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THE WORKING CLASS

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The Massive Communal Harmony March at Calcutta



Report on Page Six

The Country's Black Day

December 6 was the Black Day of India, when the vandals of RSS-BJP-VHP-Bajrang Dal demolished the 460 year old Babri Masjid with a fascist vengeance that stunned the secular and democratic forces in the country, nay, the whole world.

It was the worst assault on the secular Indian state, formed through the natural course of history through the struggles of its people, tearing asunder its united fabric and trampling under foot the constitution of the country.

The assailants, the hordes of the rabid Hindu communalists performed the act of vandalism in five-hour operation in broad day light in presence of the custodians of law and order and under the blessings of their top leadership—Advani, Murli Manohar and their cohorts, who addressed them and then witnessed the entire operation with a masked concern. With the same fascist frenzy they assaulted the journalists. While the common people were horrified over this unbelievable act of vandalism, the communalists—the Sangh, Parivar celebrated the occasion with savage glee.

As facts have revealed, the entire operation was pre-planned and done by trained vandals under the garb of Kar Sevaks. It was the worst fraud on Supreme Court and subversion of the rule of law, typical of a fascist force. It was the culmination of a series of episodes and offensives launched by the Sangh Parivar since the last several years. After smuggling the idol of Ramlala into the Masjid in 1949, the Hindu communalists got the real spurt in their movement when the Congress allowed the unlocking of the mosque in 1986. Their appeasement of the communal forces went on unabated when the Sangh Parivar was allowed to do Shilanyas on the disputed site in 1989. It gave an unbridled boost to the majority Hindu communalists who turned the situation to the point of no-return. Advani started his ominous Rath Yatra in September, 1990 spreading the communal virus in major parts of the country. Hundreds were killed in the riots that followed. Unperturbed by this, the violent attempt of vandalism was launched on October 30, 1990 in the name of Kar Seva. But they were handicapped by the fact that it was the Mulayam Singh Government in U.P. that time. Most unfortunately, because of the weakness of the secular democratic forces, the BJP came to power in U.P. It gave the real boost to the entire Sangh Parivar. The disputed land was acquired by the BJP government, which allowed the VHP to construct the Ram temple at the wanted site. The course they followed thereafter was an open and brazen violation of court orders and rule of law. The weak kneed Narasimha Rao government showed its height of appeasement and compromise with the communalists by allowing them to start construction work at the disputed site in July, 1992. Tens of thousands of the "Kar Sevaks" assembled at Ayodhya and still the Narasimha Rao govt. waited at the fences. National Integration Coun-

cil gave the Prime Minister a free hand to stop the storm troopers and establish the rule of law. But the Prime Minister believed the protagonists of Hindu Rashtra even though the spark had started.

Now after the Masjid was demolished and the first major objective of the communal hordes has been achieved, the BJP government of U.P. has been dismissed, some top leaders have been arrested and the RSS, VHP, Bajrang Dal have been banned, followed by the dismissal of the other three governments of Rajasthan, M.P. and Himachal Pradesh ruled by the BJP.

But the onslaught by the majority Hindu communalists has been started, provoking the minority communalists as well. The worst communal violence has been witnessed since independence throughout the length and breadth of the country and abroad. Thousands have been killed and maimed, and properties worth crores have been damaged. After shedding initial crocodile tears for the demolition of the Masjid the Sangh Parivar led by the BJP has started the offensive again. Attempts are being made to polarise the people.

In this situation the people are faced with a great catastrophe with the country being pushed to the cross roads—to remain secular and united or be divided under the perverse communal lines. What have been seen so far with the pernicious theory of Hindutva and the Hindu Rashtra. The worst shape of things cannot be thought of in the common man's psychology with imperialism waiting at the door steps to dismember the country. The IMF-dictated economic policies have already robbed the country of its economic sovereignty and posed a threat to its national sovereignty. The time of the Sangh Parivar's assault on the unity and integrity of the country, when the working class was fervently trying to mobilise the people in the struggle against the policies, has no doubt suited the imperialists and their agents.

The working class must now rise to the occasion to defend its unity and the unity and integrity of the country. They must drive out the communal virus from the industrial cities. It is time that the trade union movement must come in the fore front unitedly and unite with all the secular, democratic and patriotic forces to fight the communal virus and safeguard the secular Indian state. Secularism has to be the guideline of the working class to maintain its class unity. It is commendable that the Sponsoring Committee of Indian Trade Unions has taken up the reins to mobilise the trade union movement in this direction. The anti-communal convention sponsored by the four left parties and attended by other secular opposition parties and the mass organisations has laid the basis of a countrywide movement against the communal forces as the first priority. The trade union movement must assiduously work for the success of the convention proposals.

Appeal by the Secular Forces

Defeat the Communal Forces: Safeguard National Unity

The four Left Parties namely the CPI (M), CPI, RSP and Forward Block jointly sponsored a convention against communalism at Constitution Club, New Delhi on December 19. Rising to the occasion, following the demolition of the Babri Masjid by the vandals of RSS-BJP-VHP, the Left Parties mobilised the maximum number of secular, democratic and patriotic forces to fight the perpetrators of the outrage at Ayodhya and safeguard the national unity of the country.

Apart from the four Left Parties, the convention was attended by the constituents of the National Front, Janata Dal (A) Samajvadi Janata Party, Samajvadi Party, the IPF, etc and mass organisations of workers, kisans, agricultural labour, students, youth and women. Artistes, writers and other cultural groups and professional workers and eminent personalities also attended the convention.

Among the Central Trade Unions, representatives of the CITU, AITUC, HMS, UTUC and TUCC attended the convention. Apart from the Central Trade Unions, representatives of various national and industrial federations of the Central and State Government employees, of the public sector and private sector industries also attended it.

The convention was presided over by Com. Har Kishan Singh Surjeet of CPI (M), Com Surjeet explained the situation in the country created by the RSS-BJP-VHP, etc and briefed the purpose of the meeting. He urged for the formation of the broadest possible platform mobilising the secular democratic and patriotic forces in the country to defend its secular fibre and isolate the communalists of all brands.

Inderjit Gupta of CPI moved the resolution of the Convention, which was in the form of a joint appeal. Alongwith the appeal, he placed the proposals for the formation of a National Campaign Committee with all the participating parties and organisations to conduct the struggle against the communalists both at the central level and state and district levels. The concrete campaign proposals in a time bound phase were also announced to be implemented from January 1 to 30, 1993 all over the country. The campaign programme called for observance of several specific dates in the month of January, which were of national importance, so far as the unity and integrity of the people and the country is concerned.

The programme called for extensive joint campaign from January 1 to 15 upto the remotest towns and villages in the country conveying the message of secularism as against communalism and religious fanaticism. From January 15 to 30, the programme

called for holding central rallies in 18 cities in the country to be addressed by the central leaders. Apart from above, jathas would be organised by students and youth organisations.

Among others who spoke were V.P. Singh (Janata Dal), Ajit Singh (Janata Dal-A), Devilal (Samajvadi Janata Party), Jnaneshwar Mishra (Samajvadi Party), Saifuddin Soz (National Conference), M. K. Pandhe (CITU), D. D. Shastri (TUCC), Habib Tanvir, M.K. Raina, Bhisma Sahni, the Bishop of Delhi, Swami Agnivesh, etc.

All the speakers unanimously condemned the role of the RSS-BJP-VHP. They expressed their determination to fight these communal forces unitedly and pledged to uphold the secular Constitution of the country and safeguard its unity and integrity. They at the same time condemned inaction of the Narasimha Rao Government and its policy of appeasement of the communal forces and its total failure to protect the Babri Masjid despite repeated warnings by the opposition secular forces. They enriched the resolution by giving several valuable suggestions and pledged to carry forward the struggle against the communal forces to safeguard the unity and secular fabric of the country. (*The Appeal and proposals of the Convention are published hereunder—Ed.*)

Joint Appeal Issued by Convention of Opposition Secular Parties, Mass Organisations and Concerned Citizens on December 19, 1992

The Indian secular republic faces a grave challenge today from the communal forces. The demolition of the Babri Masjid at Ayodhya on December 6 by the BJP-RSS-VHP combine is a despicable act, a blot on the country's image. The self-justificatory and unrepentant defence by these forces of the attack in Ayodhya must be countered. All the secular and democratic forces must meet this challenge unitedly with a firm resolve. All those concerned about national unity and preserving the values of our freedom struggle must get together to rebuff and isolate the forces of disintegration, which defied the constitution, violated the Supreme Court order and their own solemn pledge given to the court. All citizens of this great country belonging to different faiths, communities and creeds have to assert that the secular and democratic fabric of our society will be preserved and defended. The sanctity of places of worship of whichever faith should be protected. Those responsible for this grave affront to the harmonious cultural traditions of our people must be exposed, isolated and defeated.

We the representatives of major political parties,

mass organisations, cultural groups and concerned citizens have decided to call for a united nationwide mass campaign against the dark designs of the BJP-RSS-VHP combine. The outrage in Ayodhya and its disastrous consequences with widespread violence in different parts of the country requires the mobilisation of all sections of the people to check the communal virus which has penetrated different spheres of our society. The Central Government instead of relying on the secular forces which extended support to steps that may have to be taken, depended on the so-called assurances of the communalists and failed to protect the law and the constitution. The inaction on its part in firmly meeting the challenge of the disruptive forces enabled these forces to carry out this black deed. This cannot be allowed to be repeated. The Constitution, the rule of law and the secular basis of our democracy must be unequivocally defended against further onslaughts. India's image as a secular, democratic country must be safeguarded. We therefore call upon all sections of the people, all democratic and secular organisations to join us in conducting this all-India campaign against all brands of communalism, in defence of national unity and for isolating the BJP-RSS-VHP combine, and other communal forces. We urge the minorities to realise that their interests can be safeguarded only in association with the secular-democratic forces.

