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Forthcoming Presidential Election

CPI (M)'s 'Leftism' Laid Bare

The high drama on the election for the twelfth President of India seems to have completed its first act. The ruling UPA combine led by the Congress and ably orchestrated by the so-called lefts, namely the CPI(M)-CPI and their allies, have made a detour on finding out a suitable candidate. BJP or rather the NDA combine have gone their own way; a third combination, christened as United National Progressive Alliance (UNPA) and floated just on the wake of this presidential election by unattached, mostly regional parties like AIADMK, Samajwadi Party, RLD, TDP, AGP and MDMK also makes its own

move. But before spending any words on these, we should have an idea about how does the President of India, often described by the media as the 'top job', figure out in Indian politics.

Ceremonially called the head of state and first citizen of India and the Supreme Commander of the Indian armed forces, the President of India is bound tight by the 'inferences' from Article 74 of the Indian Constitution, wherein it is provided that "... council of ministers to aid and advise the President who shall, in exercise of his functions, act in accordance with such advice". The President's role is

thus described as to 'reign and not rule', with real executive authority vested in the Council of Ministers, particularly Prime Minister, more so in normal situations. A bill that Parliament has passed, can become a law only after the President gives his assent to it. He can return a bill to Parliament, if it is not a money bill, for reconsideration. But, if Parliament sends it back to him for the second time, he is obliged to assent to it. However, conceived much in the pattern of British instance, the Indian President differs from the British Crown in one respect. On studying the different provisions of the Constitution

relating to the powers and functions of the President, many constitutional experts have expressed serious apprehensions that the Constitution contains within it the potential danger of the President assuming the dictatorial powers in certain conducive circumstances. It is of course clear that such a thing can occur only with the consent from the ruling class, the capitalists- monopolists and the other organs of the state, viz., the military, the judiciary, etc.

The President is elected by an electoral college consisting of the elected members of both houses of

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All India Citizens' Convention in New Delhi against SEZ and Nandigram genocide Eminent Intellectuals, Artists and Cultural activists call for united resistance against crime on Humanity

They have risen to the occasion—the thinking icons of the society—the socially-conscious intelligentsia of the land who could not renounce their obligation to pressing social causes, could not but come forward to register voice of protest against the atrocious assault on the life and livelihood of the toiling masses, lodge a complaint on behalf of the suffering humanity at the bar of human conscience, pledge to undertake fighting course to resist the sinister ploy of the power that be to hoist on the people pernicious schemes like Special Economic Zones (SEZs) having hideous underbelly and take up cudgels against those indulging in worst bedlam and butchery to crush legitimate people's movement surging forth to foil such disastrous moves. A galaxy of such luminaries

comprising eminent jurists, lawyers, educationists, teachers, poets, litterateurs, scientists, artists, doctors, engineers, film and stage personalities, journalists, social and cultural activists from all over the country sat together in a historic All India Citizens' Convention against atrocities on the people of Nandigram and Special Economic Zones held at Hindi Bhawan, New Delhi, on June 19, 2007 and called upon all democratic-minded people of the land to rise up in protest against brutal suppression of people's struggles by the Central and State Governments, in condemnation of the forcible land-grab by the various State Governments at the behest of domestic and international corporate sharks, in indignation against the West Bengal State Government for

the state-sponsored violence against the fighting Nandigram people and in demand for repealing SEZ act as well as abandoning such forcible land acquisition and all SEZ programmes. The Convention in a

unanimously accepted resolution while unmasking the heinous conspiracy behind setting up of SEZs also hailed the valiant and vibrant movements of the

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The dais and the audience

Comrade Manik Mukherjee speaks at the International Communist Seminar in Brussels

[In the last issue of the Proletarian Era we reported that Comrade Manik Mukherjee, Central Staff of SUCI participated as SUCI representative in the International Communist Seminar at Brussels held on 4 - 6th May. Due to shortage of space we could not publish the text of the speech delivered by him at the Seminar on "The teachings of the November Revolution in the context of our experiences of party building" which we reproduce below in an abridged form.]

Lenin said that, "Without a revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement", and at the same time he pointed out that the Communist Party is a vanguard detachment of the working class who would lead this revolution. He also said that "The role of the vanguard fighter can be fulfilled only by a party that is guided by the most advanced theory." These Leninist teachings are as much valid today as they were hundred years ago when Lenin enunciated them.

Basing himself on the conclusions of Marx and Engels, and taking into consideration the experience of the revolutionary movement in the new epoch, Lenin scientifically worked out and elaborated a complete and integrated body of thought on the organization of Communist Party. Through long and protracted ideological and organizational struggle Lenin conclusively proved that, "In its struggle for power the proletariat has no other weapon but organization. Disunited by the rule of anarchic competition in the bourgeois world, ground down by forced labour for capital, constantly thrust back to the 'lower depths' of utter destitution, savagery and degeneration, the proletariat can become, and will inevitably become, an invincible force only when its ideological unification by the principles of Marxism is consolidated by the material unity of an organization which will weld millions of workers to an army of the working class." Lenin expressed with absolute clarity and precision that, "The party is the politically conscious, advanced section of the class, it is its vanguard. The strength of that vanguard is ten times, a hundred times, more than a hundred times, greater than its numbers. Is that possible? Can the strength of hundreds be greater than the strength of thousands? It can be and is, when the hundreds are organized."

This was the 'party of a new type', founded and led by Lenin – a party that had as its aim the

conquest of political power by the proletariat, that spearheaded the revolutionary movement on the basis of correct ideology and correct practice, a party equipped with a revolutionary theory, united within itself by a combination of democracy and discipline and bound by close ties with the masses.

