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Recent stalling of Parliament proceedings

BJP makes stunt its prop

The opening session of the 14th Lok Sabha got off to a start on June 2 last. Immediately, the MPs of the BJP-led NDA started disrupting the proceedings of both Houses of the Parliament, the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha, demanding expulsion of "tainted" ministers from the new UPA ministry headed by Manmohan Singh, ministers tainted with corrupt and criminal antecedents. The disruption continued through the opening session as well as the budget session

that followed. The pattern became one of disrupting and stalling of the proceedings till the House was forced to be adjourned for the day. During the budget session, the Lok Sabha was to have 30 sittings totalling 180 hours. 6 days' sittings had to be totally scrapped. In the remaining 24 days, the Lok Sabha lost 47 working hours due to disorderly scenes forcing adjournment of the House. Another 40 hours were lost in the Rajya Sabha. The upshot was that the

budget session which was to continue till September 3, had to be abruptly adjourned on August 26. In this way, the two Houses of the Parliament were virtually made nonfunctional over two sessions. The provisions of the railway budget as well as the general budget could not be discussed and debated upon in the Houses. In the process, demands for grants totalling about Rs. 5 lakh crore of public money were approved without even so much as a discussion (report

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India Government's involvement in so-called elections in Iraq Blatant move to shield US aggressors

Comrade Nihar Mukherjee, General Secretary, SUCI, in a statement issued on August 31, strongly reacted against the reported concurrence of the Government of India to getting involved in the holding of so-called "elections" in Iraq and Afghanistan, which is nothing but a simple eyewash to hide the naked aggression of the US imperialists and a subtle attempt to "legalize" the illegal occupation of these two sovereign countries by the US rulers.

Comrade Mukherjee further said that after the US imperialists, in the face of stiff resistance from the Indian people, had failed to drag the Indian army into Iraq, this is a fresh attempt and a clever ploy on the part of the Indian Government to fall in line with the US rulers in the sinister move to foist puppet regimes on these countries and thereby appease and oblige the US imperialists. Comrade Mukherjee, therefore, demanded that the Government of India led by the Congress and supported by the CPI(M), CPI must desist from having heinous collaboration with the US imperialists, strictly adhere to the path of non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries and that it must under no circumstances associate itself with the aforesaid move of the US rulers.

Iraq War Crimes Tribunal in New York

People hold Bush guilty of war crimes

'We have a right and an obligation to resist and to stand in solidarity with the resistance, from Najaf to Palestine to Haiti.' 'Join us for the Week of Resistance, starting with the Thursday, August 26 Iraq War Crimes Tribunal.'

'We have an absolute right and, indeed, an obligation to gather together in the largest possible numbers in New York City during the coming week.'

Such were the American people on the eve of historic rally of 500,000



One of the series of demonstrations held during Iraq war crimes tribunal in New York

people not only from different parts of United States of America, but from different countries of the world too, centring round the Iraq War Crimes Tribunal at New York City organized by the International Action Center under the leadership of Ramsey Clark, the former US Attorney General and the founder of the IAC.

All this took place as New York was under siege by tens of thousands of police preparing for protests at the Republican National Convention. The hundreds

attending the tribunal had to wait in long lines to pass police-imposed security checks. 'There has been an exciting struggle here in New York, with much participation from young people. They have defied heavy police repression of a kind I've never seen before in New York (not that the brutality is new—it's the overwhelming show of force)'. Thus went the report from John Catalinotto of the IAC, informing the world about those historic events in New York City.

The Iraq War Crimes Tribunal was held in New York City on August 26 at the Martin Luther King

Auditorium. At the invitation of the IAC, Comrade Manik Mukherjee, Vice President, All India Anti-Imperialist Forum (AIAIF) and Central Staff, SUCI, participated all through the proceedings on this occasion. The Tribunal had a series of Hearings, numbering 10, each dealing with particular aspects in relation to the war crimes perpetrated by the US imperialism and its allies as also to the anti-imperialist movements. Comrade Mukherjee spoke as one of the witnesses in the Hearing

10, entitled The Right of Self-determination and the

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Stalling of Parliament

Parliamentary parties and ruling class benefitted

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in Times of India, 28.8.2004)

Questions have arisen: What has this achieved? How far has this been in the interest of the people? Could not the demand for exclusion of tainted ministers be pressed in any other way? Is it fair to thus paralyze the Parliament for an indefinite period? Different aspects of the issue should be examined.

Degeneration of bourgeois Parliament

It should be remembered that in the heyday of bourgeois democracy, while capitalism was still a progressive world force, the Parliament, as a part of the political superstructure, reflected that progressiveness. Democratic procedure and norms were respected in the Parliament, the Opposition was respected, and so were its views. Honest difference of opinion was valued, there was tolerance of the opinion of others, forbearance — and all these lent seriousness and purposiveness to parliamentary debates, elevating its standard. But with passage of time, capitalism lost its erstwhile progressiveness, became crisis-ridden, a reactionary world force and decadent. This degeneration was reflected in the Parliament, too. Bourgeois Parliamentary standards went down all over the world. Even in India, whatever parliamentary standards were there to start with after independence, have degenerated. Parliament has retained only its outward structure and pomp, but has become bereft of its positive essence. In the era of decadent capitalism, difference of opinion between the bourgeois parties has narrowed down, there is no basic policy difference between them. So, the standard of debate has also fallen drastically. It has been a notable feature in recent times that the trend to shorten the parliamentary sessions is increasing dangerously in India, so that there is less scope for the people's grievances and resentment to be ventilated. All the bourgeois parties, on coming to power, are taking definite measures towards this. The Indian Parliament has become a veritable den of self-seeking power brokers. The parliamentary parties have really nothing substantial to say against one

another. They spend time on the floor discussing points like minor budgetary adjustments and even spend time on frivolous debates. The high seriousness of parliamentary debate has been replaced by perverted logic, indecent comments, mutual mud slinging and the urge to score over the opponent anyhow, through various stunts.