As a first step in a sustained campaign towards channelising the patriotic and secular will of the people we call for a united campaign from 1st January to 30 January, 1993. The mass mobilisation should cover every town and village of the country. House to house the people must be contacted. Big rallies should be organised in all major centres in culmination of this campaign to voice the people's message. Defeat the communal forces which perpetrated the outrage at Ayodhya. Defend the secular democratic foundations of the country and national unity.

This convention of political parties, mass organisation and concerned citizens decides to set up a National Campaign Committee to conduct the nationwide campaign in defence of secularism, communal harmony and national unity.

Proposals of the Convention

1. The single priority task (despite differences on detail) is to carry on a countrywide broad-based campaign down to the grassroot level, to purge the poison of communalism and uphold secular democratic traditions and values.

2. For this, a National Campaign Committee at Central level to be set up and a time-bound intensive campaign be launched from this convention.

3. Between December 26 to December 31, 1992 similar state level (and where possible, district level) forums be set up.

4. The month of January has many days of

national importance such as :

January 4 60th anniversary of Civil Disobedience Movement (launched on January, 4, 1932)

January 13 Gandhiji's fast launched in 1948 against Noakhali riots.

January 26 Republic Day

January 30 Gandhiji's martyrdom day

These days be utilised in the campaign against communalism and for secularism.

5. January 1 to 15 : Fortnight be used to reach out to villages and mohallas through door-to-door contacts, baithaks and meetings. Student and youth organisations prepare for jathas.

6. January 15 to 30 : Central rallies to be addressed by central leaders whoever available but not more than 2-3 at a time at the following 18 centres Bhopal, Jaipur, Kanpur, Bombay, Ahmedabad, Surat, Aurangabad, Lucknow, Nagpur, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Varanasi, Madras, Thiruvananthapuram, Cuttack, Guwahati Patna and Dhanbad.

Other centres be planned and covered by the respective states during this fortnight or later.

7. Parties, other mass organisations and social or cultural organisations will, of course, also have their own programmes as decided by them.

Names of Participating Organisations in the Convention

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. CPI(M) | 15. All India Student Bloc |
| 2. CPI | 16. AIDWA |
| 3. Forward Bloc | 17. NFIW |
| 4. RSP | 18. Mahila Dakshak Samiti |
| 5. Janata Dal | 19. SFI |
| 6. Samajwadi Party | 20. AISF |
| 7. SJP | 21. Chhatra Janata |
| 8. Janata Dal (Ajit) | 22. Yuva Janata |
| 9. TDP | 23. All India Progressive Writers Association |
| 10. National Conference | 24. Janwadi Lekhak Sangh |
| 11. IPF | 25. All India Freedom Fighters Association |
| Mass Organisations | 26. BEFI |
| 1. CITU | 27. AIBEA |
| 2. AITUC | 28. All India Newspapers Employees Association |
| 3. TUCC | 29. IPTA |
| 4. UTUC | 30. SAHMAT |
| 5. AICCTU | 31. All India Lawyers Union |
| 6. HMS | 32. AIFUCTO |
| 7. AIKS | 33. AIPSO |
| 8. AIKS (Ajoy Bhawan) | 34. National Federation of Telecommunication |
| 9. All India Agricultural Workers Union | 35. All India Youth League |
| 10. Khet Mazdoor Union | |
| 11. Aragami Kisan Sabha | |
| 12. DYFI | |
| 13. AIYF | |
| 14. RYO | |

Sponsoring Committee Calls for Sustained Struggle Against Communal Forces

[The following Press Handout was issued at the Press Conference Held at Press Club, New Delhi on 11th December, 1992, by the Sponsoring Committee]

The Sponsoring Committee in its special meeting held on 10th December 1992 expressed its deep anguish at the senseless fratricidal war going on all over India in the wake of demolition of Babri Masjid by RSS-BJP-VHP combine on 6th December at Ayodhya. The fundamentalists and the communal forces are out to destroy the secular fabric of Indian society. Loss of nearly a thousand innocent lives and destruction of property worth hundreds of crores of rupees have tarnished the image of the country in the world.

The industrial centres in India have become victims of the communal frenzy and precious human lives were trampled underfoot. Children and women were not spared by the assassins' dagger. The unity and integrity of the country is now at stake and threat of destruction of country's rich heritage is looming large.

The Government of India's failure to take early action against the communal forces despite their defiant and provocative speeches even after the Supreme Court directive has contributed to this catastrophe and national shame.

The Government of India's decision to ban the communal organisations though belated is a welcome step. However, mere banning of organisations is not enough to meet the situation. Moreover, no step has been taken against BJP, Shiv Sena and other communal organisations. A sustained campaign to fight with determination all vestiges of communalism and religious obscurantism must be launched by all secular forces in the country till the virus of religious fundamentalism is fully eliminated from the soil of our motherland.

The Sponsoring Committee earnestly appeals to INTUC and other secular organisations who are outside the framework of Sponsoring Committee to join the mainstream of the struggle against communal and divisive forces which alone can save the country from disaster. History will not forgive anyone who keeps mum when the cherished national values are under severe threat.

If the trade union movement and the working class of India behaves like a silent spectator under these circumstances the country's future would be dark. The Sponsoring Committee, therefore calls upon the working class of India to rise to the occasion and unitedly resist the dangerous drift so that secular unity of the country can be saved.

The Sponsoring Committee appeals to T.U.s of all affiliations to close their ranks and form peace

committees or area committees so that murderers are prevented from taking the toll of human lives. They should organise peace marches in disturbed areas so that atmosphere of fraternity among different communities is built up. Physical resistance to reckless killers can only be organised if the working class is united and determined to preserve peace and tranquility. The T.U.s should also unite with other mass organisations and secular and democratic forces in the localities so that a powerful force is developed to defeat the machinations of the communal forces.

The Sponsoring Committee decided to organise a peace march in New Delhi on 15th December along with other mass organisations who are willing to participate in such a joint effort to preserve communal harmony and peace.

Trade Unions Condemn Destruction of Babri Mosque at Ayodhya

[The Sponsoring Committee issued the following statement on December 7]

The Sponsoring Committee of Indian Trade Unions strongly condemns the act of reckless vandalism at Ayodhya. The demolition of the Babri Mosque by the RSS, BJP, Bajrang Dal, Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Shiv Sena hoodlums amounts to a direct attack on the secular democratic fabric of the country. Their refusal to abide by the directives of the Supreme Court and willful defiance of the rule of law demonstrates the fascistic attitude of these forces. The assurance of the BJP leaders on the floor of the Parliament as well as to the Supreme Court that no harm will be caused to the Mosque and no construction will be undertaken at the disputed and acquired land was a mere cover to their preplanned conspiracy. The very presence of the President of BJP, Shri Murali Manohar Joshi and the Parliamentary leader of the party Shri L.K. Advani at the site of destruction shows their complicity in the black act of treachery and betrayal.

The Narasimha Rao Government at the centre also cannot absolve itself of the responsibility for the incident. Despite concrete proposals put forward to take over the entire disputed land by the Central Government it embarked on the path of appeasement to communal forces which ultimately led to the present situation. The sponsoring committee therefore, condemns the failure of the Central Government to protect the shrine which has brought

(Con'd on page 19)

Massive March for Communal Harmony at Calcutta

Calcutta witnessed the biggest march for communal harmony on December 15 (picture at the front cover.). The peace march followed the demolition of the Babri Masjid at Ayodhya on December 6 by the vandals of RSS, BJP and Bajrang Dal which resulted in worst communal riots throughout the country since independence, from which even Calcutta was not spared.

This massive communal harmony march was the culmination of a series of big processions and rallies at Calcutta and throughout the state of West Bengal including in all the industrial centres of the state. Following the aggressive designs of the RSS-BJP-VHP to start 'Kar Seva' flouting the constitution, the court verdicts and the rule of law, the left front, the mass organisation and all other secular forces including professional workers, university teachers, lawyers, medical profession and artistes started the campaign for maintaining communal harmony in the state. All these big and small rallies and street corner meetings and gate meetings at the industrial centres drew the attention of the people to the communal designs of the RSS, BJP, VHP combine and urged upon them to isolate these forces to safeguard the unity and integrity of the country. Simultaneously they assailed the policy of the Congress(I) to appease these forces and make compromise with them for their narrow political games, sacrificing the national cause. The rallies and gate meeting organised by the CITU particularly pointed to the dangers posed by these communal forces who will make the country a breeding ground for the imperialists, destabilising it and called for maintaining the class unity of the workers with secularism as the guideline. They called upon the working class and all other mass organisations to build up consistent and united movement to isolate and defeat these communal forces even by physical intervention if required and further to force the Congress (I) to part with their present policy and work to safeguard the unity and integrity of the country and protect its secular Constitution and establish the rule of law.

The people belonging to all sections gathered at the sprawling Chowringhee area since the morning. Before 1 PM the entire vast area was flooded with human heads and red banners, flags, festoons and placards. The procession started with sky rending slogan shouting. The massive procession in terms of lakhs wound its way through the Chowringhee Road, Surendra Nath Banerjee Junction, J.C. Bose Road, park Circus and proceeded towards the Brigade parade ground where it reached at about 4.30 PM. It was led by Jyoti Basu, the Chief Minister, Sailen Das Gupta, Chairman of the Left Front, Binoy Choudhury the Revenue Minister, etc. All senior leaders of the Left Front, the various mass organisations and the cultural groups were at the forefront of the procession. They included Ashok Gosh, Nikhil Das, Geeta Mukherjee, Prabodh Sinha,

Kiranmoy Nanda, Gaurango Samanto, Barun Ganguly, Pratap Chandra etc. It was joined by artistes and representatives of various cultural groups, cine and tele personalities like Ruma Guha Thakurta, Utpalendu Chakraborty, Gita Chaudhury, Manabendra Banerjee, Utpal Dutta, Anil Chatterjee, Poorbi Mukherjee, Soumitra Chatterjee, Gautam Ghose, Ravi Ghosh, Anup Kumar, Subhendu Chatterjee, Biplab Chatterjee, Dilip Roy etc. Sports personalities like Sibaji Bannerjee, Amit Bhadra, Ambar Roy, etc. also participated in the great march. It was a really impressive rally comprising the widest spectrum of people from all walks of life. The slogans shouted were common and pointed to the common enemy of the country and communal forces represented by the RSS, VHP, BJP combine. Needless to mention that people from all communities joined hands together and marched shoulder to shoulder in the procession, shouting the same slogans, pledging to fight the communal forces and safeguard the secular Indian state. Women, youth and even children formed the major part of the gigantic rally alongwith the working class. When the rally reached the point at Brigade Parade Ground at 4.30 PM, thousands of people were still at the Esplanade—Chowringhee Junction from where the procession started. Cultural groups rendered songs and plays exhorting the people and all the patriotic forces to stand united against the communal and fascist forces. The rally was addressed by Jyoti Basu, Binoy Chaudhury and others. It took the pledge to fight the communal forces in a determined and continuous process unitedly.

