

ML Update : 13-19 January 2009

samedi 21 février 2009, par [CPI \(ML\) Liberation](#) (Date de rédaction antérieure : 13 janvier 2009).

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By-election Pointers : Election Time is Time for Retribution

Close on the heels of the Assembly elections held in November and December, the beginning of the present year witnessed a number of significant by-elections in some states. And the results of some of these elections have indeed been quite startling. In Jharkhand, Chief Minister and JMM supremo Shibu Soren suffered a humiliating defeat in a seat reserved for tribal candidates. In Tamil Nadu, a nominee of the ruling DMK managed to defeat her Left-backed AIADMK rival by a massive margin of nearly 40,000 votes. The seat was earlier held by the MDMK, currently an ally of the AIADMK. In West Bengal, the CPI nominee suffered an equally massive defeat at Nandigram.

The defeat of Shibu Soren is perhaps only the second instance in India's parliamentary history when a serving Chief Minister has failed to win a by-election. The vacancy had arisen following the assassination of JD(U) MLA Ramesh Munda by a Maoist squad. While Shibu Soren failed to win the contest, there seemed little voter sympathy for the widow of Ramesh Munda either. In a way the result reflected the growing popular anger in Jharkhand against both UPA and NDA coalitions that have alternately governed Jharkhand since the inception of the state in November 2000. The result also clearly revealed the diminishing political stature of Shibu Soren, once considered the most towering tribal leader in Jharkhand.

Over the last eight years Jharkhand has seen four chief ministers, Babulal Marandi and Arjun Munda from the BJP, and Madhu Koda and Shibu Soren from the UPA. Like its predecessors, the present regime has also become notorious for institutionalised loot, massive corporate plunder, callous administration and repressive governance. The defeat of the Chief Minister can only be construed as a rejection of his government, and the demand for fresh elections arises quite naturally. Yet the Congress, RJD and JMM are conspiring to keep the government alive and Shibu Soren is reportedly planning to contest a second by-election. Democratic forces in the state must rise against this sordid tamasha and insist on fresh elections to end the illegitimate rule of the UPA.

Tamil Nadu has been in the throes of hectic political realignment. The ruling DMK has lost its erstwhile Left allies who have tied up with the AIADMK. The PMK, the second biggest ally of the DMK, is also not too happy with the DMK-led alliance. On top of it, the DMK itself has been beset with a lot of internal bickering. It was therefore widely expected that the DMK would suffer a jolt in the by-election, but the results have come as a jolt for the AIADMK-MDMK-Left alliance. The 'third force' led by film star Vijay Kanth has also suffered a significant erosion in its fortunes. The by-election witnessed a massive 90% turnout and there have been allegations galore of the strong-arm tactics adopted by the DMK and administrative bias against the opposition.

The Nandigram by-election was necessitated by the resignation of the CPI MLA who was exposed in

a sting operation for accepting bribe in lieu of favours granted to a fictitious NGO. Even as the CPI tried to distance itself from the CPI(M) over the issue of Nandigram, the CPI MLA from Nandigram remained conspicuously silent and absent during the entire period of state-sponsored assault on the people of Nandigram. Nobody ever heard him utter a single word of protest whether inside the Assembly or in any public forum, and the only time he shot into 'limelight' was when a television channel exposed his corrupt dealings. The TMC put up Feroza Bibi, mother of a Nandigram martyr, and her victory has been yet another blow to the CPI(M) following its rout in the district in the panchayat elections.

Till recently, Nandigram was a symbol of the near invincible electoral strength of the CPI(M)-led Left Front in rural Bengal. Today Nandigram is the most stunning symbol of the CPI(M) alienating and antagonising its own base to pave the way for a massive electoral backlash in its own fortress. Whether in Tamar or Nandigram, the people have conveyed a powerful message to the rulers who have inflicted only misery after misery on the masses. Election time is retribution time. Let us make the 2009 Lok Sabha elections a time for a still bigger popular backlash and retribution against the misrule of the treacherous rulers across the country.

Satyam : the Truth about Corporate Governance

The revelations of the Satyam scam (following a confession by Satyam founder Ramalinga Raju to massive falsification of accounts and assets over a period of many years) are being followed by many more skeletons tumbling out of the Indian corporate closet. Not long ago, the global financial crisis had called the bluff of capitalist triumphalism. Now, on its heels, the Indian IT sector - the proud show piece of globalized India - faces ignominy and disgrace.

