must come forward, build up passenger committee and release a sustained struggle to compel the governments rescind the move.

## An Appeal

The Central Committee, SUCI, ardently appeals to all its members, supporters, sympathizers as well as the members of the public to kindly intimate, at the earliest, to the Office Secretary, Central Office, SUCI, 48 Lenin Sarani, Calcutta 700013, if they have, by any chance, any copy of speeches or talks, made by Comrade Shibdas Ghosh, the founder General Secretary of the party, in written or recorded form. This will be required for publication of Complete Works of Comrade Ghosh.

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