CITU Support Tamilnadu Textile Strike Despite Ban

The Secretariat of the CITU has issued the following statement to the press :

The Centre of Indian Trade Unions strongly condemns the decision of the Government of Tamilnadu to ban the strike of two lakh textile workers in the state. Despite longdrawn negotiations the Southern India Mills Association refused to settle the reasonable demands raised by all the textile unions in the state regarding wages and other service conditions.

By prohibiting the strike the Jayalalitha Government has only come out as shameless defenders of the textile magnates. Its proposal to refer the dispute to tribunal is only a dilatory tactics.

The CITU congratulates the Joint Action council for going ahead with their decision for indefinite strike. The CITU is confident that the strike would be complete.

The CITU demands that the Tamilnadu Government should immediately accept the proposals put forward jointly by the trade unions so that the demands of the workers are settled without any delay.

The Vandalism at Ayodhya : What the Press say

(We are publishing hereunder some excerpts from the Press and Editorials on the demolition of the Babri Masjid, which reflect the severest public condemnation of the RSS-VHP-BJP—Ed.)

“The frenzied mob that attacked the shrine at Ayodhya on December 6 morning may not comprehend the enormity of the wound they have inflicted on Indian society, but their putative leaders, of the BJP, RSS and the VHP, must know that their criminal failure would extract a heavy price,—not only from today’s India but also from the India of the future. L.K. Advani and Murli Manohar Joshi, if they were not lying, should have known that they were riding a tiger. It is clear from eyewitness accounts that a section of the VHP colluded with those who had come prepared to demolish the Babri mosque. The statement of the BJP-VHP leaders, to judge by the press summary of what they said after the rampaging mob had demolished the domes, contained not a word of condemnation of this outrage.”

—Patriot, 7.12.92

“Much as BJP leaders disown responsibility for whatever has happened in Ayodhya, do one is naive enough to take them for their word. There is ample reason to believe that in the final days of the run up to the vandalism in Ayodhya, they chose to be led by the rabid ring leaders of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the Bajrang Dal and what have you. Nothing else can possibly explain the volte face on the part of its leadership which had once decided not to let its MPs take part in kar seva. Before the echo of his direction died down, no less a person than Mr. L.K. Advani was constrained to announce that he was himself setting out to Ayodhya to participate in kar seva besides the party president, Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi.”

—Indian Express, 7.12.92

“Sunday was a day of shame for all Indians. The vandalism at Ayodhya is an act of national disgrace; perhaps the blackest spot in the history of a proud civilisation and culture with an unblemished record of tolerance for all religions. The basic tenets of Hinduism were trampled under foot by those who mounted the assault on the domes of the Babri Masjid. The events need to be condemned as unpar-

donable vandalism.”

—Business & Political Observer 7.12.92.

“The country was treated to a variety of statements in the run up to December 6 by the BJP and their allies, the VHP and assorted sants, designed on balance to lull this nation into a false sense of complacency. There will be no construction, kar seva means bhajans and kirtans, we will not touch the mosque immediately, we will respect court orders and more in the same vein. Even when Mr L. K. Advani corrected the impression being given, he was careful to refer to shovels and spades only. These implements are used for construction, not for breaking down and the deception was complete.”

Statesman, 7.12.92.

“The damage has been done not to the mosque—whatever was built on—but to what India stands for. Heavens would not have fallen if those who claim to be leaders of the Hindus had waited for an amicable settlement of the dispute or the court’s opinion whether there indeed existed a temple where a mosque was there until Saturday. No divine wrath would have been incurred if Dec. 6 had not been fixed as the deadline for achieving the objectives decided by these self-proclaimed leaders of the Hindus. The responsibility for Sunday’s gory events at Ayodhya should rest among others on men like Lal Krishna Advani who chose to ride the ‘rath’ without knowing where it would lead him and the country to, and Murli Manohar Joshi whose rigid posture could not be explained by any factors other than party compulsions and myopia.”

—Hindustan Times, 7.12.92.

“The developments also expose the pernicious features of Hindutva espoused by the Sangh Parivar. The doctrine draws its sustenance from hate, prejudice, bigotry and determined and cynical refusal to abide by the pluralistic, tolerant and ethically sound character of Hinduism. To achieve its political ends, the Sangh Parivar has wantonly exploited religious sentiments. Its brand of nationalism, far from uniting the Hindu community, has sown seeds of distrust and divisiveness.”

—Times of India, 7.12.92

President Decries Vandalism

In a statement, rare from the Rashtrapati Bhawan, the President, Dr Shankar Dayal Sharma, reflecting the seriousness of the developments, deplored the vandalism that demolished the mosque at Ayodhya. He said “that such acts were against the doctrine and practices of Hinduism and all other great religions”.....“those who have harmed the structure of the mosque have caused injury to the centuries old ethos of India, nurtured and strengthened by the martyrs and great leaders of India’s struggle for freedom and national reconstruction”.....“they have violated the rule of law, traditions of India, mutual respect of all religions and basic tenets and values of the Hindu way of life.”

Listen to the Voice of India's Future

[We are publishing hereunder an open letter addressed to Mr. Advani, published in the *Statsman* of December 13, 1992, Delhi Edition.—Ed.]

Dear Mr. Advani,

We have watched in silence as the country was rocked by communal violence to extents we've never known of before. We've sat home through our very 1st curfew, lamenting on the sad circumstances; hoping against hope that things, would, somehow, "get better". But I guess even idealistic students must, someday, face up to reality. Thank you, Mr. Advani, you have opened our eyes.

Your passionate Hindutva has just about wiped out the last vestiges of Hinduism from this nation. Ironical, that your BJP-VHP-RSS combine—the so-called crusaders of Hinduism—seem responsible for hammering the last nail in the coffin of Hinduism. Thanks to all of you, today, no Hindu can stand with his head held high, for you have violated the very essence of Hinduism.

What did you feel, Mr. Advani, when you saw the saffron clad fanatics atop the Babri-Masjid domes? Glee? Triumph? But do you know what India felt? Humiliation, Mr. Advani—gross, crass humiliation.

True, she made it to the BBC headlines on the 7th, but it wasn't with her head held high. Her pride had been ground to dust by the puerile acts of a handful of individuals who were as far away from the truth of Hinduism, as the illiterate from the knowledge of the cosmos.

What in the name of heaven, did you hope to achieve by bringing down a 400 year old historical monument? Was it your weird sense of humour that made you want to reduce what was once a symbol of tolerance and peaceful co-existence to a monster, spitting the fire of communal hatred? Did not the Hindus and Muslims worship side by side in the shrine and the masjid? Was it necessary to draw them asunder? So what if it was the birthplace of Rama? So what if there had existed a temple thousands of years ago? There still was an idol of Rama which was duly worshipped. Did you honestly believe that something as insignificant as a Muslim exterior would diminish the sanctity of Lord Ram? If the people of Ayodhya were willing to let bygones, why couldn't you? Mr. Advani, your Hindutva stink suspiciously of dirty politics.

Will you take moral responsibility for the hundreds dying in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and even the United Kingdom? Will your brand of Hindutva feed the daily wage earner languishing in his slum? Mr. Advani, your acts amount to nothing short of culpable homicide.

Whom did you demolish the mosque for? Not for the Indian on the street; for the Hindu in him

and the Muslim in him had co-existed in harmony and amity. What values have you held forth to these 800 million Indians, Mr. Advani? Definitely not the values of tolerance and forbearance preached by Hinduism.

Your myopic and prejudiced views disgust us. The student community will indeed find it very difficult to forgive you. We prided ourselves on being citizens of a democratic, secular, socialist nation. Yes sir, secular! Should we define it for you? The dictionary defines it as, "having nothing to do with religion", but our Constitution has taken it to mean a tolerance of the religious diversities in India, Secularism is part and parcel of our very existence. In flouting the Constitution, you have destroyed the identity of every proud Indian.

Did we hear you justify the demolition of the Babri Masjid on the ground that fifty temples were destroyed in Kashmir! With due respect, sir, did you ever wonder as to why Hamurabi's code of law has not survived in this world? Does Ahimsa find a place in your dictionary? Politician that you are, could

(Cont'd on page 19)

The Count Down

December 6, 1992

- 11.30 hrs BJP president M.M. Joshi and L.K. Advani visit Shilanyas spot and prepare to address kar sevaks
- 11.50 hrs Kar sevaks storm into the disputed structure and damage its walls
- 12.00 hrs Security personnel withdraw after failing to control the kar sevaks
- 12.15 hrs Alert in Faizabad District administration seeks more forces from state government. State government does not deploy forces
- 12.20 hrs Red alert sounded all over UP
- 14.45 hrs Kar sevaks bring down one dome
- 16.30 hrs Second dome collapses
- 16.45 hrs The third dome was brought down and extensive damage caused to the shrine
- 17.25 hrs The President, Dr. S.D. Sharma asks Prime Minister to initiate steps to uphold the rule of law and maintain public order
- 17.30 hrs NF-LF meet President and seek dismissal of UP State Govt.
- 20.40 hrs President's rule imposed in UP, State Assembly dissolved

Public Sector Workers to Strike for 72 Hours in April

An Extended Meeting of the CPSTU was held on 3rd and 4th December, 1992 at Press Club, Hyderabad. It elected a Presidium consisting of M. S. KRISHNAN, President, AITUC; M. K. PANDHE, General Secretary, CITU; R. VENUGOPAL, Organising Secretary, BMS; N. NARASIMHA REDDY, HMS; MICHEL FERNANDEZ, Jt. Convenor, JAF, Bangalore and WILLIAM PASSO, Jt. Convenor, Hyderabad Central Public Sector Unions Co-ordination Committee. Over 200 representatives from all over the Country representing most of the Public Sector Undertakings were present in the meeting to review the problems faced by the 23 lakh Public Sector workers and chalk out a programme of action.