These Leninist teachings, in fact, played as the pivot in our struggle to build up the Socialist Unity Centre of India (SUCI) as the genuine communist party in the country. Applying the basic teachings of Marxism to the concrete situations existing in the Indian soil, Comrade Shibdas Ghosh, founder General Secretary of SUCI further developed the understanding of the Leninist model of Party building. Our party SUCI grew out of the anti-colonial, nationalist revolutionary current in the glorious anti-imperialist struggle of the Indian people against the British rule. The great November Revolution in Soviet Russia made a deep imprint on various sections of the Indian people engaged in the freedom movement. Communist Party of India (CPI) was established and it got the recognition of the international communist movement and could draw into its fold the best sons and daughters of the soil. Comrade Shibdas Ghosh and his close compatriots, who were militant fighters in the uncompromising revolutionary stream of the anti-imperialist struggle, came to the conclusion that the then CPI was not a genuine working class party which could lead the people in the revolutionary struggle for emancipation and establishment of socialism. Comrade Ghosh came to the above conclusion about CPI not just because the CPI had committed so many mistakes in the formulation and implementation of its political line during the freedom struggle. The mistakes were of a fundamental nature so that the Indian bourgeoisie took over the leadership of the movement and the people's aspiration for freedom was belied.

The mistakes stemmed from an utter failure to grasp the correct Marxist outlook, method of analysis and method of application. Through his brilliant analysis he showed that the CPI had never followed the correct Leninist process of dialectical methodology in the process of building up the party and in its process of thinking and action. It had never adhered to the process of democratic centralism; in fact it was nothing more than a petit bourgeois party which could not be reformed to a true Communist Party.

So he set himself to the task of building up a new party. He said that "without a revolutionary theory there cannot be a revolutionary party. But by revolutionary theory Lenin did not mean just the political programme and policies of a party; he actually meant a complete epistemological category developed by the central leadership of the party by dialectically coordinating the understanding and experiences of different branches of knowledge including science and covering all aspects of life." Further developing the Leninist teachings on party building, he enunciated that three primary conditions are to be fulfilled for the formation of a communist party. "First, those who have taken the lead in forming the party would have to lay the foundation of ideological centralism first among themselves through a socialist movement based on dialectical materialism, covering all aspects, including the minutest details of their personal lives." Second, "it is always to be borne in mind that the struggle for developing a concrete concept of collective leadership is, in essence, the primary struggle to build up a communist party. For this, unless ideological centralism, that is to say, one process of thinking, uniformity of thinking, oneness in approach, singleness of purpose has been developed, the concrete conception and personified expression of collective leadership within the party cannot be made possible at all. And unless this condition is fulfilled, it is to be understood that the time has not yet come to give a final organizational shape to the party." Elaborating on Lenin's teaching that collective knowledge of all the members of the party is

collective leadership he said that collective leadership in a communist party does not mean following the method of committee decision. "...the collective knowledge is the knowledge derived from the struggles conducted by the leaders, workers, the rank and file, the class and the masses, personified and concretized in the best way in a person in the highest organ of the party. And only when such a personification of the collective knowledge and experience of the party takes a concrete shape, is an objective condition created inside the party for elimination of individualism, individual leadership and groupism from the party life, and the party can be said to have established the norms of proletarian democracy and given birth to collective leadership only at this stage." "The emergence of Lenin's leadership in the Russian Bolshevik Party or that of Mao Zedong in the Communist Party of China is nothing but the emergence of the collective leadership in its concrete form in those parties." Third, "through relentless and painstaking struggle a band of professional revolutionaries is to be developed from among the leaders and cadres who have taken up the cause of formation of a revolutionary working class party." By 'professional revolutionary' he did not mean just a paid whole-time worker. Professional revolutionaries are those who constitute the most advanced section of the militant and class conscious proletariat, who by engaging themselves constantly in the very many complex battles of the revolutionary life, happily, unwaveringly and without any reservation, by rising above all their personal considerations, needs and difficulties, can identify themselves with the interest of the working class, revolution and the party, placing themselves at the complete disposal of the party.

He always emphasized the importance of intense and continuous ideological struggle within the party to raise the revolutionary consciousness and cultural standard of the leaders and cadres of the party covering all aspects of life even in the minutest details. The struggle is to attain the

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International Communist Seminar in Brussels

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proletarian cultural standard which really means to free oneself of all sorts of private property mental complex. "It is necessary that the leaders should involve the party comrades in constant common association, constant common discussion and constant common activity so that the comrades can find answers to their every problem in minutest detail and the struggle to acquire communist ethics and culture gets strengthened."

Another point to which Comrade Ghosh placed great importance is that the existence of groups is impossible in a genuine communist party; "A genuine communist party never tolerates any tendency of groupism inside the party, because groups means parallels and existence of parallel trends of thought in it, which is a characteristic feature of bourgeois parties." Differences may arise within a genuine communist party. "But such a difference is a difference or contradiction of ideas, views and experiences of the individuals of the party within the framework of the same methodological approach or trend of thinking. But existence of such differences or contradictions within a communist party does never mean existence of different trends of thinking." Such differences or contradictions have to be resolved through intense ideological struggles. But this is not to be viewed as a struggle between class enemies. "Rather we are to conduct the struggle in such a manner that not only the mutual relation between the comrades is not impaired, on the contrary, the understanding between them becomes clearer, their relation closer, and the unity of the party cemented further through correct resolution of the contradiction, further strengthening the party in the process." With these thoughts, after ideological and organizational struggles carried out along these lines from the 'Platform of Action' from May 1946, and only after fulfilling the essential preconditions did the Party emerge through the founding convention on April 24, 1948.

