

ML Update: 13- 19 May 2009

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Indian Foreign Policy and Immediate Neighbours

As curtains come down on the mega show of parliamentary elections in the “world’s largest democracy”, nobody knows which particular khichdi or combination of parties will finally make it to the seat of power through what type of realignments and murky post-poll deals. What is almost certain, however, is that the people of India will refuse to give a clear mandate to any of the existing alliances, thereby expressing themselves clearly against the basic policy frameworks of successive governments and current frontrunners in parliamentary power politics. So whichever section of the ruling elite may ultimately form the government, democratic and progressive forces will have to continue and further intensify the struggle for a paradigm shift in policies; for example in the way we handle our relations with other countries, our immediate neighbours in particular.

New Delhi’s antipathy to the Sri Lankan Tamils who are being slaughtered by the hundreds and thousands is fully consistent with its role in the island nation since 1980s. It is well-known that at one time India had extended support to the Tamil insurgency, and then sent a ‘peace-keeping force’ that engaged in series of war crimes including the Operation Pawan and the Jaffna teaching hospital massacre. And today India’s diplomatic initiatives actually boil down to keeping the Sri Lankan government in humour while simultaneously pretending to try and restrain the inhuman military offensive launched by the latter. If the former motive is guided by an urge to maintain and strengthen its influence in what it considers to be a traditional backyard, the second concern is dictated by the compulsion of wooing Tamil parties and voters ahead of Lok Sabha polls. Such dualism and dishonesty must end now. The Government of India must exert maximum possible pressure on the Government of Sri Lanka to ensure that the United Nations Security Council resolution asking both the Sri Lankan armed forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam to cease hostilities and allow international aid agencies to enter the war zone is implemented forthwith and the process of a dignified political solution is started, better late than never.

Where India extends covert support to the repressive national chauvinist government in its southern neighbour, in the north too it has chosen to side with the regressive forces bent on stalling the process of progressive change. It denies any involvement in the denouement of the crisis in Nepal, but defends the actions of the Nepal President as head of state and commander in chief of the armed forces. But the constitution does not allow him to use that authority against the advice of a lawfully constituted government because parliament is sovereign. (Just imagine what type of constitutional crisis India would find itself in if Admiral Vishnu Bhagwat, who was unjustly sacked as Navy chief by the Vajpayee government in 1998, had been reinstated by President K.R. Narayanan!) The Indian

authorities know all this well enough, but they cannot digest the prospect of the Maoists, who control 40 percent of the parliament seats, getting stronger and more coherent. So they threw a spanner in the wheel of progress.

Earlier, during Jan Andolan II in April 2006, India sent Karan Singh to Kathmandu hoping against hope to somehow save the monarchy. Later it interfered on all sorts of issues ranging from appointment of a head priest in a major temple to the Nepali government contemplating a treaty of friendship with Beijing. And now, again, it has destroyed the prospects of long-term democratic stability in the Himalayan republic for the short-term goal of undermining the Maoists, in the process isolating itself from the people and the government in that country.

India is well aware how in Pakistan and Bangladesh the political dominance of military over civil authorities has permanently damaged the democratic institutions in these countries. As comrade Prachanda said in an interview published in The Hindu on 11 May, on this score his party wished to learn from the experience of India, not Pakistan, and expected that the former would take a consistent position in favour of civilian supremacy because of its own traditions and because it had supported the struggle for democracy in Nepal. In the event, he was badly let down.

Equally shortsighted is India's attitude to the trouble-torn country on its western border. As previously pointed out in this column, by unilaterally withdrawing from the composite dialogue, and by refusing to resume it despite repeated requests from Islamabad, New Delhi has unwittingly served to further complicate the situation in the subcontinent. With the Pakistani government engaged in a bloody offensive—including strafing by warplanes and heavy artillery—against Pakistani Taliban militia in the North West Frontier Province and still facing a two-week ultimatum from the US, it is urgent that negotiations are resumed and all outstanding issues are settled without the intervention of the world policeman.

The home Minister of the outgoing government has said India is caught in a “ring of fire”. But there is no denying that in most cases India itself, in its quest for strategic influence over smaller neighbours, stoked the flames. Now it is time for the people of India to force the next government to get rid of all these baggage of the past and work up a just, forward-looking and pro-people foreign policy that would help ensure peace, stability and friendship in South Asia.