A managing editor of the Business Standard has said, « The system has to be strong, but individuals make the system. The rules were in place but individuals broke these rules and threatened the system. » Is it really a case of a rogue individual who fell prey to temptation, behaved immorally, and then came clean with a confession ? Or does the Satyam scandal reveal much about the nature of the 'system' itself ?

Consider the facts. Satyam was India's fourth-largest IT company. As late as September 2008, Satyam won a prestigious Golden Peacock Global Award for « excellence in corporate governance » awarded by the UK-based World Council for Corporate Governance. Its accounts were audited by PriceWaterhouseCoopers - an internationally renowned firm (the same firm that incidentally drafted the Delhi Government's water privatization blueprint some years back and has been hired by many state governments to advise them on privatisation plans.)

It has further been revealed that the World Bank had told the US Justice Department about Satyam's suspected fraud in 2006 itself ; and in 2007, an internal investigation by the Bank revealed proof of malpractice by Satyam. However, though the Bank temporarily suspended Satyam from bidding on new contracts in February 2008 and made the firm ineligible to bid on future contracts in September, it did not publicly announce the ban until December 23 2008 - following reports in the press about it. Further, it has only now come to light that other Indian IT giants - Wipro and Megasoft - were way back in June 2007, barred from doing business with the World Bank on charges of offering improper gratification (bribes) to Bank staff. But it seems both the Bank as well as the corporates maintained a coy silence about this ban.

And then, we have the various political parties which have had a cosy relationship with the tainted corporations. During the TDP tenure of Chandrababu Naidu as Andhra CM, Satyam expanded substantially. When Bill Clinton visited Hyderabad and attended a CII Conference with Chandrababu Naidu, Ramalinga Raju was on the dais with them. TDP was a prominent partner of the BJP-led NDA. Subsequently, the Congress regime of YSR Reddy too has enjoyed a close relationship with the Satyam chief Ramalinga Raju. There is no doubt that governments and ruling parties across the board have conspired to protect the tainted Satyam, and have handed out goodies like contracts of Metro rail to Satyam's associates - in return, no doubt, for generous remuneration.

A range of IT corporations, the World Bank, auditors of international reputation, governments and financial institutions as well as political parties - all are implicated in the dirt revealed by the Satyam scam. Graft and fraud are the rule, not the exception, in such a system. Ironically, it was not long ago that a bench of the Supreme Court decreed that corporates, by definition, could not be corrupt !

Seminar on Economic Crisis in Lucknow

CPI(ML) State Committee of Uttar Pradesh organised a seminar in Lucknow on the economic crisis titled 'Economic Crisis : Who will rescue India', on 8th January 2009. The main speaker at the seminar was Comrade Dipankar Bhattacharya who in his address outlined the unique and defining features of the current crisis and explained the way for India to come out of the crisis. Some of the prominent and unique features of the current crisis are that the crisis has struck right at the nucleus of the world capitalism - USA, and that so far bail out packages have not had any impact on the unfolding crisis. The blatantly pro-US or US dictated economic policy pursued by the UPA Govt. is responsible for the import of the crisis in India. To guide the Country out of the present crisis the pro-rich policies will have to be abandoned and new economic policies be given a democratic turn, because the workers, peasants and toiling masses alone can rescue the Country from this crisis and not the Corporate houses. Indian economy can become resilient only if it has a developed domestic market. The policies of the successive governments has incapacitated 77 percent of Indian people from keeping the crisis at bay as they merely keep their flesh and bones together on twenty rupees a day and are not allowed to be participants in Indian economy. It is only by enabling them in having economic power to purchase that domestic market can develop and sustain.

The UPA government, following in the footsteps of their US masters is interested more in bailing out the Corporates and not the people who actually can revive and save the economy. In this situation the only option left for recovering the sick national-economy is to build a powerful movement of workers, peasants and student-youth across the Country that can defeat the pro-rich, pro-corporate path of the bail out and ensure employment, proper wages, cheap inputs for agriculture and supply of daily needs at easily affordable prices.

He further said that think tanks of capitalism who not long ago declared invincibility of capitalism and end of history have been forced to introspect into their philosophies and it is time for Communists and anti-imperialists to mount a counter offensive. He also cautioned against the attempt by fascist and divisive forces like Raj and Bal Thackeray and the Sangh parivar in abusing the current volatile situation to divide the people by misleading their anger. Relating with UP's glorious legacy of 1857 he stressed on the need of the hour to revive that spirit of freedom and anti-imperialism and make UP a strong front of anti-imperialist resistance. Economist Prof. DM Diwakar also deliberated on the subject and informed the audience about the anarchic character of capitalism

and called for striking it with precision. The seminar was presided over by Prof. GP Mishra, ex-Director of Giri Development Studies Institute. Subject introduction and programme was coordinated by Comrade Ramji Rai, CPI(ML) Polit Bureau member and the audience was welcomed by Com. Tahira Hasan, Convenor of Tehrik-e-Nishwan. In the end a resolution condemning the Israeli aggression and demanding an immediate halt in attacks on Gaza was presented before the house and was unanimously passed.

