

ML Update: 25 September - 01 October 2007

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Save India from Becoming a Strategic Pawn of US Imperialism!

Intensify the Battle for Self-Reliance and Democracy!!

Oust the UPA Government!!!

The political emission triggered by the Indo-US nuke deal can now be felt quite clearly. The battle-lines have become sharper and it is time for every communist and every sincere democrat and patriot to stand up and be counted.

The American voice is predictably quite loud not only inside the US and in the IAEA but also right within India. The Bush administration is busy convincing the domestic opinion in America how the deal makes tremendous economic and political sense to the US - it will rejuvenate a moribund atomic energy industry in the US and will open up unprecedented opportunities for American big business in India. It will also help seal America's ties with India and make India a crucial Asian ally of the US in containing China and the Islamic world. At the same time it is telling the big IAEA players how the deal will effectively subject a non-NPT signatory country like India to the controls embedded in the Non Proliferation Treaty. And the message to India is of course a classic example of coercive cajoling. The line goes like this - the US wants India to become a great power; and India must now behave quickly and sensibly not to miss this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to grab this unanimous American offer.

Manmohan Singh echoes the same voice in a different accent while the UPA - United Partners of America - constituents join the Congress to sing the chorus in different Indian languages and styles so as to fully Indianise the American advice! The BJP too has now found its perfect counter prop to this UPA chorus in the Sethusamudram issue which offers a convenient escape route for the BJP from issues like the nuke deal or the naval exercise. The Congress is also quite happy to play ball on the old Babri Masjid pattern so the Left can once again be forced to side with the Congress in the name of fighting the communal danger posed by the BJP. This also enables the media to 'establish' the fact that what matters for the masses is either the mythological Ram or the mundane roti or both, but certainly not the nuke deal which is too complex and esoteric a topic to become a matter of concern for the aam aadmi! The communists who oppose the deal are being dubbed, if not Chinese agents pure and simple, too elitist to read the mass mind and too obscurantist to respond to the needs of 'energy' and 'development'.

In the face of this media blitzkrieg and increasingly isolated from the UPA, the CPI(M) still continues to voice its opposition to the deal, but the leadership is ever so anxious to demonstrate that its opposition must not be misunderstood as being ideologically driven or politically inflexible. Hence it

continues to 'engage' with the Congress in constant parleys and keeps saying that all it wants is only some time to discuss the deal in greater detail.

If it is just a tactical way of articulating its opposition it is patently self-defeating for it only dilutes the thrust and blunts the edge of the CPI(M)'s own logic of opposition. The common man cannot help asking if the CPI(M) really considers the nuke deal to be so disastrous for the people and the country, why does the party continue to hold parleys with the government and allow the latter to carry on with its suicidal anti-people and pro-imperialist policies! Also, why is the CPI(M) so hesitant to launch a real mass campaign on this issue in its biggest stronghold of West Bengal? In fact, CPI(M) ministers and leaders in West Bengal are busy stressing the need for more nuclear power and closer ties with the US!

CPI(M) watchers in the media of course love to present the whole thing as a case of an internal divide and disconnect within the CPI(M) – a divide between the 'ideological' puritans of Delhi and the pragmatic leaders of Bengal, or between an 'insulated' leadership operating from the ivory towers of ideology and a 'rooted' party machinery that knows what it takes to win elections and wield power. There is also a view which rules out any real debate within the party and treats the whole thing as a highly sophisticated and excellently choreographed division of labour between Delhi and Kolkata and for that matter within the entire CPI(M) leadership.

We cannot subscribe to such facile analyses and speculative conjectures. We must understand that there has been and continues to be a real debate – strategic and hence also tactical – within the Indian communist movement on the nature and role of the Indian big bourgeoisie. Till the onset of the neo-liberal policies in the wake of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, sections of Indian communists always treated the Indian big bourgeoisie as being essentially anti-imperialist and progressive. Even after the collapse of the Soviet Union and growing Indian proximity with the US-led West, the CPI(M) kept repeating its old tale of 'reactionary economic policy and progressive foreign policy'. Now the nuke deal has pushed the CPI(M) to a corner where its old storyline of progressive/independent foreign policy can only sound ridiculously absurd. How does the CPI(M) explain and face this new juncture? Herein lies the CPI(M)'s strategic and tactical dilemma.

Over the last few years the CPI(M)'s own 'strategic partnership' with the Congress has been elevated to a new plane of growing collaboration including power-sharing, however 'partial' and 'conditional'. Meanwhile, its opposition to the Indian big bourgeoisie's reactionary economic policies has also been diluted by its so-called 'compulsion' to implement and increasingly advocate the same policy package in Fortress Bengal, its biggest citadel of power. Now, strategic partnership demands congruence in matters of policy. If the US openly insists on this with regard to its partnership with India, the logic of Congress-CPI(M) partnership will also demand the same 'congruence' in terms of both economic and foreign policies. And equally crucially, the CPI(M)'s own theory and practice that has evolved in the course of its three-decades-long rule in West Bengal inexorably propels the party towards a more conformist approach towards the policies of the Indian state.