Election Campaign in TN

In TN, CPI(ML) is contesting in five constituencies - Thiruperumbudur, Villupuram, Trichy, Mayiladudurai and Tirunelveli and Comrades Bharathi, Venkatesan, Aasaithambi, Gunasekaran and Sankarapandian are the candidates respectively. Party had started its campaign much earlier. Thiruperumbudur is termed by Karunanidhi government as the Detroit of TN wherein, MNCs such as Hyundai, Nokia, Samsung, Foxconn, Visteon have set up their shops. It is an unofficial SEZ of TN. In all these MNCs, temporary workers outnumber permanent workers and 21st century technology co-exists with 19th century working conditions. Attempts to unionise the workers are met with victimisation. And this is projected by the ruling Karunanidhi government as a mark of development in the state ushered in by his government.

In Thiruperumbudur constituency, campaign was launched by a rally and public meeting held on March 8. Com. S. Kumarasami, PBM, addressed the rally and introduced the candidate. Election

campaign was spread out in 4 phases. In the first phase, (March 9 -31), emphasis was on identifying our voters in our work areas. We started with one-to-one contact with workers of Workers' Rights Forum and TN Democratic Workers' Union. General Body meetings of industrial workers were held and to a greater extent fund collection done in that same meeting. To plan work among students and youth a hall meeting was held on the eve (March 22) of Bhagat Singh's martyrdom day, in which 100 students and youth from our work area participated. A public meeting was held in Ambattur on March 28 to spread our message of defeating the ruling consensus, opportunist alliances that have sprung-up in poll season and vote for change and vote CPI(ML).

In phase Two, (April 1-16) door to door campaign in our work areas was taken up, and "Give One Vote and One Note" was the slogan raised by the campaigners to collect funds. It was well received by the voters. In this phase more than 200 workers were also involved in the campaign.

In phase 3 (April 17-May 3), after filing nomination on April 17, in eight wards in Ambattur, many padyatras were held with 30 to 50 workers accompanying these yatras in their work areas. On April 22, Party Foundation Day, a public meeting was held in Thiruperumbudur. Before this meeting, comrades, along with the candidate, met and addressed the Hyundai workers who were on indefinite strike. In this phase, a whirlwind tour was conducted by the candidate on April 28, 29, May 2 and 3 covering 5 Assembly constituencies.

In phase 4 (May 4-13), concentration of our campaign was among the identified voters, meeting them again, distributing voters' slip etc. May Day rally was attended by hundreds of workers and Com. Kumarasami addressed the meeting. In all, 1,25,000 pamphlets were released. In all these phases, our campaign has reached more than 1 lakh voters. In our concentrated work areas, campaign has reached 1000 families repeatedly. Com. Kumarasami participated in the door to door campaigns held whenever he was available in the constituency and this has enthused the cadres to great extent.

In Villupuram, election campaign is being run by our comrades, who left CPI and joined CPI(ML). During the campaign there were many instances of members of CPI, CPI(M), DMK, AIADMK and DPI attending our Party meetings and coming to us. In April 22 rally, around 300 rural poor participated. Party is here identified by the initiatives taken to ensure statutory wages in NREGA, and work among rural poor. Party State Secretary Com. Balasundaram camps in this constituency and guides the campaign. In Ulundurpettai Assembly constituency, the campaign has covered 20 villages in door to door campaign. In Thirukovilur Assembly constituency in 15 villages door to door campaign was held. In Vaanur assembly constituency door to door campaign was held in 20 villages. On May 1, flags were hoisted in almost all our work areas.

In Trichy, Party's slogan is "Transform Gandarvakottai into a Communist fortress". Target is to get significant votes in this election and prepare the ground for contesting two assembly constituencies, 50 panchayats and over 100 wards in the forthcoming local and Assembly elections. Campaign work concentrates in six pockets in the constituencies. Party structure, from DC to branches, is completely involved in the campaign, and this has ensured the democratic forces cutting across caste lines, joining our campaign. In all the phases of the campaign Com. Kumarasami involved in all forms of campaign and this has enthused the cadres. Our struggle against the liquor factory has made an impact in and around Kallakottai.

In Gandarvakottai assembly constituency, there was no street left in the villages without our posters and pamphlets. Campaign has reached all the 36 panchayats in this Assembly constituency. Door to door campaign was taken up in all these 36 panchayats. Likewise, in Karambakudi and Kundrandarkoil areas door to door campaign was held in 28 and 12 panchayats respectively. Our candidate has met over one lakh voters in over 200 villages. In the May Day rally held on May 2 more than 300 rural poor participated. In Tituvarembur, May Day public meet was held on May 3. In

the last phase, van campaign was held on May 5 to 9 in various places in the constituency.