AISA-RYA Convention in Orissa

The Revolutionary Youth Association (RYA) and the All India Students' Association (AISA) in Orissa observed 10th death anniversary of Comrade Vinod Mishra on 18th December by organising a students' and youth convention at Nagbhusan Bhavan in Bhubaneswar. Around 400 AISA and RYA members participated in the meeting. Com. Radhakanta Sethi inaugurated the meeting and called on to the students and youth to fight against communalism, SEZs and privatisation of education in Orissa. Com. Yudhistir Mohapatra, State Committee member elaborated on current tasks before the radical students and youth and called for strengthening the AISA and RYA in the State to counter fascist forces like Bajrang Dal and the Sangh Parivar. Com. Mahendra Parida, Secretary, All India Central Council of Trade Unions (AICCTU), said that RYA and AISA must lay greater emphasis on de-saffronisation of education and make every effort in bringing communal harmony in society. Litulal of AISA gave the welcomed address. Other comrades in the convention presented their views and ideas on how to resist POSCO and niyamgiri problems created by the State and how to fight against them. Other speakers included comrades Ajay Mandhata, Ashok Pradhan and Rita Pradhan.

Message of greetings to AIRPC Conference

Dear Comrades,

On behalf of the Party Central Committee I extend my warm revolutionary greetings to all of you attending the conference of the All India Railway Party Committee. I am very sorry that in spite of advance intimation, I am not being able to be present personally at your conference. So I am sending you this message to wish you every success not only in terms of your present conference but more importantly in carrying out your decisions and facing the challenges ahead.

You are meeting at a time when global capitalism is passing through one of its worst crises in history. Even though the US and powerful western economies have managed to avert what looked like an imminent collapse of the financial system by injecting mind-boggling sums of money, the financial meltdown has already triggered a serious recession across countries and sectors.

The crisis has brought to the fore the parasitic nature of finance capital and the ways in which capital's quest for super profit now endangers the productive foundation of the economy and pushes ever more people towards ever greater uncertainty and ruin. Faced with this huge crisis, capital now everywhere is trying to transfer the burden of its crisis to labour and make the people pay the price. The huge bailout packages only conform to the capitalist principle of privatisation of profit and nationalisation of loss.

But the crisis has also intensified workers' resistance and popular struggles against capitalism. Socialism is back in public discourse and more and more thinking minds are returning to Marx to make some sense of this catastrophe. In Chicago, the historic city of the origin of May Day, workers have won an inspiring victory against the state's policy of « bailing out capitalists, and selling out workers ».

We must make the best use of this situation in India. The Indian ruling classes are trying to invoke the crisis to intensify their policy onslaught on the working people and push through whatever measures they have not succeeded so far in enforcing. We must resist this desperate drive and press for reversal of the whole gamut of pro-imperialist and anti-people policies. The ruling classes must be held squarely responsible for the present state of affairs in the country, and the working class must come forward with its alternative leadership and vision. The Party of the working class must galvanise the masses in this direction.

Over the last few years, the Party has made good progress in terms of organising the rural working class and unorganised workers. We are also getting encouraging response from workers in the organised sector and our central trade union has now emerged as a recognised trade union centre. Comrades in the railways must also put in their best possible efforts to strengthen and expedite this overall progress.

In the railways, we have now taken a bold decision to form our own unions wherever conditions permit. Some unions have already been launched. Running independent unions is a demanding task and we must now acquire the necessary skill and adopt the necessary style of work to do full justice to our new initiative.

We have begun the present year on a note of pledge to rise to the occasion and consolidate and expand the gains on all fronts. An important electoral battle is knocking on our doors. The whole Party is getting ready for this battle and comrades in the railways have an important role to play in this context. April 22, 2009 will mark the 40th anniversary of the Party's foundation and the CC is planning a series of tasks and programmes to turn the 40th anniversary into a year of all-out expansion and strengthening of the Party on different fronts.

I am sure, the newly elected AIRPC will respond wholeheartedly to the Party's central calls while providing an energetic leadership to the Party's advance in the railways and on the working class front as a whole.

Let us organise railway workers and employees on a bigger scale.

Let us dare to fight and dare to win.