The meeting warmly congratulated Public Sector workers for successfully observing lunch boycott programme, burning effigy of IMF and the World Bank and half an hour late punching in October, 1992 in which several lakhs of workers participated. These programmes reflected fighting mood of the workers and their firm determination to carry forward the struggle against the Government of India's policy till they are reversed.

The meeting noted with grave concern the growing attacks on the Public sector workers whose problems have been aggravated due to the dilatory tactics adopted by the Government. The virtual ban imposed on wage negotiations by the BPE has literally stalled wage negotiations in most of the PSU's causing strong resentment among the public sector workers.

The recommendations of the Tripartite Committee on DA for the Public Sector that Rs. 2/- would be paid per point from 1st January, 1989 has not yet been implemented though 4 months have elapsed. The multislab system has also not been worked out so far in consultation with the representatives of Trade Unions.

The ban imposed by the BPE on the PSU's for contributing towards the pension scheme has prevented finalisation of several pension schemes in PSU's. The agreement solemnly entered by the Managements with Trade Unions are not allowed to be implemented causing immense hardship to the workers who were expecting to get the benefit of a pension scheme.

The legitimate demand of the workers in PSU's to get the ceilings on bonus removed has deprived an overwhelming majority of workers payment of rightful bonus. By its refusal to remove the ceilings

the Government has made the Payment of Bonus Act meaningless to PSU workers. The Government of India's refusal to remove the ceiling on gratuity is also prohibiting workers from getting their due gratuity.

The low exemption limit for the income-tax payment is forcing a large number of Public Sector workers to come into the income-tax net and drastically reducing their real income. While the richer sections have been given concession the Public Sector workers are compelled to pay higher tax in income in an unjustified manner. The trade unions have rightly demanded raising the exemption.

By its policy of disinvestment of shares of profit making PSUs the Government has frittered away their valuable assets to help speculators to make ill gotten wealth. The stock scam being exposed before the JPC has brought down the credibility of our financial institutions and public sector workers are concerned with the loot of the assets of public sector built through the toil of the workers. Instead of learning from the mistakes the Government of India is going ahead with further sale of shares of public sector to the speculators and racketeers.

The decision of the Government to close down 11 (eleven) PSU's in construction sector will throw out on streets over 2 lakhs workers and hand-over the entire construction activity to private contractors and builders. Here it may be noted that alternative revamping schemes prepared by the employees jointly for sectors like Fertilizer, Construction, IDPL, Scooter India etc., are not considered seriously by the Government.

Scores of PSU's referred to BIFR are facing acute problems and are faced with the threat of closure. The withdrawal of budgetary support to certain needy industries has created conditions due to which there is no money even to purchase raw materials. The ongoing privatisation of Energy Sector, Engineering and Coal Industries, Airlines, ITDC, NTC Mills etc. will ultimately result in the total dismantling of the Public Sector. Despite opposition by all the Trade Unions including the INTUC the Government is going ahead with the setting up of NRF and the Exit Policy. Such dangerous steps are taken to fulfil the assurances given to the IMF/World Bank by the Government. Not only lakhs of workers would be rendered jobless but also the nationally accepted policy of self-reliance will be given a go by.

The ban of recruitment, over growing resort to

engaging contract and casual workers by the PSUs, reduction of employment of women, have only aggravated the problems faced by the workers. The bureaucratic interference in public sector has made them more inefficient while corruption is draining out precious resources of the Public sector.

The opening of flood gates to the multi-national Companies and the permission to open branch offices anywhere and in any sector in India will spell disaster to both public and private sectors in India. The future of public sector will indeed be dark unless the public sector workers resist this policy with all their might.

The meeting noted that despite the protest demonstrations and other forms of action by the Public Sector employees, the Government of India is attempting to thrust its anti-national and anti-people policies. The meeting therefore called upon all the Public Sector workers to implement the following phased programme of action.

1. To send protest telegrams to the Prime Minister on 17th December, 1992, against disinvestment of Public Sector share and closure of 11 Construction units, several NTC Mills, and Fertilizer Units.
2. To take a pledge by all employees on 7th January, 1993 to save and defend the Public Sector.
3. To observe protest week from 8th to 13th January, 1993 on the following demands:
 - a) Withdraw ban on wage negotiations in Public sector.
 - b) Immediately implement Rs. 2/- per point DA and finalise multi-slab system in consultation with Trade Unions.
 - c) Scrap DPE circular on pension and implement agreements on Pension.
 - d) Remove ceiling on Bonus and enhance exemption limit of Income-tax.
 - e) Grant wage rise to contract labour and stop off-loading of jobs.
 - f) Scrap policy of disinvestment, closure of sick units and exit policy.

The week is to be observed by holding demonstrations, organisation processions, wearing badges and other forms of action.

4. Holding State level, industrywise convention all over the Country to highlight the problems of Public Sector industry and the workers

before the end of February, 1993.

5. February, 1993 — Holding a National Seminar/Symposium at New Delhi on the impact of the New Economic Policies on the Public Sectors. Date to be fixed by Core Committee.
6. 8th to 12th Feb., 1993 — To organise 24 hours Relay Hunger Strike by Trade Union leaders and activists in front of Factory Main Gates.
7. 13th Feb., 1993 — To organise Mass Dharna along with family members wherever in front of Factory/Administrative buildings.
8. 19th March, 93 — To serve strike notice to the Managements of PSU's by holding joint demonstrations.
9. 20th to 22nd April, 93 (Tuesday to Thursday) — To launch 72 hours strike by all the Public Sector workers all over India. (BMS representative stated that his organisation will ratify this decision on strike later)

The meeting appealed to all the Public Sector Workers to continue preparations for indefinite strike of PSU's if the Government of India, persists in its anti-national policies formulated at the dictates of IMF and World Bank, towards the Public Sector.

The meeting authorised the members of the Core Committee to go through the proposals to strengthen the CPSTU Organisation and finalise its suggestions in the next meeting of the CPSTU. It also authorised the Core Committee to work out the slab system of DA as soon as possible after discussion with other Central Trade Unions and send it to the Government for consideration. The meeting thanked the Hyderabad Co-ordination Committee of PSUs for making excellent arrangements for the Meeting.

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Central Trade Unions Jointly Welcome Madam Kotnis

All the Central Trade Unions in India jointly gave a reception to Madam Gou Qing Lan Kotnis on 13th December 1992 at Kanishka Hotel, New Delhi.

A three member delegation led by Madame Kotnis arrived in Delhi on 10th December early morning from Beijing. The other members of the delegation were Gui Yongj, Dy. Chief of the Chinese Peoples Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries, South Asia Division, and Mme Zhang Ruoli, Interpreter.

A public meeting planned by Dr. Kotnis' 50th Death Anniversary Commemoration Committee on 11th December was to be presided over by Shivraj Patil, Speaker Lok Sabha. K.R. Narayanan, Vice President of India was to be the main speaker while leaders of CPI(M), Cong(I), CPI, FB, RSP and Janata Dal were to speak in the meeting. It had to be postponed due to the prevalent situation in Delhi.

All the trade unions therefore decided to arrange a special function to welcome Mme Kotnis and others on 11th December. Li Guanghui, Minister Counsellor and other officials of the Cultural Department of the Embassy of China were present on the occasion.

M K Pandhe (CITU) welcoming Mme Kotnis and other members of the delegation paid glowing tributes to the services rendered by Dr Kotnis during anti-Japanese struggle of the Chinese people.

Gopeshwar (INTUC), B. D. Joshi (AITUC), O P Aghi (BMS), Indira Saxena (HMS), Tridib Kumar Chowhdury (UTUC), D D Shastri (TUCC) R K Sharma (UTUC-LS), Ashok Rao (PWTUC) Sudhir Kumar (FMRAI), Ramakant Pandey (FWFI) and Rajeev Sood (INA) remembered the contribution by Dr Kotnis in strengthening friendship between two great Asian neighbours.

Mme Gou Qing Lan Kotnis thanking the Indian trade unions and the working class for the affectionate feeling expressed for Dr. Kotnis, the great internationalist and freedom fighter.

Mme Kotnis and other members of the delegation

Special General Council Meeting—Bangalore 19-21 February, 1993

The Special meeting of the General Council of the CITU scheduled to be held on 16-18 December 1992 was postponed due to the serious communal situation prevailing in the country.

The meeting will now be held on 19th-21st February 1993 at Bangalore. The venue of the meeting will remain unchanged. The agenda will be the same. The meeting will commence at 10.00 AM on 19th Feb. 1993.

As mentioned in the previous circular every member of the General Council will have to pay Rs. 200/- towards board and lodging expenses.

All the members should inform their arrival at Bangalore on the following address :

Com. V. J. K. Nair
General Secretary
Karnataka State Committee of CITU
12 Thanappa Gardens
18th Cross, Sampangiramanagar
Bangalore-560 027
(Phone : 236462)

As informed earlier, comrades are advised to purchase their return tickets in advance in order to avoid difficulties in reservation.

Regarding other industrywise meetings convened along with the General Council meeting, intimation will be given to comrades within a week.

You are requested to positively attend the meeting.