In Lenin's days bourgeois humanism had not reached the totally decadent stage that it has today. Now its role is completely exhausted and the sense of

individualism and freedom of the individual which once played such an important role in liberating man from feudal shackles has appeared as a great danger in all progressive movements. Building up our party at this time Comrade Shibdas Ghosh pointed out that in this period of total decadence of bourgeois humanist values a new and higher standard of character, a deeper realization of communist ethics and morality is demanded of the leaders and cadres of the communist movement. If we merely try to copy what Lenin said, or what Mao said this is bound to end up in failure. In industrially advanced countries like UK, USA, or even India, the problem of individualism has assumed a very acute form; the bourgeois sense of liberty has turned into a privilege. He remarked, "Is it possible to fight out individualism in a country like India, where it has taken an acute form and appeared as an exceedingly complex problem, with the same standard of communist character with which it was possible to accomplish revolution in Russia or China, where the bourgeois sense of values had not become completely exhausted in the pre-revolutionary period?" He said that in earlier times the highest standard of communist consciousness was considered to be "to surrender unconditionally and happily the individual interest to the social interest, place the cause of revolution and party above all and subordinate individual interest to the cause of revolution and party....But this cannot be considered as the adequate standard for leading communists in the newer complexities of present-day life." Today "a more intense and arduous struggle is to be conducted for complete identification of self interest with the interest of society with unflagging dedication and constant vigil." He further said, "...surrendering personal interest to social interest is not the same as identification of personal interest with social interest. The question of surrendering personal interest presupposes separate existence of personal interest. But when personal interest is identified with social interest, it no longer exists as a separate entity." ... "It is a struggle in the realm of ethics."

Comrade Ghosh underscored the importance of fight against

individualism in a socialist society. For, as long as the state exists, even if it is a socialist one, it exists as an instrument of coercion. He said: "Even in socialism the individual must have to submit to the social interest, and the trend of revolt against the repressive character of the socialist state would appear repeatedly in the individuals....Time and again the individual would revolt and his indifferent attitude towards social problems would grow more and more. As a result, the appeal of the nobility of communist ideology and the power of communist dedication would lose their attraction, or it would lead to the trend of liberalization....And if this process continues, then this would give birth to revisionism and that would only help in the restoration of capitalism." The great leader of the proletariat Comrade Stalin was pointing to this danger when he was discussing in the 19th Congress of CPSU the need to fight out the private property sense. In China too Comrade Mao ushered in the Cultural Revolution to raise the ideological standard of the leaders and cadres and the people as a whole. But this legacy was discarded by the revisionist leadership of Khrushchev and Deng which ultimately led to restoration of capitalism in Soviet Russia and China.

Following the process of conducting intense socialist ideological struggles among the leaders and cadres, building up a band of professional revolutionaries committed to the struggle of identifying the individual interest to the social interest, laying the foundation of democratic centralism, conducting study circles, study classes and schools of politics among different sections of the toiling people, upholding the nobility of Marxism-Leninism and proletarian internationalism and developing an epistemological category encompassing all branches of knowledge and science, Comrade Ghosh shaped the party.

Throughout the fifty-nine years of its existence the party has carried out uncompromising struggles involving workers, poor peasants, agricultural labourers and all sections of toiling masses. It built up trade unions in industries and mass fronts among peasants, students, youths and women. It has

made untiring efforts to forge a broad based unity of all left and democratic parties and forces and to build up country-wide powerful, militant people's movements. Following Comrade Ghosh's teachings it is trying to build up people's committees and volunteer corps to conduct movements for combating various problems in their daily lives, with the object of giving birth to people's alternative power. At the same time it is carrying out incessant inner party struggle to elevate the political-ethical-moral-cultural standards of its cadres and leaders. Through its ideology and actions it has earned the confidence of the struggling masses and from a handful of comrades at its inception the party has expanded to a mighty organization today.

Our party emphasizes that to carry the world socialist movement forward we should have a correct understanding of the changes in world situation and their significance. We hold that the class positions and class contradictions that exist today are basically the same as in Lenin's time. Historically we are still in the era of imperialism and proletarian revolution. The great changes that have taken place in the recent past are the dismantling of socialism in Soviet Russia and the East European countries and the disintegration of the socialist camp consequent upon the counter-revolution in Soviet Russia. The imperialist camp became bolder after these events, but this does not change Lenin's formulation.

We firmly believe that to resist the onslaught of imperialism broad-based people's fronts must be built up and consolidated in all countries with communists at the core. While building up effective people's resistance through such broad based anti-imperialist fronts, through continuous ideological struggles and exchange of opinions we should strive to arrive at a uniformity of understanding and advance towards the goal of socialism. We are making an appeal for a global coordination of anti-imperialist movements in different countries. Only such globally coordinated movements on a firm ideological base can drive away the disarray and frustration in the socialist movement and infuse it with revolutionary fervour.

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courageous people of Kalinganagar, Singur, Nandigram, Raigad, Jhajjar, Gurgaon, Barnala, Dadri, Jagatsinghpur and other places against SEZ and snatching of agricultural land and expressed total solidarity with them.

This historic Conference which marked augury of a new chapter of intellectual protest against the palpable anti-people policies of the governments of different hues and the orgy of violence perpetrated by them to crush democratic mass movement began with an inspiring song on Nandigram struggle by Shri Romesh Sharma, a social activist from Delhi. The organizers then elected a Presidium comprising Sharvashri Tarun Sanyal, veteran poet, litterateur, educationist and President of the 'Forum of Artists, Cultural activists and Intellectuals', West Bengal, Prakash Bhai Shah, former editor, Jansatta, Gujarati, and prominent figure of Ahmedabad-based Movement for Secular Democracy (MSD) and Aminder Pal Singh, social activist from Punjab to conduct the proceedings and the presidium in turn authorized Shri Tarun Sanyal to discharge the responsibility on its behalf. Then all the nominated speakers were requested by Shri Sanyal to take seat on the dais. The resolution of the Convention was moved by Shri R. Rajesh, a social activist from Delhi and seconded by Prof. Narender Sharma of Delhi University. Thereafter the inspiring message from Mr. Ramsey Clark, former Attorney-General of USA and founder of International Action Centre, a well-known organization articulating voice of protest against the barbarism and bestiality of world imperialism-capitalism as well as subversion of democratic rights, was read out. It was greeted with a thunderous applause from the house. In another message Shri V K Krishna Iyer, former Justice, Supreme Court, and President, All India Anti-Imperialist Forum, mentioned, *inter alia*, "Nandigram has ceased to be a mere geographical spot in West Bengal but represents an ideological deviation from the vision of the egalite socialist secular democratic Constitution. Any tyrannical or arbitrary or terrorist attitude by the State is inconsistent and incompatible with the freedoms and values enshrined... in the Constitution.... I feel hurt by the Nandigram doings and policies."