Let us turn 2009 into a year of better efforts and bigger victories.

With warm revolutionary greetings,

Comradely yours, Dipankar Bhattacharya

« End the Distressing Reign of Congress Government of Puduchery »

A massive campaign was carried out in the entire region of Puducherry and Karaikal of Union

Territory of Puduchery highlighting the Congress misrule for the past seven and half years. The Congress government led by Rangassamy, earlier Chief Minister, and the present Chief Minister Vaithyalingam failed on all fronts. Large scale corruption in all government departments especially in PWD, non implementation of NREGS and welfare schemes, and continued closure of industries which led to rampant shrinking and loss of existing jobs are few examples of the Congress misrule. The campaign highlighting these issues also included pledge taking campaign of our Party and culminated in a massive rally on 30th December 2008 at Puduchery which was led by Com. Dipankar Bhattacharya, General Secretary of CPI(ML). The rally passed through main roads of Puduchery and ended with a big people's convention. The convention was named « Intensify the working people's struggles... End the seven and half years of distress rule of Congress Government of Puducherry... » It was a well attended convention headed by the State Secretary Com S. Balasubramanian. The main speaker of the convention was Com .Dipankar. The Tamilnadu State Secretary Com. Balasundaram was also present in the rally and the Convention. In the convention Com Dipankar spoke of Party's resolve to lead people's movement against American dictated policies pursued by the UPA Government that is ruining the livelihood and life of the working masses. He also attacked the US for its increased intervention into the Sub continent especially after the recent developments emanating from Mumbai terror attacks. In the Convention, he also condemned the back door entry of black laws like POTA of the past and the Israel's brutal attack on Palestine.

Convention in AP on Capitalist crisis

On 24th December, a convention was held in Ananthpuram town of Andhra Pradesh titled 'Growing Crisis Of Capitalism -Tasks of The Working Class'. Com. Siva Reddy, District leading team secretary presided over the meeting. Women's participation in large number, and many from the Muslim community was another encouraging aspect of the Convention. CPI(ML) General Secretary Com. Dipankar Bhattacharya, the chief-guest of the convention, addressed with detailed presentation on capitalist crisis and tasks. Comrades N. Murty, B. Bangar Rao, Gayatri Devi and Siva Shankar also spoke in the convention.

AIPWA initiatives in Karnataka

The Mysore chapter of IIMS along with AIPWA held a discussion on « Perspectives on the Women's Movement » in Mysore on January 4, 2009. The discussion was facilitated by a presentation by Kavita Krishnan, national Secretary of AIPWA, and was chaired by D^r. Laxminarayana. D^r. Rati Rao, National Vice President of AIPWA, conducted the discussion, in which many activists and intellectuals of Mysore took part.

On January 6, AIPWA hosted a discussion on « Challenges before the Women's Movement » in Bangalore. Kavita Krishnan addressed a gathering of women activists on the subject, followed by a discussion. The event was attended by many activists of the women's movement, representatives of women's groups and progressive Kannada publications. Discussing the impact of globalisation, the gathering also expressed deep concern over the intensified assault of saffronisation, instances of moral policing and attacks on freedom of expression in BJP-ruled Karnataka.

On January 7, a meeting of AIPWA activists was held in Bangalore to plan on AIPWA expansion in Karnataka. At the meeting, a State-level leading body of AIPWA was formed with D^r. Rati Rao as President, Comrade Gandhimati as Secretary, Comrades Hambakka and Ranjini as Vice Presidents, and Comrades Devakka and Mona Das as Joint Secretaries.

AISA's Uttarakhand State Conference

The All India Students' Association (AISA) held its fourth Uttarakhand State Conference on 15-16 December 2008 at Dehradun named Chandra Singh Garhwali Nagar for the Occasion. Prior to the organizational session a seminar was held on « Growing Assaults on Education and Employment and the Student-Youth movement ». Veteran littérateur Comrade Vidyasagar Naitiyal was the chief guest at the seminar and the inaugural session was addressed among others by AISA President and General Secretary Comrades Indresh Maikhuri and Ravi Rai respectively, JNU Students' Union President Com. Sandeep Singh and Uttarakhand CPI(ML) incharge Com. Raja Bahuguna. A total of eighty delegates attended the Conference who had come from different parts of the State. In the end the delegates elected a 19 member State Council which in turn elected its office bearers. Com. Malti Haldar and Pawan Nautiyal were elected as the State President and Secretary respectively.

P.-S.

* ML Update, A CPI(ML) Weekly News Magazine, Vol. 12, No. 03, 13-19 JANUARY 2009.