M. K. Pandhe
(General Secretary)

called on Vice President, K R Narayanan on 11th December. He expressed his fervent hope that the cause for which Dr Kotnis gave his life will be invincible. Zhang Rui Sheng Chinese Ambassador and M K Pandhe were present on the occasion.

Delhi Police Arrested Workers Participating in Peace March

The Sponsoring Committee of Indian Trade Unions held a meeting at Mandi House Island on 15th December at 11.00 AM. Over 1000 workers participated in the meeting condemning the communal and divisive force in the country and demanding strong action against them.

Though application for permission for the peace march upto Red Fort was sent in advance police did not reply to the application and announced on the spot that the assembly was illegal.

The Sponsoring Committee held a meeting at the Mandi House Island which was addressed by M.K. Pandhe (CITU), T.A. Francis (AITUC), A.D. Nagpal (HMS), R.C. Sharma (UTUC-LS) Abani Roy (UTUC), D.D. Shastri (TUCC), P. Sharma (AICCTU), Ashok Rao (PWTUC), Harish Sharma (BEFI) and Ramakant Pandey (FWFI).

The workers then proceeded to Red Fort for Peace March when police arrested about 500 participants and took them to Tilak Road police station. They were released later.

However despite the release order, due to instruction from, above 44 participants including M.K. Pandhe, P.K. Ganguly, Kanai Banerjee, S.B Bhardwaj and K.N. Tiwari (CITU), Bhasin and Dhar of the Confederation of Central Govt. Employees, Santosh Singh of All India Defence Employees Federation were again detained by the police with the purpose of filing a case under section 188 of the Cr.P.C. When the participants were asked to deposit their money, watches etc. the arrested persons strongly protested and refused to give the names of the arrested persons. After detaining the participants for about one hour the police released all the participants.

The Sponsoring Committee of Indian Trade Unions strongly protested against this highhanded behaviour of Tilak Road police station officials.

CITU Wins HSCL Election

The secret ballot elections to recognise the majority Union in Hindustan Steel Works Construction Ltd (HSCL), Vishakhapatnam, A.P. was conducted on 8th December, 1992. The election officer declared the CITU got 419 votes out of 826 polled. The AITUC which challenged the recognition of HSCL Employees Union in Visakhapatnam Steel

Plant of HSCL got only 188 votes. INTUC and BNS got 166 & 53 respectively.

The militnat struggles on local issues and the relentless struggle against the new industrial policy made CITU to win with thumping majority in this elections. HSCL employees union (CITU) responded to all the calls given by CPSTU and Sponsoring Committee. CITU is the recognised union for last twelve years in Visakhapatnam. CITU was successful in solving the problems like providing housing, providing Transport to employees as well as school going children. It also fought for job for 500 employees transferred from Bokaro and succeeded. is fighting for maintenance of job orders in Visakhapatnam steel Plant.

The victory meeting was conducted after the results were declared by Deputy Commissioner of Labour, Visakhapatnam. The gathering was addressed by Ch. Narashimaha Rao, President, M.T. Kuriakose, General Secretary of HSCL Employees Union and N. Rama Rao, General Secretary Steel Plant Employees Union (Recognised) and S.V.K. Parusaram, General Secretary Steel Plant Contract Labour Union. The CITU district committee, Visakhapatnam congratulated the leaders of HSCL Employees Union for winning in the elections with wood majority.

CITU Demands Dismissal of U.P. Government

6-12-92

Secretariat of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions vehemently condemns the RSS-BJP-VHP Bajarang Dal for breaking down the walls around the Mosque structure and forcibly entered the disputed place for giving the so called Karseva.

The manner in which these religious fanatics were gathering in Ayodhya had clearly indicated that they will not abide by Supreme Court Order. The leaders of the VHP-BJP-RSS were in fact inciting these fanatics to fan up communal polarisation. All their assurances that the Karseva would be only 'symbolic' turned down to be a fraud on the people and an overt onslaught on the secular fabric of the country and rule of law.

The CITU condemns the Narasimha Rao Govt. for sitting idle over the matter despite repeated warnings given by the secular and democratic forces. CITU demands immediated dismissal of Kalyan Singh Government of U.P. and establish the rule of law and safeguard the unity and integrity of the country.

Strengthen Solidarity and Co-ordination—2nd Indian Ocean Region TU Conference

Tapan Sen

Forces of capital has been seeking to consolidate itself internationally across the border of the states. In the face of worldwide recession and also in the background of the traumatic developments all the world over (collapse of Soviet Union & East Europe) so called the human face of capitalism already started fast disappearing and is being reflected in its desperate bid to leave everything to the hand of so called free market mechanism. World Bank and IMF and other international agencies have set themselves with the task of creating ground for the multinational companies to rule the economy of the entire developing world.

Working class in particular and the common people in general are being made the first cannon fodders of such design of global consolidation of capitals' power over the humanity. Hence working class struggle in any country must address the problems internationally in cohesion with their counterparts in other countries as well while carrying on fights at national level. This in essence is the message of the recently concluded 2nd Indian ocean region Trade Union Conference held in Perth, Western Australia during 4-11 December 1992. The conference participated by the leadership of trade union movements from 12 countries in the region, after a thorough exchange of their experience of the so called economic restructuring programmes under the stewardship of World Bank, IMF and other international agencies, reached the conclusion on the urgent need of building up deeper co-ordination and cohesion in both understanding the situation and the action programmes in resistance against the severe fall out of such restructuring and economic policies in the life of the workers and the people.

Delegation from the trade union movement of twelve countries who participated in the conference hosted by Trade and labour council of western Australia included COSATU from South Africa, ZCTU from Zimbabwe, KMU, from Phillipines, ITGWU from Sri Lanka, CITU from India, Vietnam and also trade union representatives from Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, South Korea, Hongkong and of course Australia, CITU delegation to the conference was headed by Com. Chitta Brata Mazumdar. Secretary CITU and Com. Tapan Sen, Chandran Pillai, Uma Maheswari were the other members of the delegation accompanied by a two member team from the cultural workers within the trade union movement consisting of Com. Gopal Adhikary and Amal Nayek.

Experiences Are Quite Common

The conference discussed in length the experience of the trade union delegates of the participating countries in their struggle against the onslaught on the rights and living of the workers and people engineered by the so called economic restructuring programmes based on liberalisation of the delegates reflected many common features. Widespread privatisation, opening of the national economy to multinationals, and foreign capital are identified as the common experience of most of the participating countries. Alongwith increasing domination of foreign capital in the concerned economies, the labour market is being sought to be totally deregulated through various measures and legislations. This resulted in severe erosion of trade union rights, virtual banning of strike, increased power of the employers to hire and fire workers and also to set the service condition of the workers unilaterally.

Most interesting to note is that while the potential of expanding the domestic market for the industrial commodities through improvement of purchasing power of common people remains unexplored and unexploited in almost all the countries, the respective Governments are being guided by the frenzy of reducing the labour cost in their desperate bid to attract foreign investment and also to find out export market. Improvement of the living condition of the common people has already been relegated from the agenda of economic programmes of the respective countries as a consequence of the economic restructuring programmes. In particular the experience of the trade unions from Malaysia, South Korea, Hong Kong and Thailand, the countries which are being projected by Indian rulers as the examples of success of the kind of economic programmes presently being followed by Indian Govt., clearly revealed that in those countries also, workers and common people are facing a regime of repression alongwith all round deterioration of standards of living and increasing domination of the foreign capital. Even in Australia policies of deregulation and free market mechanism has accelerated deindustrialisation and massive growth of foreign debt and also contributed towards fall in standard of living, severe inroad to the rights of the workers & common people, and increasing unemployment.

Eco Restructuring Abrogates/Threatens Democracy

The deliberation in the conference also revealed the alarming feature that the economic restructuring programmes besides affecting the economy of the respective countries carries with it increasing authori-

tarian inroad to the democratic rights of the workers and the common people, endangering the democratic political set-up wherever the same exist. Deliberation also noted with concern that the repression and abrogation of democratic rights of the common people by the authoritarian & dictatorial regimes in Indonesia, South Korea, Malaysia, Sri Lanka Philippines and South Africa have been further intensified by the introduction of New Economic restructuring policies at the dictate & guidance of international Financial Agencies. In fact based on this deliberation the conference noted in particular that "political condition developing in the region undermine the struggle for democracy & strengthen the military and authoritarian regimes which dominate some of the countries and destabilise the countries with traditions of democracy."

The Deliberation also reflected with revealing examples that the restructuring programmes based on privatisation and deregulation have losing jobs in thousands and also facing naked abuse of women's right and dignity by the employers.

Growing Resistance

The exposure of the experience of the trade unions from the participating countries also gave a revealing account of the rising working class struggle even in the countries with most oppressive regimes. Even in Indonesia there had been at least 200 strikes during last one and half year in different industrial sectors which marked the firm resolve and determination of the working class to confront the most oppressive & militarist regime of the country. The adamant challenge thrown by the Phillipine working class against the virtually militarised administration facing murders, kidnapping, killing in custody, through numerous strike actions, strike and other mass actions by South Korean workers in the background of Govt decree of virtual illegalisation of any trade union action in the country and direct involvement of military and armed forces in combating the striking workers, and similar actions in Thailand and Hong Kong and Malaysia, heroic and brave assertion of South African working class confronting the racist and apartheid regime, united strike actions in India are the glaring examples of the firm determination of the working class of the entire region not to give walkover to the arrogant offensive of capital against the labour and common people throughout the concerned areas.

Capitalism is not the Answer

The most notable feature of the discussions in the conference is that while deliberating on problems emanating out of the new offensive of capital both nationally and internationally in the background of collapse of socialist economies in Soviet Union and East-Europe, and also in the face of the attempt to Philosophise Capitalism to be the only viable system before the humanity on the part of internationally capitalist-class as a whole, the trade unions in the

field of struggle, minced no words in expressing unequivocally, that capitalism cannot be the solution to the problems of the workers and the mankind in general, and working class must direct their efforts to transform the system of exploitation. There are some confusion and also a kind of heart-searching among some of the delegation regarding the model of alternative economic system, emanating from the development of Soviet Union, East Europe and also from the recent experiments in the Chinese economy. But there was absolutely a clear realisation regarding the need for uprooting the capitalist system, the need for ending the system of exploitation of majority by a handful minority class, and also the need for establishment of a system for ensuring equitable distribution of wealth and fruits production in the society. The urgency for developing strong social movement by linking up the struggle of different social strata like students, youth, women and others with that of the working class was also demonstrated in the deliberation of the conference.