During the tenure of the erstwhile NDA government, the corruption and conduct of George Fernandez were perfectly acceptable to the BJP, but the Congress, then in the Opposition, made a row over it and tried to obstruct the parliamentary proceedings. But this time, the corruption and criminal activities of the tainted UPA ministers are quite acceptable to the ruling Congress, but the BJP, being in the Opposition, has made an issue of it to disrupt both Houses of the Parliament. And the CPI(M), CPI and their associates go on supporting the UPA ministry! In reality, none of these parties seriously mean their opposition to corruption and criminal activity, they level charges and counter-charges against one another as stunts. Indulging in cheap stunts has become their politics. None of them is at all concerned at the huge wastage of public money caused by the disruption of Parliament.

Corruption and criminalization : mass movement the only deterrent

The reason given out by the BJP for organizing the disruption is the inclusion of tainted ministers in the ministry. There is no doubt at all that persons like Lalu Prasad Yadav, Md. Taslimuddin, J.P. Yadav, Shibu Soren and Prem Chand Gupta are not merely tainted but veritable personifications of corrupt and criminal activities of all sorts. Each one of them is charged with multiple grave offences. There was countrywide protest by all sections of the people when their names were announced as ministers. Had the CPI(M), CPI and their associates paid heed to the strong public opinion and insisted that the Congress exclude the tainted ministers, the BJP would not have got the opportunity to disrupt the Parliament. But they did not do that. But how to get rid of them now? Is

it not a fact that they continue to be ministers even after all this row and boycott against them by the BJP? So, what is the way out? Only a countrywide movement can achieve the purpose. It is to be remembered that the tainted ministers or politicians are not isolated instances but the outcome of the rampant corruption and criminalization of politics that engulfs the society, bred and nurtured by the crisis-ridden decadent capitalist system. All the bourgeois and petty bourgeois parties, engaged in parliamentary politics in service of the ruling capitalist class, are indulging in corrupt and criminal practices of all sorts with the blessings of the ruling class. Corruption and criminalization of politics are their very breath which they cannot live without. It should not be forgotten that politicians like Lalu Prasad Yadav represent the ruling class with its strong backing and blessing, and cannot be dislodged easily. Only a protracted, countrywide mass movement expressing the strong will of the people can become the determinant in resisting the spate of corruption and criminalization of politics and ensure removal of corrupt and criminal politicians from office.

If the BJP were really concerned about the country and the people, and serious about rooting out corruption and criminal activity, they would have taken to this course involving the people. But the BJP is really not concerned and, being a very trusted political agent of the ruling capitalist class, how can it do that since any continued mass movement cannot but hurt the interest of the ruling class in the long run?

Sham righteousness of the BJP

Besides, how clean and democratic is BJP itself? Even a child would not believe that it is an epitome of virtue. It is well-known that the BJP is second to none in corruption and criminalization of politics and is full of people tainted with corrupt and criminal antecedents of all sorts. If corruption and criminal activities are so abhorrent to the BJP, why does it not cleanse its own stable first? How is it that top BJP leaders like Advani, Murlu Monohar Joshi and Uma Bharati, charge-sheeted under the

Babari Masjid demolition case, continued as ministers in the BJP-led NDA ministry despite public outcry against them? The Tehelka scam, the coffin scam pointing the arrow of strong suspicion against the then defence minister in the BJP-led NDA ministry, George Fernandez, the then BJP president Bangaru Lakshman's acceptance of money as illegal gratification, the widespread corruption in Chhattisgarh indulged in by the BJP and involving Judeo that came to light before the assembly election there last year — are all fresh in public memory. It is this BJP, sunk upto the ears in the morass of corruption, that seeks to unfurl the banner of righteousness! That it has been actuated by a principled moral stand against corruption and criminal activity in disrupting the proceedings of parliament, is just not believable. It has made use of this issue as an excuse to justify the disruption, but what is the real purpose behind it?

By engaging in the parliamentary theatrics, the BJP became a "hero", so to say, received publicity as a militant Opposition party, posed as an upholder of morality and ensured that the ruling class remained unscathed. The NDA MPs boycotted the tainted ministers but they did not boycott their princely salary and perquisites! And, at a conservative estimate, it costs the half-fed and half-clad people of the country at the rate of Rs. 20.25 lakh per hour of Parliament stoppage time (Ibid. 28.8. and 30.8.04).

14th Lok Sabha sessions : the background

There is another grave aspect of the matter. What was the background in which the 14th Lok Sabha sessions began?

The burning problems in people's life had been intensified through onslaughts on the people by the preceding BJP-led NDA government at the Centre in the name of economic reforms pursuing the liberalization and privatization policies in the interest of the ruling Indian capitalist class. The people, groping for a way out of the stifling condition, found no suitable alternative before them due to the incapacity of the official leftist parties to develop and project a pro-people alternative. Taking advantage of the situation, the Congress and its allies succeeded in confusing the people and formed the present UPA government at the Centre with the support of the official leftist parties led by the CPI(M) and the CPI. The

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Recent fury of devastating floods

Glaringly manifests criminal negligence by government

After decades of expensive flood control measures, floods in India wreak havoc and devastation with increasing ferocity in vaster areas, ruining ever larger sections of people, and causing more and more damage. While the states that have traditionally been subjected to floods, especially in the north-eastern region, suffer from their growing magnitude, drought prone states not affected previously, like Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana and Andhra Pradesh, too, are increasingly afflicted by flashfloods.

The question naturally arises : are such floods a freak of nature, natural disasters or the result of human faults? What about flood control measures, undertaken by successive governments? Indian rulers take much pride in proclaiming that India is technologically advanced and there is even talk of sending an unmanned mission to the moon — then is it to be believed that we have to remain helpless onlookers, totally at the mercy of the vagaries of nature?