Speaking first in support of the resolution, Shri Gursharan Singh, noted playwright and stage personality questioned as to whose development is envisaged by establishing SEZs and at whose cost? He also expressed utter disgust at the double standard betrayed by the CPI (M) leadership by showing opposition to SEZ in Barnala but sponsoring the same in West Bengal. Shri Debabrata Bandopadhyay, former revenue secretary and Chairperson, Council for Social Development, New Delhi, who spoke next, quoted from government statistics to show how jobs in organized sector, both private and public, are steadily dwindling exposing hoax of employment generation. He cautioned that in the name of creating chemical hub in the SEZ earlier planned in Nandigram and now shifted to other location, the West Bengal government is giving license to infamous US companies to burn harmful toxics. He also warned of a repeat mayhem at Nandigram. Shri Prakash Bhai Shah saw a land scam in the making in the SEZ policy. "The land is being given away, for reasons latent to us but patent to them," he said. Observing that the conflict is between corporate industrialization and agriculture and where the land is to be allotted is latent to the people but patent to the authorities, he appealed to all to resist the Modi-Buddhadeb SEZ model by building up people's committees. In an emotional speech, Shri Nanda Patra, convener, Nandigram Bhumi Uchedh Pratirodh Committee (Committee for resisting eviction from land), gave a brief account of how the Nandigram people drawing inspiration from the Singur movement organized themselves under the banner of the Resistance Committee, shed their blood, sacrificed their lives and bore the brunt of a beastly savagery let loose on them by the police-CPI (M) criminals to resist set up of SEZ on their agricultural land and homestead and ultimately forced the government to retreat. The CPI(M) leadership, he mentioned, in a calculated way made the mothers and sisters victims of gang-rape and inhuman sexual assault so that they bend down disgraced, their morale is lost and they dare not come forward in any mass movement anywhere in future. But they failed as the morale of the movement is still very high.

Statement from Ramsey Clark to the All India Convention Opposing Special Economic Zones

I wish I was able to join with all of you on June 19th in New Delhi, India, at your important meeting to address the needs and grievances of the farmers and rural poor whose lives have been made miserable by the greed of the transnational corporations and the local rich.

Free trade areas in Central America, Maquiladoras on the Mexico-U.S. border, Special Economic Zones in West Bengal — these arrangements all over the world allow freedom for the transfer of money and finances but end the freedom of the people who have lived on and worked the land for generations.

It is such a harmless phrase — Special Economic Zone — it sounds like an area of rapid development of technology and learning that will allow the creation of wealth from nothing and enrich the life of a region. What a difference between words and reality. It pushes small farmers — who were at least able to feed their families — off the land, introduces industries that pollute the environment while giving only a small minority of the displaced people alienating, low-wage jobs. A tiny minority of transnational corporations, rich people and corrupt officials have an opportunity to make fortunes from speculation in real estate, while most of the displaced people are simply made landless and desperate.

It is a tribute to the courage of the poor people of Nandigram that they have joined together to fight against this imposition of a Special Economic Zone on their region. It is a crime that the government and private corporations have unleashed upon these people the power of the police and of private hoodlums who have beaten and even killed dozens of them.

Some eight years ago a well-known New York Times columnist wrote an article in which he wrote the phrase: "You can't have McDonald's [fast-food shops] without McDonnell-Douglas [the bomber-plane manufacturer]." He wanted to illustrate that the so-called free market and things like Special Economic Zones depended on the military might of the Pentagon. What this means in practice is that all the special exploitation and oppression of the billions of urban and rural poor of the world depend in the long run on the military power of the United States and the willingness of Washington to wage aggressive war.

It is important for all people who stand for justice to stand on the side of the poor people of Nandigram in their heroic struggle against the Special Economic Zones. And we salute the organizers of the SUCI who are helping to mobilize the independent action of the rural poor to carry on this progressive struggle.

Without being able to break through the organized resistance, the CPI (M) leaders, added Shri Patra, are now taking all vile means from imposing economic blockade to playing communal card to create fissure in the people's unity. There is continuous firing and bomb-hurling from adjoining Khejuri side. Yet, the brave Nandigram people are standing to their ground, with gallantry and determination, remaining unflinched in resolve. He appealed to all to stand by the struggling Nandigram people and frustrate the machination of the West Bengal government. Smt. Bijoya Mukherjee, noted social activist, read out a written speech of Smt. Aparna Sen, well-known film personality who could not be present due to indisposition. "In our country, a new slave system seems to be emerging with a mere 20% of urban

populace enjoying all fruits of democracy and having sizeable disposable income. It is for the benefit of this privileged class that mass killings are being organized throughout India. Can we really call this development? People of Nandigram refused to be the sacrificial rams for this development. They defied. They fought. The struggle continues. Hats off to them..." This was the tone of her address hailing the struggle of Nandigram. Shri Sumit Chakravarty, the Editor of Mainstream journal, questioned the government claim that SEZs will generate jobs and push exports. Criticizing tax breaks and incentives for SEZ developers, he said: "Concessions for small and medium units might be considered but you are giving concessions to the Ambanis and the Tatas — to big

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capitalists." "Goons are running the show in West Bengal. As a Leftist I hang my head in shame after what happened to womenfolk in Nandigram", he categorically mentioned. According to him, anti-CPI(M) does not mean anti-left and left political forces like the SUCI have been behind organizing the Nandigram peasants in their heroic battle to resist an extra-territorial enclave like the SEZ.