It is therefore a real debate and real dilemma confronting the CPI(M) and while the so-called 'realists' within the CPI(M) advocate greater conformism, we revolutionaries from outside must push for greater confrontation between the parties of the ruling classes and their ruling policies on one hand and the entire Left on the other.

The direction and tasks for revolutionary communists are thus clearly cut out. We must firmly oppose the nuclear deal and must boldly push for ouster of the government that is bent upon imposing such a disastrous deal on the country and its people. We must sharply expose the pseudo-national pretension of the ruling classes and their parties and squarely combat the anti-communist propaganda and other dangerous diversionary games being played by them. Within the communist or Left movement in the country, we must reject the suicidal and capitulationist line that seeks to

justify itself as 'realism', confront every trend of vacillation or wavering in ideology and politics and enable more and more communists to grasp and clinch the real debate and unite along revolutionary lines.

Judiciary Cannot Insulate Itself from Scrutiny

Increasingly the judiciary has been delivering anti-people verdicts on a range of issues: displacement, big dams, slum dwellers, sealing, reservation...Now there is specific and well-documented allegation by eminent lawyers campaigning for judicial accountability, that former CJI Y K Sabharwal deliberately headed a bench on the Delhi sealing case, despite the fact that there was an obvious case of conflict of interest. Sabharwal's sons and their friends ran malls - and stood directly to benefit from the forced clearing of shops and commercial complexes. Sabharwal also stayed the publication of the Amar Singh tapes - and around the same time his sons acquired prime property at rates far below market rates in Noida (UP). Journalists who made this story public have been sentenced to jail by the Delhi HC for "contempt of court."

The Contempt law is being used to insulate the judiciary from any public scrutiny - be it criticism of the judiciary's ideological biases or specific cases of corrupt judges. But the voice of citizens' protest demanding accountability of judiciary is growing. Several citizens including Aruna Roy, Arvind Kejriwal, Arundhati Roy, as well as Comrade Kumudini Pati, General Secretary of AIPWA, publicly filed vakalatnamas stating that if it was 'contempt' to demand a probe into charges of corruption against a judge, then they too be arrested for contempt. More protests are to follow in the days to come.

Workers at Rudrapur Determined to Take On the State Government

The SIDCUL workers at Rudrapur who were brutally lathicharged by police last week are determined to protest against the Uttarakhand Chief Minister who is protecting corrupt managements and punishing the workers. Over 70 workers had been arrested - but due to protests all over the state, and a statement of protest submitted by the AICCTU to the Uttarakhand Governor through the Resident Commissioner in Delhi, the police was forced to release them all. Now they are planning to hold a People's Convention in Rudrapur to highlight the violations of labour laws in Uttarakhand and to make the labour issue a central issue of democracy in the state.

Angry Protests against arrest of popular mass leader and former MLA Comrade Mahbub Alam

The surreptitious abduction and arrest of popular peasant leader and former Barsoi MLA Comrade Mahbub Alam by the Katihar Police, in violation of all legal norms, from a meeting in Kushida Hatia, West Bengal on September 1 has enraged the people of Barsoi. Comrade Mahbub has been framed on false murder charges. The police came in plain clothes and initially people thought Comrade Mahbub had been abducted by some gang. The police did not admit the arrest until much later, when they had shifted him to the Katihar District HQ, far from Barsoi. Clearly fearing a popular upsurge, they did not keep him at the Barsoi thana.

The very next day there was a spontaneous and total bandh in Barsoi Block. Even tea vendors shut shop; when the local BJP leader Dulal Goswami exhorted shopkeepers to flout the bandh, he was rebuked even by his own voters who declared that Comrade Mahbub was worth ten of corrupt leaders like him. NCP, RJD and CPI(M) leaders who had conspired to frame Comrade Mahbub did not dare venture out for fear of facing people's wrath.

On 3 September, there were protests all over Bihar demanding unconditional release of Comrade

Mahbub. On 6 September, braving both incessant rains and a menacing police force armed to the teeth, CPI(ML) held a Protest March at the Katihar District HQ, in which thousands of people, including women and children, marched on the streets demanding that the false cases against Comrade Mahbub be withdrawn immediately. On 10 September a massive Protest Meeting was held by the CPI(ML) at Katihar.

CPI(ML) Investigates Into and Protests Against Cholera Epidemic in Orissa

On 1 September 2007 a 10 member fact finding team led by CPI(ML) Liberation State Secy. Com. Khitish Biswal and Rayagada Dist Secy. Comrade Tirupati Gomango to visit Kashipur, the site of a deadly cholera epidemic. They covered at least 15 to 20 villages. This team found that there is no administration and health service to speak of in Kashipur. With minimum health support and preventive steps in adjacent areas many lives of these poor tribal people could have been saved. Even in the ill-equipped hospital at the block headquarters of Kashipur partially-cured patients were being released from hospitals at night to admit new patients. It is likely that the death toll from cholera may reach thousands.