Present scenario

Our country being a monsoon rain-fed country, floods have occurred for ages. Though the British colonialists never took up major flood control projects here, floods, on the whole, did not wreak the kind of destruction found nowadays, and in many places were welcomed for enriching the river valleys, or flood plains. Thus district gazetteers written by the British at the turn of century say that local cultivators “welcomed the floods,” which left behind a rich deposit of silt, invaluable for the winter crop. (Floods, Flood Plains and Environmental Myths, p. 94, Centre for Science and Environment) But after decades of flood control measures, consisting of building hundreds of dams of over 15 m height and thousands of km of river embankments at a gigantic cost of billions of rupees, the damage caused by floods has increased 40 times from an average of Rs 60 crore (600 millions) annually in the 1950s to an incredible Rs 2,307 crore a year during the 1980s. (ibid.) Since then the problem far from getting mitigated, has intensified many

times over and the flood affected areas also shot up.

In our country where the problem of floods and erosion is multifaceted a comprehensive policy is needed to tackle the problem, taking into account the opinion of different scientists and experts as well as people’s long experience. But far from doing so, after independence a narrow circle of government experts, technocrats and politicians have decided on projects for flood control measures, mainly on an ad-hoc basis, refusing to accept the opinion of scientists and specialists, not to speak of considering people’s experience or utilizing people’s initiative and creativity. As a result the planning has been faulty and deprived of people’s support. And whatever projects were taken up in this way, these were not even carried out properly. Moreover, even the maintenance of these projects was generally neglected. The result has been disastrous, as experience of flood in this year has shown again.

When different governments and the Centre come under pressure after a calamity strikes, they talk about a master plan for flood control and make grandiose promises. But that is as far as it goes. Through the decades, one after another commission has been set up but no heed is paid to their findings and their recommendations remain on paper only. Thus, for example, the Rashtriya Barh Ayog (RBA) or National Commission on Floods, set up by the government in 1976, concluded that even though there had been no increase in the rainfall in the 1970s, floods had increased because of human factors like deforestation and inadequate flood control objective in dams and construction of embankments along rivers as well as drainage congestion associated with these, among others, and destruction of wetlands, etc. But no appropriate action has been taken, no lessons drawn from these.

Apathy, corruption and politicking hinder relief and rehabilitation

This year, too, state after state were reeling under devastating floods. Assam has been hit by the

worst ever floods in two decades which have confounded the problem of erosion, a problem afflicting Assam for decades. Floods in Bihar have affected over 12 million people. And West Bengal is facing its worst erosion problem. In the different flood-affected states of India hundreds died, according to official figures, and many more went missing. Though ministers and government officials make aerial inspections to assess the damage and promise remedial action and funds, yet what we find instead is bureaucratic bungling, corruption and sectarian political favouritism of vote-seeking bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties. In fact, things have come to such a pass that floods have become a means for different parliamentary parties to derive political capital for their petty party interest. The millions of marooned people, especially in the villages are largely left to fend for themselves, perched on rooftops, highways or embankments for days with no food and drinking water. If they are lucky, some crumbs of relief are thrown to them.

Worst floods in two decades in Assam

In Assam, for example, by mid-July the unprecedented flood displaced over one-third of its entire population, devastating 24 out of 27 districts. Almost 9 million people have been suffering the annual trauma of homelessness and vulnerability to disease. Many towns including the capital Guwahati were under water and the road and rail links snapped for days. But even more dangerous is the serious erosion problem in the Brahmaputra valley. Yet 57 years have passed since independence, but the erosion problem far from having lessened through measures taken, has become much worse annually thanks to faulty planning and government apathy. As a result annually tens of thousands, among them even well-to-do farmers, to their horror find that in the twinkling of an eye their land, their home, their livelihood, their wealth, — everything — is being swallowed up by the ferocious waters of the ever eroding river. Even in winter this problem persists

and countless families lose all they have in one moment: more so during the monsoon. This having been the worst flood in two decades its dimension has surpassed everything experienced before. But not to speak of economic rehabilitation, not even a shelter has been provided for the tens or hundreds of thousand unfortunates, rendered destitute over the years and condemned to subhuman existence for no fault of their own; often chased like stray cats and dogs by chauvinist forces who call them foreigners.

Not only have the flood control projects, not only in Assam but throughout the country, been badly and wrongly planned, but so poorly have they been carried out that in Assam alone, for example, where by 1988, 4000 km of embankments had been constructed against river erosion at a gigantic cost, almost all the protected areas were affected by breaches that year. (ibid, p. 70) It is well known that many embankments, often built by a corrupt mafia of engineers, contractors and local wheeler dealers, are of such poor quality that they collapse at the first surge of high, strong water and currents. And the less said about maintenance, the better, though huge funds are allotted for it. Thus, for example, the Centre of Science and Environment in figures released showed that in the first 35 years after independence the cost for the maintenance of the embankments was more than that of the original cost. But much of the huge amounts earmarked every year for “flood protection” goes to line the pockets of a nexus of corrupt officials, politicians, engineers and contractors — the rest is wasted on bad materials and poor workmanship with which repairs are undertaken, and that, too, not after the monsoon is over, but when it starts, making it difficult to check what is actually built and swept away, and what not. Needless to say these things happen in state after state — not only Assam — and year after year.

Moreover, the National Flood Commission, or BRA, set up in 1976 had flayed the building of embankments, as mentioned before. Because when the silt load gets deposited within the narrow confines of the river embankment, it increases the height of river beds, which accentuates the flood and erosion problem. Besides,

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Tribunal

AIATF calls for world-wide militant peace movement to thwart danger of war

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Right of Resistance. His speech is summarized below.