Shri Rajendra Sachar, former justice of Delhi High Court and a veteran Human Rights activist, reminded the audience that when Smt. Medha Patkar was holding protests against the displacement of the Narmada-affected people without proper resettlement and rehabilitation, leaders of the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) — which leads West Bengal's ruling Left front — had turned up to support her. However, when she went to West Bengal to speak for people of Nandigram, they used the kind of language one would not employ even against enemies. "When they are setting up industries after shooting at people, for whom are they setting up the industries?" he asked. "Marx would be turning in his grave now that a party named after him says that we need capitalists for the cause of socialism," he added. Calling Nandigram struggle as the struggle of the dispossessed Indian people, he exhorted all to join the battle of the poor against injustice and pledged full support on behalf of his organization, 'People's Union for Civil Liberties'. Prof. Arun Kumar of Centre for Economic Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi, drew attention of everyone to the fact that with the gap between the handful of rich and myriads of have-nots yawning, it is infantile to talk of economic growth. There is no connection between industrialization and doling out huge farmland to corporate giants, he mentioned, as the corporates are only interested to use this land for realty and such other business to mint super profits. Vehemently opposing the plethora of tax concessions being granted to the SEZs, he held that anti-SEZ did not mean anti-industrialization and emphasized on integrating all anti-SEZ movements. He also questioned if according to the government, economy is growing at 8% without SEZ, what is the necessity of setting up SEZ? "What



Prakash Bhai Shah

Justice Rajendra Sachar

Medha Patkar

Prof. Tarun Sanyal

the rich is gaining is lost by the poor", added he. Shri K. L. Subramanyam, Retd. Police Officer, remarked that even after so many years of independence, police is carrying the legacy of the British rulers. Lampooning the police, he said, "Whenever I ask any police officer as to how is the law and order situation, he says it is perfect. In fact, law and order is now similar to saying 'tum lao, mein order deta hu' (You bring, I am giving the order). Terming clashes between farmers and police in West Bengal over a special economic zone (SEZ) as nothing less than a war, Smt. Medha Patkar, renowned social worker and human rights activist, in her spirited speech, pitched for a "militant approach" in peoples' struggles against forcible land acquisition for industry and set up of SEZs. "Law of land clearly says that the decision of any displacement of the people has to be taken from bottom to top. First it has to be passed by the village panchayats, then it has to be brought to the upper levels, but in India this rule is flouted time and again regarding SEZs....The struggle undertaken by the peasants of Nandigram and Singur is much more than what it appears to be. It is a struggle for democracy," she noted. Referring to the police action in Nandigram area where 14 people were killed on March 14 while protesting the move to acquire farmlands for an SEZ, she said: "The situation remains serious. It is nothing less than war... it is comparable to the Iraq war or Gujarat's communal violence of 2002", was her categorical observation. She severely criticized the CPI (M) for initiating so-called peace talks with only Mamata Banerjee of Trinamul Congress and not inviting the Singur Krishi Jami Raksha Committee (Committee for protecting agricultural land) and Nandigram Bhumi Ucched Pratirodh Committee (Committee for resisting eviction from land), the two people's committees leading the

people's struggles. "I have been seeing how the SUCI is developing struggle on each and every people's issue facing police repression and shedding blood", she mentioned. Shri Anup Singh, social activist, informed that the peasants of Haryana have been refusing to hand over fertile land for SEZ and are organizing resistance movement. Shri Anil Nauriya, Advocate, Supreme Court, gave certain instances of such malevolent land allotment from Zaire and other places. Shri Vilas Sonawane, well-known social activist from Maharashtra, gave a detailed account of the resistance movement of the local people particularly those belonging to the backward sections of the society including fishermen in Raigad, Navi Mumbai and other parts of the state against land grab for SEZs of Ambanis and industrial tycoons. "Allotment of land to the industrialists is the CPI (M)'s national policy", he observed. While strongly opining in favour of developing united struggle, he wondered if there could be any unity with the forces who oppose SEZ in one state but establish SEZs with alacrity by brutally crushing peasants' movements in the states ruled by them? Shri K R Chowdry, retd. Professor, AGNR Agricultural University, Hyderabad and President, Indian Rural Development Congress drew attention to the danger of food scarcity in the event of destroying fertile land and emphasized on forming a national platform of resistance with a concrete action plan. Shri Tapan Das, one of the key organizers of the Singur resistance movement, said "The government of West Bengal has gone far ahead of all other states in its repressive actions, unleashing an unprecedented brutality by its armed criminal gang and the police forces." He also described how the key incidents where Singur peasants showed exemplary courage in facing attack on their life and livelihood and are still continuing

their resistance unbending despite some rightist forces like the Trinamul Congress trying to enfeeble the struggle from within and strike a compromise with the government by deviating from the main issue of not allowing any industry on multi-crop fertile land.

Prof. Miratun Nahar, educationist, writer and former member, West Bengal Mahila Commission, said that killing and torturing people cannot be a means for development. She narrated to the audience the telling tale of the Nandigram women and read out a portion from Tagore's condemnation of the infamous Jallianwallabagh massacre to show resemblance between the two heinous crimes on humanity. Shri Suhas Borkar, independent documentary film maker and director, wondered while China has only six SEZs, what prompts India to have as many as 200. Dr. Satyajit Singh, well-known medical practitioner, commented that the governments are implementing the programme of the Tatas. Dr. D. Surendranath, President, Karshaka Pratirodha Committee, Waynad, emphasized on correct ideology and correct leadership on the people's movements to lead them to success. Prof. Vijoy Kumar Piyush, well-known educationist from Jharkhand, desired that similar conventions be organized in every state by the delegates to spread the voice of protest. He also informed how the Jharkhand government is trying to repeal Chhotanagpur Tenancy Act to facilitate snatching of land from the tribal people. Prof. Soumitra Banerjee, Dr. S S Bhatnagar Prize Awardee scientist, IIT Kharagpur, showed how crisis-ridden capitalism cannot undertake industrialization in the truest sense of the term and how the central and various state governments in the name of industrialization is forcibly acquiring vast stretches of fertile agricultural land to hand over to individual monopolists for real

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Not election, mighty mass movement leading to anti-capitalist struggle makes the correct path