In Mayiladudurai constituency, campaign was planned in the cadre meeting in which 68 participated on March 17. Election committees were formed in the 51 areas where campaign was concentrated. Despite efforts on the part of the vested interests to prevent people from attending our rally, On March 31, a rally with hundreds of rural poor was held in which the candidate was introduced. Door to door campaign was held in the work areas on day to day basis and SCMs took part in these programs directly. Around 400 participated in the rally held on April 22 in Kumbakonam. This rally has created an impact among those beyond the party. Our candidate has met 40,000 voters so far. Around 300 were involved in the campaign work. On May 1, flags were hoisted at 14 places in the constituency.

In Tirunelveli Constituency, our struggle against digging unauthorised borewells in Tamirabharani river which is the source of drinking water and water for irrigation, by a private paper mill has yielded results and during our campaign, government intervened and ordered removal of unauthorised borewells. This has created a positive impact among the farming community in the constituency. Again, during the campaign, as a result of our struggle against TVS company management after it closed the factory when workers protested against the management, the management was forced to announce that it would reopen the factory. This is unprecedented in the history of TVS management, which, in 80s, even declared that the accord it reached with the then Chief Minister, M.G. Ramachandran would not bind it. But the management did not open the factory as announced and the candidate Com. Sankarapandian announced that if the management did not open the factory he would sit before the factory along with the workers. The management has since said that it would reopen the factory on 20th May. These struggles have helped in our campaign and the TVS workers took part in the campaign enthusiastically. In all, campaign was concentrated in 12 wards, 4 panchayats and 10 other pockets where party has work among the beedi workers.

Barhania Massacre: Popular Protest Forces Administration to Reject Police' Version

On the eve of phase one of 15th Loksabha election the CRPF forces in Jharkhand picked up five innocent tribal villagers from Barhania village, massacred them in cold blood and tried to portray the victims as Maoists, in an attempt to pass off the whole incident as a successful police operation and bravery in fight against Naxalism. Initially, they won accolades from the higher-ups in Administration. But, sooner, rather than later this attempt was shredded to pieces after a courageous and timely action by the villagers and CPI(ML) in association with other democratic and progressive organisations. In the first couple of days after the killings, one could easily sense the air of fearfulness lingering all around as hardly any one wanted to openly speak against the killings. But once on our initiative organisations came together to speak out, people were all over on the streets asking for punishment to the perpetrators in the CRPF. The Administration and the Police concocted various stories to save the criminals in uniform and tried various means to 'prove' the killed villagers as extremists. However, the mass outburst and anger was such that the DIG and SP of police had to change their statements but they still contrived to propagate that the villagers were not killed by the CRPF personnel but by the explosion carried out by Maoists. But the bullet marks were all too prominent on the bodies of all the victims to mislead the people with false versions. The Administration roped in middlemen to convince the families of the victims by their concocted

explosion version and if convinced the families would receive compensation too. However, the resolve of the families of the killed tribals proved too much for all this dirty tricks and they refused to accept any money from the administration which was trying to shield the killers. CPI(ML) was present everywhere throughout all of this and acted as people's voice. Lastly, the Govt. had to transfer the SP, DIG and the Dist. Collector in order to quell people's anger and declared that a magisterial enquiry will be conducted. It has also asked the enquiry team to publicise its report in a week's time. Commissioner of Palamu region AK Pandey has been delegated the responsibility for enquiry.

Investigation has started, but there is general suspicion among people regarding the probe's efficacy in implicating the Policemen involved in the massacre. So far, police in Jharkhand have been killing innocents and proving them Naxals in order to win promotion. CPI(ML) organised Barhania march on May Day in which more than one thousand villagers participated. The march was led by Party's central Committee member Com. Bahadur Oraon and other comrades - Janardan Prasad, State Secretary CPI(ML), Kalicharan Mehta, SCM, Jayprakash Minz, Party State Spokesperson, Sunita, AIPWA Secretary and Sukhdeo Munda among others. Through this "resistance march" Party has declared that unless the perpetrators of this heinous crime are arrested the movement will be intensified. Party has also cautioned the people to beware of those who are calling for rising above Party banners and affiliations in this fight, making it clear that all such attempts are to confuse the people, weaken the edge of the movement and reap favours and gains out of it by ultimately shielding the CRPF and police involved in this massacre.