Comrade Mukherjee addresses tribunal

Congratulating the IAC for organizing the Iraq War crimes Tribunal, Comrade Mukherjee showed how on the question of India's relation with US imperialism, the Indian rulers and people stand right apart. He pointed out that this relationship can only be properly appreciated in the background of twists and turns in the relationship between India and USA through years. Since the emergence of the independent Indian capitalist state in 1947, the Indian ruling bourgeoisie, already at the stage of monopoly, was guided by the overriding aspiration of developing and consolidating its national capitalist economy. At that time, impressed upon and attracted to by fast, all-out growth of the Soviet planned economy under Stalin, the crisis-ridden capitalist economy of different countries of the world, themselves were adopting planned economy in different forms. Indian planned economy was simply a variant of this general trend in the capitalist world. India, like other newly independent countries like India, were also in a position to bargain between and to wrest concessions from the two existing camps, the capitalist-imperialist, headed by US imperialism and the socialist, headed by Soviet Union. Hence arose the Non Aligned Movement or NAM providing these countries a common foothold on which they could acquire the bargaining strength. By receiving Soviet help and support or by standing against imperialists on any particular issue, these countries, however, did not assume any progressive nor a pro-socialist character; rather they utilized it to consolidate capitalism further in their respective countries.

Quoting from the brilliant analysis of the post-second world war international situation by Comrade Shibdas Ghosh, the founder General Secretary our party SUCI, Comrade Mukherjee, then showed how with more and more consolidation of the national capitalist economy of India, the internal market crisis aggravated,

the ruling class developed a military-industry complex to stave off the crisis, the Indian state developed all signs of fascization, curtailing democratic rights of people and becoming more attached to militarism and bureaucracy and the Indian capitalists sought for external market, exported Indian finance capital to other countries, particularly of Asia and Africa, thus turning into an imperialist power itself becoming a junior partner of the world imperialist trust and cartel. Side by side it tried hard to establish its hegemony over the Indian subcontinent and developed expansionist tendencies too, with aspirations to be recognized as a superpower at least in the South Asia. It tried to exploit the contradiction between the imperialist countries and the newly independent bourgeois countries, posing itself as the spokesman of the NAM, at the same time penetrating into the market of those countries. US imperialism chose Pakistan and played on the Kashmir and other issues against India. At the same time India's design to develop as a superpower in South Asia brought about its conflict with China and it thus fell easy prey to the US policy of containment of China, that is containment of socialism.

Comrade Mukherjee then showed that with dismantling of the socialist camp and counter-revolution in Soviet Union and China, as also consequent disappearance of the NAM, pressure of the bigger imperialist powers, their agenda of globalization-privatization-liberalization came down heavily and unavoidably upon countries like India. At the same time it fitted well with the long-cherished aspirations of the Indian national monopolies and provided them with the opportunity to expand, in collusion with the bigger imperialist powers, further into the global market as an important partner of the world capitalism-imperialism. As a result, they tended to develop a more thick and thin relation with imperialists, particularly US imperialists. Evidences emerge from stepping up of Indo-US military ties, arms trade and even joint military exercises since nineties of the last century. In the process, India has emerged as the third

largest spender on military, behind only the US and China. It even aspires for a G8 membership, for a permanent berth in the Security Council. The bonhomie of the Indian bourgeoisie with imperialism, particularly US imperialism has reached such a stage that they dream for a

politics. It also established relations with Zionist Isreal that the BJP later thrived on. BJP government even sent Indian soldiers there for training against insurgency and terrorism. Now Congress has reconfirmed military hardware and arms deals with that country. Comrade Mukherjee pointed out

Comrade Manik Mukherjee meets leaders, activists of Workers' World Party of America

Comrade Manik Mukherjee during his stay at New York in connection with the Iraq War Crimes Tribunal against Bush and historic anti-war rallies met leaders and activists of the Workers' World Party of America in the Workers' World forum and had a heart-to-heart talk on different issues of anti-imperialist movement as also on developing closer, more intimate and stronger party-to-party relationship between WWP and SUCI. Here again Comrade Mukherjee reiterated the Leninist concept that possibility of war looms large, so long as imperialism exists. He also re-emphasized the importance of international coordination in developing worldwide anti-imperialist movement. In addition, he drew attention to the fact that until and unless anti-imperialist movements led by broad-based platform has a communist core, firm in ideology and well-knit in organization, to lead from within, movements for peace instead of developing into a militant peace movement will bear every possibility of turning into pacifist movement. It was thus necessary to form and develop such a core of communists also within the internationally coordinated broad-based anti-imperialist platforms. Comrade Mukherjee congratulated WWP and the IAC for the massive and significant programme they had organized.

rendezvous not just with US imperialists; they desire to include Israel, the barbarous brainchild and handiwork of imperialism, in their triumvirate of self-proclaimed democracies.

However, contradiction continues to persist, as these capitalists-imperialists vie for a share of the crisis-ridden global market only with a view to staving off their own crisis.

This basic character determines the nature of relationship between the Indian bourgeoisie and US imperialism. All the major parliamentary political parties, their combinations or their governments, all follow the same line. Differences only lie in their verbiage. Pro-imperialist character of the Congress, most ardent proponent of NAM was also evident during Indo-China conflict and sending medical aid for invading US army in North Korea. The rabid-rightist Hindu communal BJP has always been nakedly pro-imperialist. The Congress tried to maintain cordiality with Arab nations, not for ideology or religion, but to exploit Arab market and appease the Muslim community for vote

that the recent Congress-led and Communist Party of India (Marxist) or CPI(M) supported, UPA government has also decided to allow US installed Iraqi government to open consulate in Mumbai even in the face of condemnation by SUCI as a clever manoeuvre to give virtual recognition to US puppet regime in flagrant violation of Indian people's deep sentiment against invasion and occupation of Iraq by US imperialism.