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Parliament (Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha) and the elected members of the State Legislative Assemblies (Vidhan Sabha). The election uses the Single Transferable Vote method of proportional representation. Thus election to this virtually decorative figurehead office is elaborate and complex; yet people have no direct role in it. However, the ruling class try utmost to maintain even this titular political entity in public focus, so that, as and when required, they can effectively project and use this office and its incumbent in defence of their aggregate class interest and their governance. So the ruling class, the bourgeois parliamentary system and its inseparable components including the ruling and opposition parliamentary parties at both the Centre and the states, as well as the media at large and other accompaniments, take every pain to keep this election alive, even to pose this election as a mega political event of the country, notwithstanding the lukewarm response of people. In result, they have been successful in creating a sort of media hype on the forthcoming Presidential election this year, which becomes due with the term of APJ Kalam, elected President during the NDA rule, reaching its end. The parliamentary parties are still to take positions; the media make running commentary of how and to what extent they are aligning themselves, which of the candidate in the fray holds prospect and which not etc. Amidst such a hullabaloo, it becomes imperative for all genuine left forces, not to speak of the revolutionary party only, to present to the people what it is all about, what are the real motives and aspirations behind all poses and utterings of the bourgeois parliamentary parties and even the social democrats, who go as leftists, but act on the contrary.

In the present case, the ruling UPA combine of the Union government, formally authorizing its virtual Supremo chairperson, Sonia Gandhi, first made a move for a consensus-nomination for the post of the President, with the major opposition NDA combine. BJP-led NDA combine refused and decided to put up Bhairon Singh

Shekhawat, the present Vice-President, as their candidate, presenting a hard-core member of the BJP- RSS combine as an 'independent' nominee. From the beginning of the procedure, CPI(M) and its allies tried to pose distinction, as well as act as the friend-philosopher-guide of the UPA combine. Setting up certain conditions they found their choice in Pranab Mukherjee, the Defence Minister. However, the choice was rejected by the Congress leadership on the grounds that he could not be spared from the Government; some quarters add that support from the 'lefts' proved abortive for Mr. Mukherjee. At the next stage, Congress tested the ground for the Union Home Minister Shivraj Patil. Along with its allies, CPI(M) registered stiff opposition. With Congress apparently yet groping for a suitable candidate, BJP and NDA combine stuck to their decision of fielding the present Vice-President, Bhairon Singh Shekhawat as an 'independent candidate'. Congress finally proposed Rajasthan Governor Pratibha Devisingh Patil as the UPA's nominee. Once member of the Maharashtra Assembly and also the Rajya Sabha and the Lok Sabha, in each for a term, she had a footnote in her biodata that stated her being a close friend of Nehru and Gandhi families. CPI(M) and its allies were all enthusiast at her nomination.

To buy necessary support, there were other tricks and manoeuvres. Before relinquishing the power to Mayawati of BSP, the immediately former UP Chief Minister, Mulayam Singh Yadav, had recommended to the state Governor to continue the Taj Corridor case against Mayawati. To reiterate, the Taj Corridor issue, a grand case of corruption at the top, cropped up five years back, centring round a project adopted by Mayawati during her last rule as the Chief Minister of the state. Avowedly meant to build up infrastructural facilities, including roads in the vicinity of the Taj Mahal at Agra, it blatantly violated all norms and directives of the Archaeological department, posing danger to the ambience around this well known historic structure. Then followed a sequence of events starting since

2003 with the Supreme Court ordering FIR against Mayawati and a few of her ministers and officers, as well as a CBI enquiry. The latter decided to withdraw in 2005, but the Court asked the Central Vigilance Commission to submit a report. On that basis, a case was started in February 2007. In May, as mentioned, Mulayam recommended the Governor to continue the case. As Mayawati gained absolute majority in the UP Assembly, she wanted to make use of the situation for bargaining. She immediately ran to New Delhi and did not lose time to meet the Congress chairperson there to assure her of the necessary support in the Presidential election, vital since Mayawati held absolute majority in the largest state assembly of the country. In lieu, the UP Governor did not allow the Taj Corridor case to continue for want of evidence. Both Mayawati and Sonia were relieved; the former was saved from the case and the latter gained Mayawati's support. Mulayam and his Samajwadi Party, along with a few other parties namely, AIADMK, RLD, TDP, AGP and MDMK, which were pitted between the two contending camps led by Congress and BJP respectively, not being firmly attached to either and really prone to switching sides or shuttle between the two, also wanted to make use of the present Presidential election to their advantage through bargaining by pledging equidistance from the two camps and announcing to float an independent candidate. They ultimately proposed Kalam for a second term, having at the back of mind the prospect of winning support of BJP. After all, Kalam had risen to the office largely with support from NDA. At first, BJP was caught in two minds; Kalam himself came out in the open with a broad grin and solicited consensus, but soon withdrew as the UPA- Left couple did not oblige him. BJP, too, retained its stand in favour of Shekhawat. In the mean time, scramble among bourgeois politicians for power dug out scandalous allegations. It was alleged that the UPA sponsored President- incumbent, Ms Patil had used her position as the Governor to save her brother, who had killed a political opponent. Besides, a sugar

factory, of which Ms Patil was the founder-chairperson in the early nineties and thereafter her brother occupied the chair, has been declared by the bank a defaulter on a loan of more than 17 crore of rupees. Furthermore, a cooperative bank, (Pratibha Mahila Sahakari Bank) with Ms. Patil as the chairperson had to be closed down by the RBI in only twentyfive years' time, because of poor loan recovery and abnormal increase in non-performing assets, with a number of relatives of Ms. Patil as defaulters. While BJP and its NDA allies raised the issue, UPA smashed back with equal venom. So, there are all sorts of calculations and equations, aspirations and eulogization still going on among the parties, in their efforts to vie with each other and gain majority of the electoral college of 10,98,882, slicing out some chunk from the others' votes.