Pledge for Stronger Co-ordination and Solidarity

The conference also reiterated the need for developing permanent co-ordination among the trade union movement in the different countries of the region and stressed upon the need for developing a common strategies for struggle & mutual solidarity between the movement in different countries. Working class struggle must consolidate itself internationally to face the offensive of capital in the new situation of globalisation & integration of World economy—was the call of the conference.

Accordingly the conference decided to develop a system of co-ordination within the region to ensure regular exchange of experience and information between the countries of the region, carry on research work on the trend and character of the political, social and economic impact of economic restructuring and other allied aspects and publish newsletters, periodically to facilitate exchange of informations.

It has been decided that the next conference of the region would be held in November 1994 with a wider participation and the representatives of the trade unions South Africa, South Asia, South East & Eastern Asia and Australia would meet in the coordinating Committee to prepare for and organise the next conference of the trade unions in the Indian Ocean during the intervening period.

The Conference also adopted a 'Social Code of Conduct' highlighting the demands for basic trade union and human rights still being ignored in many countries in the region and also highlighting the aspects of solidarity between the movements of different countries against the offensive of multinational companies in the region.

Cultural Conference

Parallel to the trade union conference, a con-
(Cont'd on page 15)

CITUC Urges upon INTUC For Joint Movement in Public Sector

"M.K. Pandhe, General Secretary of CITUC in a letter to Shri G. Ramanujam, President of INTUC has drawn the attention of the latter to the one month ultimatum given to the Central Government Public Sector Workers and call to the workers to prepare for direct action from the INTUC's working committee meeting held at Bombay on 8th November 1992.

Com. Pandhe in his letter has appreciated the stand and decision of the INTUC and has proposed joint movement by all the secular trade unions to fight the menace of communalism and also to realise the demands like implementation of D.A. Committee recommendation, withdrawal of ban on wage negotiations, finalisation of contributory pension scheme and of course to fight the danger of privatisation, disinvestment of PSU shares, threat of closures and exit policy.

The full text of the letter is produced hereunder :

I had observed with keen interest the one month ultimatum given to the Govt. of India to finalise the burning issues of the 23 lakh public sector workers all over India by the meeting of the working committee of the INTUC held at Bombay on 8th November.

The resolution of the INTUC working committee on the functioning of the special tripartite committee after reviewing its non-implementation of the decision has correctly characterised that the 'Tripartite consultation has thus been turned into a mockery. It further expressed the feeling of the public sector workers in these words. The workers are greatly agitated and have become increasingly restive. The committee warns that any unilateral action by the Government without taking the workers into confidence will only lead to widespread industrial unrest....

Regarding the non-implementation of tripartite decision of payment of Rs. 2 per point from 1st January 1989 the INTUC Working Committee expressed its strong resentment and observed, "The Committee strongly demands that the tripartite decision on DA should be implemented within a month and further delay will have serious repercussions for which the Government of India will be solely responsible. The INTUC working committee had also called upon workers and their unions to get prepared for direct action if the DA issue is not settled by December 10 this year".

We were hoping that after the period of ultimatum is over the INTUC would propose some united movement of the public sector workers to achieve their demands. We were also hoping for a

plan of direct action as visualised by the INTUC.

As you are aware, apart from the question of DA the public sector workers are protesting against ban on wage negotiations and non-implementation of assurance that pension agreements would be given green signal. The question of privatisation, disinvestment and threat of closures are evoking strong resentment among the workers.

The shocking communal carnage in India had caused a severe set back to our movement and it is high time that all the secular trade unions should come together to fight this menace. Despite our earnest appeal to the INTUC to come together on this most pressing issue, we are extremely unhappy to note that the INTUC is not responding positively to our appeals for unity in common struggles.

Moreover, since the Govt of India has ignored the ultimatum given up by the INTUC and 5 weeks have already elapsed since it was given, I would urge upon you to agree to hold a joint meeting of the trade unions working in the public sector undertakings so that we can chalk out programme of movement including direct action as soon as possible as decided by the INTUC working committee meeting. In absence of this approach there is a possibility that the Govt of India may not take such ultimatum seriously in future. Public sector workers will not forgive us if we don't rise to the occasion.

With personal regards."

(From page 14)

ference of the cultural activists within the TU movement was held where cultural delegates from all the participating trade unions took part. The discussion in the conference covered a wide spectrum including the offensive of the culture of degeneration and selfishness sought to be popularised by the govt-run and also commercial media basically controlled by the multinational capital, and effort of the progressive cultural movement to combat the same. It has been identified by the conference that this offensive of culture of degeneration is in tune with economic restructuring programme going in the countries of the region which is basically designed to drag the working class and common people away from struggle and create confusion in the matter of outlook and approach. The conference also exchanged useful experiences of the cultural workers of the trade union movement regarding the subjects, and forms being utilised to carry the message of struggle to workers and the people and development of progressive cultural movement in the concerned countries.

Why Not Fight the Menace of Privatisation Unitedly

When a section of our press calls it Manmohanomics, it gives Dr Manmohan Singh a lot more credit than his due. It is now well known that the blue print for economic policies pursued by him as the Finance Minister of Rao Government is supplied by IMF-World Bank authorities, which Dr Singh, and for that matter the Govt of India, is required to act upto as condition for the million and billion dollar loans granted by these so called international financial institutions which are in reality wedded to the interest of multinational corporations based in the USA and other capitalist countries. Aware of the fact that none of the economic measures adopted by the Govt in terms of the economic policy, and none of those they propose to adopt, is in their interest or in the interest of the nation, the working class of India has launched a determined struggle against these policies, and after two industrial strikes, and the massive march to parliament by half a million workers, they are preparing for a more massive struggle involving all other sections of population besides the working class, namely the peasantry, the agricultural workers, the youth and the students, women and all. Almost the whole nation is going to rise against the IMF-World Bank dictated economic policies of Dr Manmohan Singh and Narasimha Rao Government.

As for the trade unions spearheading this struggle, they include all trade union centres in the country except the INTUC and the BMS. They also include independent national federations and confederations of workers and employees operating in various industries and Govt departments like Banks, Insurance, Railways Central and State Governments etc. Workers and employees of the public sector are in the forefront of the struggle.

As far as the INTUC is concerned they have, from the very beginning, been critical of the various aspects of this Govt's economic policies. Even though INTUC is organically linked with the ruling party, as a working class organisation it is next to impossible on its part to support the so called Exit Policy, the policy of retrenchment of thousands and lakhs of workers. The INTUC is voicing its protest not only against exit policy, but also against some other aspects of the economic policies which are detrimental to the interest of the working class. The trade unions who have been carrying on united struggle against the economic policy of the government are putting this question before the leadership of the INTUC: like us you, too, consider these policies detrimental to the working class interest, you, too, are criticising them. Why then will you not join us in a massive struggle against these policies? The INTUC cannot avoid answering the question long.

Privatisation on Railways & INTUC

It is widely known that the Govt is planning large scale privatisation of various items of railway work. The idea of the railway authorities is that they should be responsible for nothing beyond running of trains. They are anxious to shed off all ancillary activities to private sector. In fact they started the privatisation process long before the present economic policy was declared. They started handing over the track maintenance work to contractors several years back. They off loaded many production and maintenance work hitherto done by the Railways own workshops to private companies. With the declaration of the economic policy, the Railway Minister as a first step announced the decision to privatise the catering service which was so far being provided departmentally. He also announced the decision to privatise conservancy services on Railways. The authorities have already handed over parts of these services to private contractors. But in some places they have met with resistance from the workers and in a number of cases the workers have foiled their attempt. Generally the AIRF and the AIREC have been campaigning against the Govt plans of privatisation drastic staff reduction and attack on railway workers in various other forms. At local level workers following these organisation have taken part in physical resistance against privatisation attempt. Even workers having allegiance to NFIR (INTUC) have also joined them. In a recent issue of "The Indian Worker" the official organ of the INTUC, the veteran INTUC leader Keshare H. Kulkarni has published a long article on governments privatisation plan for the railways. Having enumerated all the various items of work that the railway authorities have planned to privatise and referring to a recent statement of the minister of State for Railways Shri Mallikarjun that the Railway Ministry is thinking of amending Indian Railways Act to enable private participation in railway activities Shri Kulkarni has remarked that "privatisation proposals are assuming more and more serious proportion". Shri Kulkarni added "Railways being a public utility service and the most vital infrastructure in the country's industrial and economic activities, privatisation of activities is more dangerous and even more harmful".

But awareness of the danger and harm involved in privatisation of railwaywork is not enough. It has little value unless it is followed by opposition in action. Railwaymen will naturally ask the INTUC leader: Why not fight against this danger unitedly with other trade unions on Railways who are already in struggle against this menace.

Conference of Women Workers in Beedi Industry

Vimal Ranadive

About one thousand women working in Beedi at Beawar in Rajasthan assembled at Bidami Devi Burad Dharmshala terrace on 30th November 1992 at 11 AM. The Beedi Ekta Union (CITU) expecting the gathering not more than 200, arranged a hall, lunch packets and other things. Since, the hall was full and hundreds of women remaining out of the hall, wanted to hear the speakers, Com. Vimal Ranadive, Secretary CITU was requested to discontinue her speech till the alternative arrangement, outside on the terrace, was completed. After 15 minutes or so women sat silently on the terrace and listened the speeches. Women from Ajmere in Beedi too came for the meeting. Anganwadi militant women were present.