On the question of sending troops to Iraq, too, the new Indian government deserves no special credit for deciding not to send troops at this moment; it was also a decision that the earlier government had to reach under people's pressure. The US rulers keep on pressurizing India. The latter, in turn, desires to fulfill its dream for developing into a superpower now through its closeness with US imperialism. In addition, Indian monopolists bear a strong craving for a share of the booty from Iraq, its precious oil, or reconstruction of its war-ravaged economy and thus wants to come to terms with US

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Tribunal

Iraq War Crime Tribunal and anti-war rally

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imperialists, if necessary. However, the Indian ruling class and the government face strong opposition from people. From their long tradition of anti-imperialist struggle, people posed a problem for the former BJP-led government, as also for the Congress.

Unfortunately, it should be said that in spite of repeated call from the AIAIF or from the SUCI or in spite of people expressing their anti-imperialist bent, there was no serious effort to develop any sustained massive anti-imperialist movement, because of the lukewarm attitude of CPI(M) that go by the name of Communists and claim to enjoy mass following that has allegedly helped it to remain in the government of West Bengal for more than two decades. It even declined outright to lend support to a SUCI call of a symbolic boycott of American goods including Coca Cola and Pepsi, that received spontaneous support from people of all walks of life and from all over the country.

In conclusion, Comrade Mukherjee submitted that people responded with warmth, and zeal and in large numbers to all our initiatives, all over the country. He assured the leadership of the International Action Center and people of America that from New York Tribunal back home he will carry the message of the struggle that IAC is developing against US imperialism and Bush in particular, of the fraternity of the people of the whole world, and of its support and encouragement to every genuine

movement that the Indian people might be able to build up in India.

People's verdict — guilty

On 26 August evening, in the open session of the Tribunal, a 19-point indictment of Bush and other top officials in his administration and at the Pentagon, was read out at the opening of the tribunal with dramatic flair by three IAC activists. The indictment had been drawn up by Ramsey Clark himself. A number of speakers addressed the gathering. Manik Mukherjee, one of them, submitted "So long as imperialism exists, the possibility of war is there.". He added that even if the erstwhile socialist camp was gripped by the revisionist leadership in later years of its existence, its presence had some restraining effect on the imperialism. With collapse of the socialist camp, imperialism, led by US imperialism in particular, has come out more aggressively, transgressing nakedly upon freedom and sovereignty of smaller or weaker countries. In conclusion he called for coordination of different organizations that are striving to build up anti-imperialist movement in different parts of the world, as also for international coordination to develop a worldwide anti-imperialist movement. Slides were shown during Comrade Mukherjee's talk on various episodes and incidents of anti-imperialist movement in India under the leadership of the AIAIF.

Sara Flounders of the International Action Center, who co-chaired the tribunal, explained that it aimed to continue and strengthen the resistance to war and occupation,

both in the targeted countries and here in the United States.

In his concluding address, Ramsey Clark, founder of the IAC, put the question to the audience: "The US government spends more on the military than all others on earth—all in the service of corporate wealth. It is a clear and present danger to the planet. This assault on Iraq is beyond question a war of aggression, which the Nuremberg trials said was the supreme crime. How do you vote?"

After hearing and discussing the charges for six hours, the house had no doubt about the verdict: "Guilty! Guilty! Guilty!" they roared.

A number of other speakers reported on the work of tribunals held around the world.

Professor Akira Maeda of Japan described hearings in Manila, Philippines, on US bombings of civilians in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Joachim Guilliard told of plans in Germany to focus on German complicity in the Iraq war. Ayca Cubukcu, an organizer of the World Tribunal on Iraq held in New York this May, explained that the judging of the United States for war crimes will culminate in March 2005 with a final tribunal session in Istanbul, Turkey. A close-up view of the Iraqi struggle came from Hana al-Bayati, an Iraqi-French documentary film maker who worked on the Brussels, Belgium,

Tribunal. Referring to fighting in Najaf, Falluja, Sadr City and other areas under US attack, she said, "We have to support the resistance," explaining that it is "a fight for the people to control their own resources." After describing how unity is being forged by many sectors



Comrade Manik Mukherjee with Ramsey Clerk during Iraq war-crime tribunal in New York

of the Iraqi population—"leftists, Islamists and Baathists" — al-Bayati concluded that "whatever course they take is legitimate because they are occupied by a foreign power." Khadouri al-Kaysi, an Iraqi living in the United States, described the horrors of everyday life for his relatives in Basra. Ghazwan Al-Mukhtar, a retired Iraqi engineer, said that 100,000 Iraqis have passed through US detention centers like Abu Ghraib.

In person and on videotape, the tribunal heard from resisters in the US military, past and present. Dustin Langley of Support Network for an Armed Forces Union said the movement must "shock and awe the war criminals in Washington," and explained why young men and women have an obligation to resist committing war crimes. Fernando Suarez, whose son Jesus was one of the first GIs to die in Iraq, said: "I'm here because Bush broke the law in Iraq. My son died of an American cluster bomb. Bush doesn't own this country. You have the power to stop this." In a filmed interview, Pvt. Brandon Hughey explained he was seeking asylum in Canada because "I can't go kill people in a war my government cannot justify." Gerry Condon, who spent time in Canada as a Vietnam War resister, said the Canadian Labor Council—equivalent of the AFL-CIO here—has taken a stand supporting US resisters today. Maria Rosa PeArroya and Javier

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A view of a section of 'Mahamichil' (mammoth rally) held in Calcutta on 1st September, the 'International Anti-War Day'.

Stalling of Parliament

Role of true representatives of people in bourgeois Parliament

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Congress was aware of the deep-seated resentment of the people that was instrumental in installing it in power, but at the same time, serving the ruling class, it was committed to continue and further step up the anti-people liberalization and privatization policies. So, the general budget, under cover of pro-people utterings, further intensified the economic onslaughts on the people in the interest of Indian and foreign monopoly capital. The association with the "leftist" CPI(M), CPI, etc., was no doubt helpful to the Congress in perpetrating this deception on the people.