Under the circumstances the question that naturally haunts every right thinking person is: how should a revolutionary party or for that matter, genuine left forces, approach any election. To get the correct answer, it is needed that the economic-political-social-cultural background, on which the election is taking place, be correctly appraised. It also requires to point out to people that all this hullabaloo on Presidential election is being raised at a time when common people of the entire country are gasping under the severe spell of a host of burning problems. In a background of mounting poverty, soaring prices leave them further scorched. Unemployment reaches out to virtually one and all household of common people; ever-increasing lock-out, lay-off, retrenchment, downsizing add to the plight, eating out the minimum security of livelihood and life. So-called industrialization and SEZ, stand out as pleas for governments to rob peasants of their lands and even homestead; thousands of peasants commit suicides under unbearable debt-traps that go on increasing in face of exorbitant costs at all stages of farming, or of corporates of the land and abroad manipulating prices or marketing of agricultural produce. Boundless

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Coming Presidential election exposes sheer opportunism of bourgeois parties for power

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greed, limitless corruption and shameless opportunism along with criminalization of every walk of life mark administration and police, as well as parliamentary political forces, and leave people further helpless. Not ending there, fast spread of communalism and all sorts of divisive trends of chauvinism based on regionalism, ethnicity and such others on one hand, and degenerate culture, sex-violence, shameless self-seeking attitude on the other, with overt and covert encouragement from the rulers are further shattering the fabric of social life. The ruling class and the governments serving them, stamp any protest as affront on law and order or create the alibi of terrorism, to snatch away hard-earned democratic and trade union rights, or bulldoze democratic movements by the brute force of police and administration.

While all these conditions have worsened and problems deepened for people, during the sixty years of independence, there have been so many elections at all levels from Panchayats or municipalities, legislative assemblies and parliament to the so-called highest office of the President. There have been changes in the forces to assume power in these forums. But conditions of people have only worsened; rule of capitalism has remained untouched. Rather it has become more and more consolidated and powerful, sharpening every arsenal to crush people under the cruel steam-roller of its regime of capitalist exploitation.

Hence it is clear that the condition did not and is not going to change for people simply and merely through the constitutional means, such as the elections, so long as the capitalism prevails and rules. It is only by overthrowing capitalism from the state power at the stroke of anti-capitalist revolutionary struggle that people can have the root of all their evils eliminated from their life. And that struggle can only be developed through building up and consolidating mighty mass movements one after another, on basic problems of people's life. So people are left with this alternative

of strengthening militant mass movements on people's demands as the only weapon. It is also their experience that whatever demands, they could wrest from the governments or the ruling class, all come under the pressure of united and organized mighty mass movements. Even elections were to be viewed and fought in a way conducive to the growth and consolidation of these mass movements. Thus whenever a revolutionary party or genuine leftist forces face elections in which people are participating or are being dragged into, as the best course they may put up their own candidate and use the election battle to step up and propagate its political campaign and views among the masses exposing all bourgeois parties and the capitalist system, it being the breeding ground of all basic problems. They fight the battle to win it knowing full well that they will have to face all odds from the ruling class and their agents. So they reiterate at every step to make it clear to people that even if they win in elections they cannot touch upon the prevalent capitalist system and hence upon solving the basic problems of people's life. What they can do at best, is to convey people's voice of demand and protest raised in mass movements outside the legislature, right into the elected forums. They can press upon those demands within these forums to bring about some relief. But win or lose in elections, they constantly keep vigil that people do not harbour any illusion that merely elections will come to any rescue for them. Rather the more the illusion is dispelled, the more the mass movements outside these legislative forums will muster strength, the more the forces of movement will consolidate, people will be more united and organized with determination and zeal to develop even further powerful movements and thus the more people will advance towards the desired goal of ending with their miseries. In any case, genuine leftists never fight elections towing behind and combining with bourgeois parties and combinations to anyhow win elections.

But the so-called communists in the fray for the present Presidential

election, like the CPI(M)-CPI, are nowhere near this correct approach. Rather they are acting as impediment to this approach to make any headway into people. With all sorts of cunning they dance in tune with all the bourgeois parliamentary parties to keep people glued to this election politics. In fact, as we stated earlier, they are playing the role, rather as a 'friend-philosopher and guide' of the UPA, the trusted combination of the ruling class. They have abandoned the path of militant mass movements and are thus becoming fast isolated from people. And with their political existence now resting on the support and patronage of ruling class, they cannot but play subservient to the capitalists-monopolists. At the same time, with a view to covering up their real intention of appeasing and serving the ruling capitalist class for the sake of power and pelf and by whatsoever means possible or available, CPI(M)-CPI, as out and out social democratic forces, keep on with their opportunist politics. To save their face to the people and to hoodwink them, they fan up different sorts of smokescreen. Here, as in many other cases in the recent times, they bring out danger of communalism and BJP as the main reason for their alliance with the Congress, the main trusted representative of the ruling capitalist class. People of this country have repeatedly seen that CPI(M)-CPI once and often raise the bogey of communalism to cover up their opportunist electoral alliances and other misdeeds. We have repeatedly pointed out that it was when these social democratic forces like CPI(M)-CPI deserted democratic movements, that the ground was left open for communal forces to play upon. The latter did not waste time and have spread rapidly into the common masses. In the vacuum created by their desertion of left and democratic movement, the communal forces enmeshed people with all sorts of obscurantist, communalist ideas and mentalities. To combat communalism, it was necessary to tear apart this ideological-cultural ambience created by it. And this can be done only by ever-strengthening mass movements developed with genuine left and democratic outlook, approach and ideology,

uniting people irrespective of religion, caste, creed or language etc. Only such movements can create a counterpoising ambience to make people free of communal influence and inspire them with genuine democratic leftist outlook, approach and ideology. This task can never be accomplished through elections; communalism and its influence cannot be fought through elections. The truth is fully corroborated by experience. Though BJP was convincingly defeated in the last parliamentary election and the bourgeois forces as well as social democrats rejoiced at that, it did not lead to defeat and extermination of communalism. Rather, as we warned, communalism is making fresh and fast inroads into different spheres and activities of society posing as danger as before. But the CPI(M)-CPI shamelessly perform the same act of forging alliance with Congress on the same plea of defeating BJP and NDA. To pose their distinction, CPI(M)-CPI advanced a few conditions, which were really nothing but tricks to make their effort to combine with Congress look acceptable. Subsequently, when the UPA decided on Ms Pratiba Patil's nomination, CPI(M) and its allies did not waste time in any further bargaining. In the meantime, as mentioned, there were serious allegations against the UPA nominee, based on the strength of RBI reports, court rulings and media investigations, which were grave enough to leave spot on the incumbent for any post whatsoever, not to speak of the post of the President of the country. Had there existed an iota of respect for democratic norms, it would have demanded the stained candidate to withdraw from any effort to run for a post of the stature of President of the country. But such respect for values cannot be expected from Congress, the most trusted force of the ruling capitalist class in this age of decadent capitalism, with the society swamped in total cultural degeneration and Congress duly sharing every bit of it. So it did nothing to look through and investigate the allegations; instead it summarily dismissed the charges to leave a candidate with spots in the