The working conditions of the women in Beedi Industry have been worse. They are given the identity cards and pass books in the name of men, even though not living. Reasons? The big Beedi owners like Gajanand Beedi and others do not want to abide by the Beedi and Cigar Act which provide the provision of creche medical benefit, Provident Fund, Maternity Benefit and so on.

In Beawar, two types of Beedi is made by women. One is called as "Sadhi" and another is called "Nakhun". The Nakhun Beedi is supposed to be better made. As per the role the Sadi Beedi wage is Rs. 18.62 paise and 'Nakhun Beedi' at Rs. 22/- per one thousand, Unfortunately nobody is given this rate. Some years back, women were given only Rs. 9/- per one thousand and signatures taken but the actual payment was only Rs. 5/- to 6/- only. Women spoke in the meeting of about the "Chat" system which is ruling in every state. The "Chat" will be about 100-200 Beedis in thousands, Beedis are rejected under the name of "Bad Beedi", but it was sold in the market by the owner. Not only that women spoke about giving less Tobacco and leaves by the owners but expecting them to make beedi numbering 1000, out of this

Even after the deputation to the Beedi owners on these demands, the Beedi owners were not moved and continued to exploit women. They ultimately went on strike on 1st Feb. 1986 which continued upto 15th! As historic 'Bundh' was observed all over Beawar on this question, which resulted in the agreement between the Beedi owners and union.

Not only that, there was Dharna and fast by Com. Sharma, President of the union at the Secretariat, Jaipur for 6 days in June 1990.

It is not surprising, therefore that 10,000 Beedi workers in Beawar are getting Rs. 250/- as maternity Benefit and their children are getting education out of the Beedi welfare fund. It is because of such struggle a hospital for Beedi workers is opened and

the provident fund is cut out of the payment of 4000 workers.

Com. Vimal Ranadive spoke in detail congratulating the women on their struggles and gave instances about the extreme exploitation of women in Beedi, Anganwadi, Construction work and so on. Com. Anaraj Sharma in his speech spoke about the worsening conditions of women even after the struggle and appealed to unite under the banner of Red Flag. He also appealed that a statewide Beedi Union to be formed soon. The rally demanded among other things Rs. 35/- wage for 1000 Beedis, 20% Bonus, P.F. Rs. 1000/- and 90 days leave for Maternity Benefit, one copy of receipt of payment be given to the workers etc.

Com. Ravindra Shukla, the General Secretary specially mentioned about the 25th November rally and the huge participation of men and women from all stratas of the society. The rally by the sponsoring committee gave a slogan of Bharat Bandh against the economic and industrial Policies of the Government.

Com. Jagjivan Lal, President of Beedi union, R.C. Gupta, LIC and other representatives also spoke congratulating the women workers who joined such a magnificent rally.

Com. Biren Datta

The CITU mourns the death of Com. Biren Datta, the former General Secretary of the Tripura State Committee of CITU and a veteran leader of communist and left movement in Tripura. He was earlier the Minister of Labour in the Left Front Govt. in Tripura and was also a member of the Parliament. He was till his death a member of the Tripura State Committee of CPI (M). His service to the working class and communist movement will ever be remembered.

Com. Ganesh Ghosh

The CITU mourns the death of Com. Ganesh Ghosh the veteran freedom fighter and leader of communist movement. He was a trusted lieutenant of Surya Sen, the legendary leader of Chittagong armoury raid, and had to spend many years in the Andaman Cellular jail, where he embraced communism. After release, he devoted his entire life for advancement of communist movement. For several terms he was a member of West Bengal Legislative Assembly and was also a member of Parliament. He was for quite some time a member of West Bengal State Committee of the Communist Party of India (Marxist). His image will ever remain bright in the memory of the countrymen and the working class.

International Struggles

Train and Air France Employees Strike :

Train workers walked off the job on 15th December paralysing service across France to protest the conviction of two colleagues they say were scapegoats in a 1988 crash that killed 55 people. In another job action, Air France employees went on strike over the airlines plans to lay off thousands of people by the end of next year. Flights were reduced by about 50 per cent. On Paris train lines, traffic came to a complete halt on several major routes, leaving major stations jammed with frustrated travellers and commuters. The RER commuter line was also affected. The government-run SNCF rail company said service was zero and completely interrupted on suburban lines from three major Paris stations. Traffic was also shut down or drastically cut back in Marseille, Lyons, Bordeaux and other cities.

Transport Workers Strike at Manila :

Police arrested 36 jeep drivers who urged other drivers on 17th December to join a one day strike to protest a pending electricity rate increase and plans to phase out passenger jeeps from Manila's streets. The one day strike was to protest a plan by the state-run National Power Corporation to increase power rates by 18 centavos (72 cents) per kilowatt hour effective from December 26. The strike also was to oppose a government plan to phase out the jeeps, or jeepneys, the principal means of public transport.

Slump in Euro Car Industry :

Recession and a slump in car sales are hitting the traditional giants of the car industry in Europe, biting into profits and threatening thousands of jobs. On 17th December US car maker Ford announced more than 2,600 job cuts in Europe, while German companies Daimler Benz AG, Volkswagen AG (VW) and MAN issued gloomy statements on the outlook for the German car industry. "We are entering a crisis," Mr Dieter Ullsperger, VW's head of finance, told reporters.

Europe's Car makers face a host of problems even before they confront competition from Japanese "transplants"—factories set up in Europe to get round European Community (EC) import quotas. Germany's car makers, saddled with some of the highest costs in the world, have to contend with an unexpectedly sharp slowdown in the economy which has choked domestic demand.

VW has trimmed its domestic workforce around 5,000 this year as part of a planned reduction of 12,500 by the end of 1994. Mercedes-Benz intends to cut its domestic workforce by 12,500 by the end of this year and further cuts are planned in 1993.

In Paris, PSA Peugeot Citroen chairman Jacques Calvet said new car sales in 17 European countries were expected to fall more than four per cent in 1993. "It is not a very easy 1993 in front of us," Mr. Calvet said, adding however, that he was relatively optimistic for Citroen.

Last month Swedish car maker AB Volvo

announced the loss of 4,000 jobs and the closure of two key factories, while Saab-Scania AB said it was making 2,000 workers redundant. Ford said it aimed to shed 1,180 jobs in Britain by April 1993 and 1,500 in Germany. It has a total European workforce of 97,400 including headquarters and development centres.

British Petroleum Cuts Jobs :

British Petroleum announced on 15th December that it would cut further 9,000 jobs worldwide by 1995, increasing an earlier figure for expected job losses to a total of 20,500, or 20 per cent of the workforce. The cuts are in addition to previously announced plans to lose 11,500 jobs by early 1993.

The job losses are part of a cost cutting drive launched by Mr. David Simon when he became chairman this year. The company aims to cut \$ 1 billion from annual operating costs by 1995.

Unemployment on Rise in UK

The UK unemployment figures are likely to show a rise of 35,000 in November from October, and fears of joblessness are likely to have prompted another slowdown in the underlying rate of October average earnings, according to an average of forecasts in a Knight-Ridder Financial news survey of 26 economics teams, reports KRF. The unemployment rose by 24,200 in October and 32,300 in September.

The underlying average earnings in the 12 months through October meanwhile, slowed to 5.25 per cent, compared with 5.5 per cent in the year through September and 5.75 per cent in the 12 months through August.

Campaign for National Unity

The national committee set up by the December 19 convention of secular parties and mass organisations held its first meeting at New Delhi on December 26. The meeting was presided over by Shri I.K. Gujral. It formally constituted the committee for the "Campaign For National Unity" (Rashtriya Ekta Abhiyan) consisting of eleven secular opposition parties, various mass organisations and concerned citizens such as Kuldip Nayyar and Bishop Paulose Mar Gregorius.

The Committee chalked out the plans for the nationwide mass campaign to be held in the month of January. Apart from the mass rallies to be organised in different parts of the country in the second half of January, the committee decided to organise a mass signature campaign on a pledge to fight communalism. Fifty million signatures are to be collected in this campaign.

The committee decided that on January 30, the anniversary of Gandhiji's martyrdom, a mass pledge taking campaign will be organised all over the country at 11.00 a.m. The committee also decided to bring out a number of posters and stickers for the intensive campaign to begin on January 1, 1993.

Glorious Victory of Chittivalasa Jute Mill Workers

The indefinite strike launched since 2nd September, 1992 ended with a glorious victory. The Government order stating that "terms and conditions as applicable to the workers of Chittivalasa Jute Mills before the operation of the settlement dated 12.8.92 shall be restored", led to scrapping the conspired settlement arrived between Congress Karmikasangam and the management. This settlement had forfeited the existing benefits of the workers like sick leave, DA, triculture change piece rate, work loads etc.

A victory rally was organised on 4th December, 1992 at Chittivalasa jointly by CITU and AITUC and also a public meeting was conducted after the rally and it was then decided to resume duties from 5th December, onwards unanimously. Com. Ch. Narasinga Rao, Com. V. Ajay Kumar and Com. C.N. Reddy spoke on behalf of CITU. The CITU leaders appealed to the employees to be prepared for a state wide agitation for the implementation of West Bengal Jute Wage settlement in Andhra Pradesh i.e., increase in pay of Rs. 90/- per month and 0.10 DA increase per every point of C.P.I. The mass meeting was attended by more than three thousand workers.

As AITUC had not come forward for joint agitation, CITU had independently called for signature campaign, rally to district collector's office at Visakhapatnam, mass dharna, jail bhara etc in September and October 1992. Later AITUC joined in the joint agitation programmes and continued the agitation.

The state level union leader met at Visakhapatnam and decided to conduct a mass rally at Hyderabad on 23rd November 1992, a convention at Vizianagaram and statewide one day strike against the lockouts of Chittivalasa and Eluru. All the programmes were conducted with great success. The state government which pressured the unions to call off the strike understood at last that unless and until the earlier settlement be scrapped, the workers will not call off the strike. Hence the government was forced to notify scrapping the earlier settlement.

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down the image of India in the entire world.