The budget brought about a spate of fierce new onslaughts on the people through further encouraging unfettered domination of national and foreign capital in every sphere of economic activity, through various tax reductions, exemptions and holidays to benefit the capitalists, by turning a blind eye to the huge tax and credit defaults by the capitalists, by opening up the rural economy to systematic, organized and widespread exploitation by kulaks and monopoly capital at the cost of common peasants and through a further reduction of provident fund interest rate and imposition of education cess on all Central taxes. While the people are gravely concerned about the alarming rise in the number of disastrous railway accidents, and the level of service and amenities provided for railway travel falling down and down, the railway budget has done nothing about ensuring passenger safety nor about raising the railway service and comfort level.

So, the need of the hour was to expose the deception and staunchly oppose the host of anti-people budget measures on the Parliament floor. But the disruptionist activity of the BJP and its allies has ensured that whatever limited scope that was there to expose the government, was lost.

Stalling of Parliament has been anti-people

Through this manoeuvre of disruption of the Parliament, the BJP, the Congress and the parties

like the CPI(M) and CPI — all benefited. That is, all except the people.

It was unthinkable for the BJP, the erstwhile vigorous pursuer of the anti-people policies, to oppose on the floor of Parliament the continuation of the very same policies by the UPA. Had there been debate on the policies in the Parliament, BJP's nefarious doings would have once more come to the forefront before the people, and it would have been exposed once more. So, it took to the course of disrupting the Parliament proceedings to avoid condemnation for its anti-people policies which had led to its rejection by the people in the general election. By handling the issue of the tainted ministers, the BJP successfully diverted the attention of the people from their real problems for the time being, and got an opportunity of refurbishing its image with a virtuous air, thanks to the CPI(M), CPI and their associates. The very existence of the UPA ministry is dependent upon these latter parties. They swear by leftism, but why did they not prevent Congress from inducting people with such palpable corrupt and criminal record into the ministry? This provided the BJP with the opportunity to disrupt the Parliament proceedings and place them alongside Congress in the dock for encouraging corrupt and criminal activities.

On the other hand, this provided some leverage to the Congress. Its anti-people character as the continuator of the hated policies of the BJP could not be discussed and exposed in the Parliament and it got the railway budget and the general budget passed without any obstruction whatsoever. So the Congress has every reason to feel happy about it.

The CPI(M), CPI and their associates have also benefited because if the anti-people measures adopted by the UPA government with their support were discussed and exposed in Parliament, that would have shown them up in poor light. Perhaps it is because of this that the CPI(M) and CPI were not much vocal against the anti-people disruptionist tactics of the BJP, nor did they make an issue of it and place

it seriously before the people, inside the Parliament or outside.

Clearly, such diversion in the form of stalling of the Parliament suits the ruling class as well, because taking advantage of the virtual one party rule, it can get done anything it wants through the subservient ruling party easily and unobstructedly.

How to work inside Parliament in the people's interest ?

The BJP could adopt the tactics of stalling Parliament in a bid to derive political benefit from it because of the absence of true representatives of the toiling people in the Parliament. How many true representatives of the people can get elected through the election process, utterly dominated by the money provided by the ruling class to the parties subservient to it, by muscle power and the organized propaganda in their favour by the monopoly-controlled media? It is also true that in the bourgeois set-up like ours, Parliament and state Assemblies have a very limited role in protecting the people's interest. Because, after all, these are bourgeois fora, institutions for protecting the interest of the ruling class. But even so, if some true representatives of the people can get through despite all this, their principal objective becomes to expose and oppose all anti-people and draconian government measures within the legislatures and to place the people's demands there — and

through all this, to strengthen the mass movements outside from within the legislatures. They have to go on working with this aim, because it is mass movement that is the determinant in the matter of wresting the people's demands. It is the real, decisive weapon in the hands of the people.

In its work inside the legislature, the true Opposition force safeguarding the people's interest may have to resort to shouting of slogans, walk out, boycott or even temporary stalling of the proceedings at times as weapons. But it should be particularly remembered that such parliamentary forms of protest can never be solely relied upon to secure demands because if a bourgeois government so wishes, it can easily ignore these and stick to its anti-people policy. What is of decisive importance is the strong people's movement outside the legislature on the demands. The particular form of parliamentary protest adopted will depend on what the movement outside demands. But whatever form is adopted, the movement outside the legislature remains the determinant. But normally it should never go to the extent of indefinite stalling of the legislature making it defunct through indiscriminate use of such tactics. If that is done, it becomes a self-defeating exercise. For it should be remembered that despite all their limitations, the parliamentary rights were earned through long struggle by the people to replace the feudal autocracy and denote an improvement on it, a progress. Sittings of the legislatures for definite scheduled periods should be utilized in the interest of the people, to the extent the opportunity for that still exists.

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On 31 August last the Orissa State Committee of AIMSS organized massive women's rally before the Assembly, unprecedented in the history of Bhubaneswar, on various demands of the women. Front view of the procession.

Why the fury of flood ?

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embankments not only deprive the wider flood planes of the rich silt deposits that had traditionally been an important source of fertility enrichment, but create the added problem of drainage congestion and waterlogging in the plains. On the other hand, deforestation that is going on recklessly for decades in connivance with ruling bourgeois parties by government officials and contractor mafia nexus everywhere in the vast catchment areas is not only aggravating the siltation problem of rivers everywhere, and raising of river beds, but is creating an ecological disaster. For the forest canopy acts like a sponge slowing down heavy rainwater and allowing much of it to percolate into the ground, in turn recharging also groundwater — essential for prevention of drought. Thus deforestation, leading to a huge runoff of rainwater down the hills and also discharging topsoil into the river is responsible for more floods and the strong aggravation of siltation problem. In the Brahmaputra that has reached such a magnitude that people have witnessed, for example, at the time of flood in Guwahati — many parts of which had to be evacuated this year — a water level several meters above the level of roads, a few meters away from the main wholesale market!