After returning from Kashipur Comrade Khitish Biswal & Tirupati Gomango addressed a press conference at Rayagada and demanded

- Immediate resignation of Health Minister
- Rs 5 lakh compensation for those killed in the epidemic
- Booking criminal cases against medical officials for their negligence
- Immediate supply of well-equipped mobile medical vans in affected areas and installing temporary medical camps.

Congress, supported by CPI and CPI(M) had called for a bandh on 10 September

CPI(ML) pointed out that the Congress which was responsible for a never-ending spate of farmers' suicides in Vidarbha was hardly in any position to protest. CPI(ML) Liberation along with CPI(ML) ND and Kanu Sanyal jointly issued a call for an Orissa Bandh on 10 September against pro-imperialist and anti-people policies of both the Congress government at centre and the BJP-BJD in Orissa. An independent propaganda campaign was also launched before the Bandh. On the day of the Bandh CPI(ML) Liberation along with ND & Kanu Sanyal mobilised people to the streets in Bhubaneswar, Rayagada, Gunupur, Parlekhemudi, Kudrepada etc. and were arrested by the police while campaigning. The bandh was totally successful.

ASHA Workers' Conference held in Patna

ASHA women health workers organized to raise their voice against the Government through a conference held in Patna on 22 September. The conference was organized jointly by the organization of State Employees of Bihar and AIPWA. Around 250 workers from 14 districts participated in the conference and discussed issues like proper wages for their work. The members were addressed by employee leader Rameshwar Prasad, AIPWA National Secretary, Meena Tiwari, AIPWA State Secretary Shashi Yadav Executive member Anita Sinha. The conference elected a 21 member committee with Shashi Yadav as President and Bina Devi as Secretary. It was resolved that a state-level rally would be organized on 2 November in Patna.

Bhagat Singh Birth Centenary Commemoration at Bhojpur

On 22 September a mass meeting was held at Ara, Bhojpur to commemorate Bhagat Singh's Birth centenary. Addressing the event as the main speaker, CPI(ML) General Secretary Comrade Dipankar

said the Nuke Deal was a document to bind India in slavery to the imperialist US. He called upon people to pay tribute to Bhagat Singh on 28 September, the 100th anniversary of Bhagat Singh's birth, by participating in a March to Parliament at Delhi against the Nuke Deal. He said that the India of Bhagat Singh's dreams required a struggle against the imperialist agents of today.

Other speakers and participants at the event included Ramji Rai, editor Janmat, literary critic Ravindranath Rai, AIALA National President Rameshwar Prasad, writer Anant Kumar Singh, Prof. Virendra Singh, CPI(ML) State Secretary Comrade Nand Kishore Prasad, Politburo member and leader of the CPI(ML) Assembly group, and many others.

Brutal colonial butchery paraded as 'bravery'

In September, a team of retired British Army officers and descendants of British Army officers who suppressed the revolt of 1857 came on a tour of various sites of the 1857 war. It was no private mourning for forefathers - it was a brazen public attempt to celebrate the British Empire's 'victory' over the 'mutineers' of 1857. At Meerut, where the war first broke out, they attempted to erect a plaque in memory of the "bravery and distinguished service" of the 1st Battalion of the 60th King's Royal Rifle Corps between May 10 and September 20, 1857.

The 1857 uprising was crushed in a bloodbath, replete with scenes of racist humiliation and cruelty - tying rebels to the mouth of cannons and blowing them up; forcing them to lick blood off the floor; hanging them on display from the trees and so on. For British ex-soldiers to come to these sites, not to offer an apology but rather to celebrate the colonial cruelty without a shred of remorse is incredibly audacious.

The leader of this team, one Roy Trustram Eve, a former soldier of the Kings' Royal Rifles Corps, declared that 1857 had not been "a war between English and Indians, it was war between the English and a majority of the population of the subcontinent versus the mutineers." Sir Mark Havelock Allan, descendant of the notorious Sir Henry Havelock and inheritor of the Baronetcy conferred on Havelock posthumously after the Siege of Lucknow, expressed "enormous admiration" for Havelock and his fellow colonialists; said the Raj had been a "good thing"; and claimed that India's stable democratic system was attributable to the British Raj!

This habit of viewing the empire through a rosy racist haze is perhaps not so surprising in the descendants and admirers of the colonial soldiers. More serious is the question: how come they received permission from the Indian Government, specifically the Ministry of Defence to hold this public tour and go around trying to put up offensive plaques? Why was their visa not cancelled as soon as the purpose of their visit was known?

Well, no doubt, they were made bold by the fact that India's own Prime Minister, on British soil, had already declared the Raj to have been a 'good thing' - a fundamentally benign act of "good governance", responsible for Indian modernity and democracy!

Obituary

Comrade Basudev Sinha

Comrade Basudev Sinha, AICCTU's Bihar State office bearer, passed away on 18 September. He was 76. Comrade Basudev had been employed in Bihar's finance department and Raj Bhavan until his retirement; and after his retirement he dedicated himself to organising workers. He had a keen interest in modern Indian history and world history. Comrade Basudev is remembered with great

warmth and respect by his comrades. Red Salute to Comrade Basudev!

P.S.

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