World Witnesses First Mass Murder under Obama Administration

The massacre of at least 150 civilians in Afghanistan by the NATO troops commanded by the US has given rise to such levels of anger in that country that even Bush appointed President Karzai had to speak about it and express his regret while in Washington. This was a mass murder of such starkness and brazenness and that it could not be portrayed to the world in any other guise like "civilians who were human shields for terrorists". US air strikes that killed up to 150 people in the western Bala Baluk district two weeks back are just the latest atrocity in a war aimed at terrorizing the Afghan people and suppressing any opposition to the neo-colonial occupation. While all this being done in the name of "advance(ing) security, opportunity and justice" for the local people, however the real motive is to pursue Washington's strategic goal of dominating energy-rich Central Asia. Prior to this also massacres of alleged militants have been taking place on Af-Pak border by the Pakistan military under US pressure, but many international opinions have expressed their suspicion at the credibility of the killed people as militants.

So, as the Obama Administration regresses from disguised mass murders to blatantly massacring civilians, concerned and peace seeking people around the world watch in horror and shock the continuation of Bush era US' military offensive on the poor and helpless people including children and women, and wonder whether Bush has really exited the White House. Obama cannot get away with any excuse for this unforgivable crime or by cover-up measures like joint investigation into the massacre. Such incidents of extreme proportion and terrible crime will be repeated as long as the US and NATO forces occupy Afghanistan and try to strengthen their foothold in the region. A couple of months ago while responding to a question on US' history of brutal imperialist aggression against weaker nations, he had said he could not be held responsible for the acts perpetrated when he was a kid or not even born. However, for this mass murder of 150 civilians, he can be held directly responsible as it's his Government which decided to intensify, rather than end, the brutal occupation

of Afghanistan.

Afghan Students Rally Against the Massacre

Students took to the streets saying they held the US responsible for the killings in Farah province and demanding that those who ordered the air raids be put on trial. During the protest outside Kabul University, a student leader read out a statement saying: "Our people are fed up with Taliban beheadings and suicide bombings." On the other hand, the massacre of civilians by the American forces is a crime that our people will never forget."

Swine Flu: Corporates in Food Business are Deadly for the Planet

The ordinary Mexicans in last few days faced the shutdown of their country by swine flu and an unknown number of deaths. The source of the current epidemic was easy to identify in their eyes. Near the town of La Gloria, east of Mexico City, which appears to be the epicentre of the flu outbreak, is a giant industrial pig complex jointly owned by the world's largest pig processor, Smithfield Foods. It won notoriety a decade ago when two of its US subsidiaries were given the largest ever environmental fines by the government's Environmental Protection Agency, having to pay \$12.6m for illegally discharging pollutants from its operations in to the Pagan river in Virginia. It had committed more than 5,000 violations of permit levels for discharging faecal coli forms, phosphorus, ammonia, cyanide and oil from its pig factories over more than five years, destroying fish stocks and polluting water tables. Even more troublingly, it was also found guilty of falsifying documents and destroying records.

It is the very nature of today's globalised meat industry that is at the heart of this swine flu pandemic. The factory unit near La Gloria fattens nearly a million pigs a year. Globally Smithfield slaughtered 26 million pigs in 2006, generating sales of \$11.4bn and profits of \$421m. The huge amount of waste that is generated at such slaughtering farms are excellent breeding grounds for the viruses. Swine flu is currently being passed from human to human, and it is possible that this particular strain of swine flu was created without ever seeing a pig directly, as U.N.'s Food and Agriculture Organisation's (FAO) experts on animal health point out.

The 1918 flu pandemic was an H1N1 strain and was a kind of bird flu new to humans so they had no immunity to it. It killed at least 50 million people as it raged around the world in less than a year. The 1918 H1N1 strain passed from humans to pigs, and became the dominant form of flu among pigs, albeit one that evolved into a fairly mild strain. But then in 1998 there was an explosive new outbreak of swine flu in a factory farm in North Carolina that made thousands of pigs ill. The virus had evolved into a triple hybrid that had never been seen before, containing gene segments from bird, human and swine flu. It had found the ideal breeding ground. Pigs, whose immune systems were suppressed by the stress of crowding and fast feeding, and kept confined indoors, were perfect disease incubators for flu whose preferred method of transmission is virus-infected aerosol droplets, expelled by the million in the hog's barking cough. Thanks to the modern practice of transporting live animals, the new virus spread rapidly through pig herds around the US. Six of the eight genetic segments of today's swine flu outbreak isolated by CDC experts can be traced back to the triple hybrid from North Carolina.

P.S.

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