Bihar leads in corruption and profiteering during floods

In Bihar afflicted by perennial devastating floods, the problem has become much worse with the construction of embankments, often on both sides of the rivers, and the Kosi barrage and Gandak projects. Many scientists and experts have criticized these projects as epitomes of what a faulty planning can do. Far from reducing floods they have brought on the problem of waterlogging sometimes for up to 8 months, fouling the groundwater in turn. All in all these projects have made life hell for the people of the affected areas.

In a state where about 12 million people have been affected by the floods, the brazen apathy and corruption of government depriving the people even of minimum of relief stands out glaringly. Prices of potatoes in some areas have shot up to Rs. 20 and Kerosene, the fuel of the poor, to Rs. 40 and 50 even a litre. There have been almost daily food

riots by starving villagers. Even the trickle of relief that finds its way to the people is accompanied by the stench of corruption as in the recent relief scam where 30 crore of rupees worth of sattu (roasted gram flour) was purchased from a non-existent firm at almost three times the market rate and was moreover unfit for human consumption. Equally, salt distributed to flood-hit people was found to be unfit for human consumption, to which were added matches crumbling with their boxes and candles breaking into pieces.

Danger builds up but CPI(M) government in West Bengal indifferent

The serious Ganga erosion problem in Malda and Murshidabad district of West Bengal has become even more acute this monsoon. Year after year, tens of thousands of people have lost their homes, their land and livelihood because of it, and many more are threatened. Every year parts of villages and sometimes entire villages are wiped out in an instant as houses, agricultural lands, roads, and even parts of small towns, including a high school, for example, fall prey to the blind fury of the eroding Ganga. People have to watch helplessly with horror and trepidation as their livelihood, their land, their wealth created by long years of toil is swallowed up by the river in a moment never to be returned. Their cries for preventive measures and for help rebound on the inhuman indifference of a government that calls itself Marxist and proclaims itself to be pro-people. The CPI(M)-led Front government in West Bengal in power for almost three decades has not taken any measures, and tries to cover up its callous apathy by making false promises and false assurances, but whenever their bluff is called and they feel the pressure of built up people's anger and distress, CPI(M) leaders and ministers either tell people they must learn to live with floods or else they blame their own irresponsibility on the Centre, on the lack of funds, as they have done this year too, while the Centre, in turn, puts the blame on the West Bengal government. All the while people are suffering and in desperate need for help. But just like in Assam, so also in West Bengal, not to speak of economic rehabilitation, even a shelter is not provided for those uprooted families who have lost their all in the floods

Red Salute Comrade Rambahadur Ray

On 9 August, Comrade Rambahadur Ray, member of Mujaffarpur District Committee of our party SUCI of Bihar State, died in an accident on his way back home after working for the relief of the flood victims. He was only 42. While a student, he joined the AIDS — the student organization of our party. Later on, he started work for building party organization among poor peasants and agricultural labourers in Munapur Block of Mujaffarpur District. In course of all these struggles, he became the party-in-charge of Munapur Block and later member of Mujaffarpur District Committee of our party.



In 2001, he was elected the Panchayat chief of Ranikhera area and gained immense popularity through increasing welfare activities.

This year, the Panchayat area under his jurisdiction was affected by the devastating floods. He personally braved intense currents and risked his life to rescue flood victims. Later when the water somewhat subsided, he engaged himself wholeheartedly to organize relief work. Having arranged for safe-keeping of collected relief materials like foodstuff, garments, etc., on 9th August when he was cycling back home a tractor hit him from the back leaving him seriously injured. He later succumbed to his injuries.

On 10 August, his body was brought to the office at Mujaffarpur. There, Bihar State Secretary, SUCI, Comrade Shibshankar, District Secretary, Comrade Ramsurat Thakur, District Committee members, Comrades Lakhichandra Ray, Jogendra Ram, Md. Idris, Rampreet Roy, Lalbabu Mahato paid homage to the departed leader. People from all the villages under his Panchayat came to bid their pained and tearful last respects. A memorial meeting was held on 18 August at Turkey High School Ground of Munapur Block.

and erosion. The problem of erosion in West Bengal has been aggravated with the building of Farakka Barrage. Many scientists and experts had warned about the unscientific character of both the Farakka barrage and DVC river valley project, but their opinion was ignored. Moreover because of the neglect in maintenance and regular de-silting, all the 54 sluice gates on one side of the Farakka Barrage have become totally silted up and inoperable. As a result, the erosion problem became much worse. And with half the sluice gates non-functional the river is forced to cross the barrage at double its speed, as a result of which even the pile foundations of the base concrete have been severely eroded. Erosion on the other bank goes on with a vengeance every monsoon. But such is the apathy of the CPI(M)-led government that no remedial actions whatsoever have been taken, making the danger of a huge disaster of unimaginable magnitude especially for Malda and Murshidabad very palpable. Besides, tens of thousands of people faced with imminent threat of erosion look with trepidation to the future.