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Protest Against G-8 Summit in Germany



Massive demonstration against capitalist-imperialist globalization during recent meet of G-8 countries in Germany. This mammoth people's protest once again brings to the fore the imperativeness of establishing genuine leftist leadership in the democratic mass movements to lead them to logical culmination

Movement against price-rise

TRIPURA

Movement against exorbitant price-rise of essential commodities including food-grains was organized at Agartala in Tripura on 10 May. A demonstration through the city, followed by a protest meeting at Battala was held. In the meeting Comrades Subrata Chakraborty and Sanjay Chowdhury, both members of the Tripura State Organizing Committee of SUCI brought out the miserable plight of common people because of the spiralling rise in prices of essential commodities. Thereafter, a 4-member delegation submitted a memorandum to the Chief Minister demanding immediate measures to arrest the price-rise.

ASSAM

A protest day was observed at the call of the Assam State Committee of SUCI on 15 May to

press the demands to immediately solve power crisis, to ensure regular power supply and to withdraw the proposed hike of electricity charges again. Demonstrations were held at different places of the state under the leadership of different members of Assam State Committee. Guwahati District Committee staged a massive demonstration in front of the District Collector office. A memorandum addressed to the Chief Minister was submitted. Demonstrations were also held at Goalpara led by Comrade Chandralekha Das, at Mangoldoi, Silchar, Mankachar, Naogaon, Tezpur, Lakhimpur and Karimganj. In a press statement, Comrade Kalyan Choudhury, Secretary, Assam State Committee congratulated people for their response and appealed to them for building up a stronger movement.

Dharna at Muzaffarpur

In response to the call from the Central Committee, SUCI is continuing to wage mass movements in different parts of the country on different burning problems of people's life. As a part of the statewide protest day, SUCI, under the banner of People's Left Alternative Movement (Baam Jan Bikalp Andolan), formed jointly with MCPI(U), CPI(ML) and CCI staged a dharna at Muzaffarpur on May 4 against sky-rocketing price rise, unemployment, corruption, bribery, increasing privatization of education and health services, miserable plight of peasants and such

others. The speakers from different parties, including Comrade Arun Kumar Singh, member, Bihar State Committee of SUCI, the District Secretary of SUCI, Comrade Ramsurat Thakur, pointed out that both the NDA government of Bihar and the UPA government in Delhi which is supported by CPI(M) and its ally so-called left parties, are trumpeting the band of development and governance while maintaining criminal negligence towards these acute problems of people's life. After the dharna, a 5-member delegation submitted a 22-point memorandum to the District Magistrate.

All India Citizens' Convention in New Delhi

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estate business and set up of so-called chemical hubs to produce toxic material now banned in developed countries. Describing the Nandigram movement as a manifestation of people's power, he held that all anti-SEZ and anti-land grab movements must conduce to anti-capitalist movement for being led to their logical culmination. Among others who spoke were Shri Amitav Banerjee, noted engineer from West Bengal, Shri Ramajanippa, Karnataka, Smt. Mini Philip, Kerala and Smt. Binapani Das, Orissa, all social activists.

A co-ordination committee comprising of select delegates was formed from the convention to undertake the preparatory work for developing an all India Body to steer the anti-SEZ, anti-land grab movement. The President of the Convention also announced that a few amendments suggested for incorporation in the main resolution will be duly examined by the organizers. A note giving a brief picture of the recent developments

in Nandigram was also circulated among the delegates. Members of Medical Service Centre, an all India voluntary organizations of medical professionals which has always been seen in the forefront whenever there is a need for extending medical assistance during any natural or man-made calamity and which was the first to set up medical camps in Nandigram to treat those injured in the brutal attack of police and armed hoodlums of the ruling CPI(M), distributed copies of the special Singur-Nandigram edition of its English organ, Health Spectra, to the dignitaries on the dais. Avishkar, a drama team from Bangalore presented Bakri, Sakharam and Highway, a short satirical play in Hindi by Dr. B R Manjunath on the issue of forcible acquisition of land. The drama was highly acclaimed by one to all present in the conference. As the Conference hall was packed to its capacity, many of the delegates witnessed the proceedings on close circuit TV installed in a third floor mini-conference room.

Forthcoming Presidential Election

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fray. As it appeared, the family-allegiance played a vital deciding role; after all, Ms. Patil was known to be close friend of Nehru and Gandhi families. CPI(M)-CPI too kept mum on the alleged spots; rather they preferred to be on the safer side of supporting the probable winner than sticking to their distinction and started acting virtually as political manager of the Congress candidate to add credibility of the UPA nomination to the left and democratic masses. Once again, this attitude and behaviour of CPI(M) and its allies prove how unerring our analysis and contention about them have been. Instead of exposing the bourgeois parliamentary politics, these social

democratic forces, now completely subservient to the ruling capitalist class, are simply trying to drag toiling masses into the tangles of election politics, to keep them swamped in the illusion about bourgeois parliamentary processes and institutions and thus to ensure their meek surrender to the ruling capitalist class.

Under the circumstances, we would appeal to the entire masses of left and democratic minded people to shed apart all illusions about elections, to tear apart the leftist cloak of forces like CPI(M) and its allies and to find out the correct path in joining and strengthening the democratic mass movements all over the country.

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