The DVC is another typical example of faulty planning and lack of maintenance leading to increasing floods. Prof. Supriya Sengupta, an eminent geologist, for example, points out that the Damodar Valley Corporation had proposed construction of eight dams on the rivers within the Damodar valley. Eventually, however, only four dams were constructed besides the Durgapur barrage. The dams had also a much smaller storage capacity than originally planned, limiting the storage capacity considerably. Moreover, though the DVC constructed check dams to restrict passage of silt into the reservoirs these lost their effectivity. Neither the check dams nor the canals associated with the multipurpose river valley projects were subjected to periodic cleaning to keep them free of silt. Hence, even though these dams did originally contribute to industrial development and flood control to some extent, now because of such heavy siltation they have lost their storage capacity at an alarming rate, leaving no option but to release surplus water whenever it rains

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Iraq War Crime Tribunal

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Barandiaran, from the Spanish State, gave precise testimony representing dozens of interviews conducted in Baghdad hospitals with Iraqi civilian victims during the bombing attacks of March-April 2003. Jo Wilding, who drove an ambulance in Falluja for five days during a US siege of the city, told how US forces shut down the main hospital, cut off water and electricity, and fired on her ambulance, hitting a woman in premature labor. The deliberate destruction of Iraq's infrastructure was described by Denis Halliday, who resigned as head of the United Nations "Oil for Food" program. In a video interview, he called the

sanctions against Iraq "genocide." Dennis Brutus, who fought South African apartheid, said: "We have the right to resist the occupation charade of transfer of authority to a puppet government created by the US. This is not true sovereignty." Brutus called Washington "the principal agent of terrorism all over the world." Yoomi Jeong of the Korea Truth Commission explained how "what's happening in Iraq today happened in Korea 50 years ago." Ben Dupuy of Haiti's National Popular Party talked of his country's two-centuries-long resistance to French and US imperialism. Teresa Gutierrez of the New York Committee to Free the Cuban Five told how the Venezuelan people now

chant, "Hold on Iraq, the world is rising." Lamis Deek of Al Awda described the resistance of Palestinian prisoners now on hunger strike against US-backed Israeli repression. John Parker, West Coast IAC organizer of USA, questioned the imperialists' motives in Sudan. In 1998, he visited the pharmaceutical plant there that was destroyed by US missiles. A fiery speech AFSMCE District Council President Brenda Stokely invited the anti-war movement to be part of the massive workers' mobilization to take place on October 17 in Washington. Known as the Million Worker March, it will "offer a space for the voice of the people to identify the real enemy."

Stalling of Parliament

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Otherwise, the very purpose of using the legislature from a pro-people angle would be negated. The process of exposure of the anti-people government measures is obstructed the way the BJP is behaving and also no demand can be secured by this.

The form of struggle adopted inside legislature will change from time to time depending upon the requirement of the movement outside, but unless the circumstances are very exceptional, it should never go to the extent of making the legislature defunct and that too, only at the specific necessity of the mass movement outside.

What next ?

If the BJP continues with the same tactics of stalling during the next session of Parliament and if the Congress withstands that pressure with the backing of the ruling class, there will be no difficulty for the Congress to carry on like this way as the last time. With the Opposition not performing its role, it would be tantamount to one party rule for all practical purpose. Huge amounts of people's money will continue to be wasted, the burning problems of people's life will not be raised in Parliament, and the tainted ministers except Shibu Soren who has been forced to resign because of the turn of events in the legal proceedings against him, would continue in office unharmed. So, where is the end of this process? The only way out is to develop and intensify strong mass movement on the burning problems, against corruption and criminalization, for removal of the tainted ministers.

We appeal to the rank and file of the CPI(M), CPI and their associates to force their leaderships to pressurize the Congress to exclude the tainted ministers, to turn back from their present ruinous course. But, for that, they will have to compel their leaderships to forsake the policy of striking opportunistic alliances with all and sundry with the object of anyhow making gains in election, that they have been moving with. By their present conduct, these parties are helping the BJP to refurbish its image, the BJP which they profess to fight. Will they see reason? It is never too late.

Fury of flood ?

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heavily in the catchment area. (Rivers and Floods (With Special Reference to West Bengal)), Breakthrough magazine). The result is obvious: floods! And it may be added neither the reforestation programme as planned or promised was ever carried through by DVC.

Need for comprehensive flood prevention policy, taking into account scientists' opinion and people's experience

And this is the kind of disaster management in a country that prides itself on its technological and economic advancement! Hence, it is clear that what is lacking is a comprehensive flood prevention policy, taking into account the opinions of scientists and specialists and people's long experience. And whatever measures are undertaken have to be properly planned, carried out and maintenance provided. And all this needs to be freed from corruption, from deeply entrenched

anti-people approach and callous irresponsibility. Even the recommendation that have been periodically made by different committees and have been gathering dust should be studied and taken up immediately. Moreover, when floods have become an annual feature, what is needed over and above is a contingency plan — a plan for keeping stocks of boats and relief material at pre-ordained and important locations to be able to arrange efficient relief in such a way that people would benefit the most.

Clearly it is futile to expect that governments will do all this and people have no alternative but to unite and build up movements, taking the help of scientists and experts, to put pressure on the governments in the states and at the centre to take remedial action at last and implement comprehensive flood project measures — properly maintained — and a proper contingency plan.

SUCI engaged in flood relief in Bihar

This year the effect of floods has been particularly devastating in the 17 affected districts of Bihar. SUCI organizers, workers and supporters are sparing no efforts to rescue the marooned people and provide them with necessary relief in the form of money, food stuff, clothes, medicines etc., having collected them from different parts of Bihar like Maslau, Patna Jehanabad, Mungher, Bhagalpur, Mujaffarpur, Baishali etc. Side by side Medical Service Centre with a team of efficient doctors conducted a medical camp providing ailing flood victims with treatment and medicines free of cost from 14 to 17 August.

Students' Rally to be held in Delhi on 24 September

A students' rally organized by the AIDS O will march to Parliament from Ramlila Maidan on 24th September protesting against commercialization, privatization and communalization of education and demanding universal secular and scientific education.

Save Education Convention to be held in Delhi

All India Save Education Committee will hold an All-India Convention against anti-education policies of the Central and state Governments on 25th September, 2004 in Gandhi Memorial Bhavan, New Delhi.



The 14th West Bengal Youth Conference was organized by AIDYO from 3rd to 5th September, 2004 at Joynagar. A view of the gathering in the delegate session on 4-5 September.

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