The Sponsoring Committee calls upon the working class to defeat the machinations of the communal forces to create disturbances all over India and strive to maintain peace and harmony so that unity and integrity of the country is preserved.

M.K. Pandhe
General Secretary CITU

M.S. Krishnan
President, AITUC

V. Tiagi
Secretary, HMS

Abani Roy
Secretary, UTUC

Pritish Chanda
President, UTUC (LS)

D.D. Shastri
Vice President, TUCC

Swapan Mukherjee
General Secretary, AICCTU

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you find no differences in the political circumstances in Kashmir and Ayodhya?

Let us brush aside these apparent shortcomings in your profile and assume for the time being that you (God forbid!) become the Prime Minister of India. Will you then, live up to your party ideology? Will you, as Prime Minister, disallow the reconstruction of the demolished masjid? We keep hearing you talk about the wrong policies of the government on this issue and their having been on a suicidal path. What would you have done, Mr. Advani? Would you have been a Hindu Prime Minister, ignoring the largest minority in the country? Would you declare India a Hindu state? What then, would you do about the millions of Indian Muslims? Will you snatch away their very identity? They have been Indians, only Indians, for longer than they can remember. What happens to them?

At a time when the country is stumbling into the 21st century, you have thrown us back another 50 years. At a time when the country is facing problems on the economic and national front, when the need of the hour is a concentrated effort on the part of every single Indian, you have had audacity to introduce as base an element as communal politics into the scene. And you call yourself an Indian? Worse, a Hindu?

You have had the temerity to ruin our tomorrow for the sake of your today. We are India's future and we did not want the Babri Masjid to be demolished. What gave you the right to destroy our dreams of tomorrow? What gave you the right to shatter the idealist illusions of the millions who sit poised to shape India's destiny?

What gave you the right, Mr. Advani? Do you have an answer for us?

Regards,

Varsha Venkatesh
Poonam Narang

Calcutta, December 12, 1992

OECD Report

Feeble World Recovery to Swell Jobless Ranks in 1993

Nearly 34 million people in the industrial world will be unemployed by the end of 1993 as high debts and low confidence hamper economic recovery, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) said on 16th December. "On balance, the negative risk seem greater in the near term, particularly in Europe and Japan," the report said. Two per cent growth will be too slow to stop an inexorable in unemployment. A total of 33.8 million people, or 8.3% of the workforce of OECD nations, could be without a job by the end of 1993, up from 32.3 million, or 7.9%, in 1992.

Eleven of the OECD's member countries would have double-digit jobless rates, compared with just four in 1990. And the OECD issued a grim warning: "Many of those who become unemployed over the next two years will drift into long-term unemployment, with all that entails in terms of erosion of skills and moral and financial hardship."

The true picture is probably even worse because people who have been forced to accept part time jobs or who have given up looking for work are not counted in the unemployment totals.

United States: The projection for US economic growth was only slightly higher than the 2.3 per cent growth rate projected by the 24-nation OECD in late November.

Japan: Japan's economic slowdown, now nearly two years old, may have stopped as the government maintains, but recovery will be long and slow. The OECD report says that recovery will far from the economic miracle of the late 1980s, when Japan's economy grew at an average 4.7 per cent.

Germany: The OECD said German economic growth will remain low in 1993. It predicted pan-German gross national product (GNP) growth of 1 per cent at market prices in 1993 after 1.2 per cent this year. Last month the federal government's council of economic advisers forecast zero growth for western Germany in 1993.

Asia: The dash for growth in the so-called Dynamic Asian Economies (DAEs) has slowed but they will go on benefiting from faster growth in China, the OECD said, China has jumped in the world's trading league recently, taking more than 10 per cent of trade in clothing, footwear and other goods. Its exports of more sophisticated consumer durables also appear to have expanded rapidly.

France: Growth will to the European Community (EC) average in 1993 but a rise in GDP of 1.6 per cent will not prevent unemployment from rising to 10.9 per cent in the second half of the year from 10.4 per cent now.

Italy: GDP growth will slow to 0.8 per cent in 1993 from 1.2 per cent this year, weighed down by the government's belt-tightening measures.

Britain: Inflation will rise in the near term after sterling's devaluation but is expected to recede again

given the slack in economy.

Canada: Export-driven growth will reach three per cent in 1993 but unemployment will remain high at more than 11 per cent and the current account deficit will stay very high.

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equity participation in existing state-owned companies like ONGC, OIL are under active participation of the government". It has further been reported that the representatives of Nomura have already visited India to make a study for the prospect of equity participation. Thus the danger of foreign companies taking control of ONGC and OIL through equity participation is perhaps not a mere threat but an ominous reality.

Compared to the international market price, the cost of our indigenous crude oil and other products are cheaper. For instance for per tonne of crude oil the ONGC and OIL get a mere Rs. 968 only whereas for per tonne of imported crude oil the country pays more than Rs 4,000 per tonne at the present international price. Again the price of petrol in India is more or less 50 US cent per litre whereas in some foreign countries it is 91.1 at Japan, 99.2 at Italy, 93.8 at Denmark, Uganda 133.1 and Brazil 320.1.

Now with the transfer of the ownership of our oil industry to the foreign oil companies and bestowing the authority and right for fixing the prices of various products under the free pricing mechanism according to the gospel of 'globalisation' and 'market economy', what is going to be the price of petroleum products under the new private regime is a matter of serious concern. In this connection it should be always kept in mind that any increase in the price of petrol, diesel etc. would have a cascading effect of pushing up the prices of nearly every products of mass consumption.

Therefore, the oil and petroleum policy of the Government under its New Economic Policy will put an end to the cherished goal of attaining self reliance in oil industry. This in turn would have its affect on the industrial development as well. The countrymen will have to bear the burnt of apprehended spurt in the price on all front. The employees of the public sector oil and petroleum units are exposed to the danger of retrenchment due to heavy shrinkage of activities. The so called voluntary retirement scheme has already been launched by the oil companies which are in no way comparable to the so called sick public sector units.

When the ruling party is surrendering the economic sovereignty of the country, the responsibility falls on the countrymen in general and the working class in particular to come forward to defend the nation from the onslaught of the imperialist forces. The need of the hour is to launch united counter offensive by all the patriotic, democratic, secular and progressive forces. The trade union movement in the oil and petroleum industry will have to come together irrespective of affiliations to launch a joint movement to defeat the anti-national oil and petroleum policy of the Narasimha Rao Government.

Oil and Petroleum Industry : Worst Victim of New Economic Policy

Swadesh Dev Roy

The saga of our public sector in the oil and petroleum industry is very colourful one. Under the public sector the crude oil production reached to 33 millions tonnes from a meagre 2 million tonnes per annum at the time of independence. While in 1960-61 the production of petroleum products in the country was only 4,50,000 tonnes, with the passage of time the production has been pushed up to 3,40,87,000 tonnes in 1990. During the seventh plan period ONGC exceeded the target from 143,64 million tonnes of crude oil.

Not long ago oil and petroleum products used to be 35% of the total import bill of the country. But due to the increased efficiency of our PSUs in the field the import bill had come down to only 13% and the level of self-sufficiency went up to 73%. Thus it can be safely said that the performance of our PSUs in the field had been par excellence.

The successful journey of the public sector in the oil sector came across many hurdles both from foreign and indigenous vested interests. The imperialist forces were always keen to see that India does not develop oil industry in the public sector and had been pressurising the government through various means. It has been said that 'Nehru was not only under pressure of his cabinet colleagues, but also that of the World Bank, whose president, Eugene Black told him in January 1961: "Pull back your on-going public sector policy on oils".'

The role of public sector in the economy of the country started major erosion with the pronouncement of Industrial Policy statement in 1980 by the Indira Gandhi Government. The same was further accentuated with the induction of Rajiv Gandhi as the Prime Minister. All these steps were taken by the Central Government in fulfilment of the conditionalities attached to 1981 IMF loan.

From early eighties news of government's intention to allow private sector to enter in our oil sector started appearing in the press. The multinational companies who have been looking for such a situation swamped into action. ONCC and Oil India started off-loading various jobs to the private sector. On the other hand activities of ONGC and OIL also came under restrictions at the instance of the govt. The Business standard dated 17th August 1985 reported "The Union Government's decision to have a refinery in the private sector also amounts to a major change in policy". The advocates of privatisation started pleading for the 'need to privatise oil sector.'

The New Economic Policy of the Narasimha Rao Government has come as a bonanza for the multinational companies to materialise their long

cherished intention to invade the oil fields of the country. Under the New Economic Policy the Govt. is announcing concessions to the foreign oil companies one after another at very quick successions. The result of such concessions are going to be so serious that ultimately the country might have to depend on foreign companies almost solely for our oil and petroleum requirement. The extent government has surrendered to the pressure of the imperialists is evident from the audacious statement of the executives of a multinational oil companies which said—"as a first step towards liberalisation in the oil sector, the Petroleum Ministry should put an end to the monopoly of the public sector undertakings and should decanalise imports and exports of petroleum products." Thus it is clear that the dangerous oil policy which are being put to practice by the government is really formulated at the dictates of IMF-World Bank.

Before the current spate of economic liberalisation, the multinational companies were eager to enter our oil sector under terms and conditions which were not totally at the cost of our public sector and not so much dangerous as of now. But with the induction of the NEP the foreign oil companies are taking undue advantage and rather imposing more and more dangerous conditions for their participation in the oil sector. The bankruptcy of the govt. is so much that it is not content by extending invitations to the multinational companies to take control of our oil economy. A team of top bureaucrats consisting of the petroleum Secretary himself and ONGC Board Member incharge of oil exploration went to USA, to woo oil majors to participate in the development of discovered oilfields." The Government tried to maintain a low profile about the visit saying that same was for holding 'routine' discussions with the World Bank. But the officials had no hesitation to say that the visit is aimed at explaining the liberalised hydrocarbon policy of the government to the foreign companies.

During the initial stage of discussion for inviting the foreign companies in the oil sector it was contemplated that these companies would act more or less as sub-contractors of our public sector units in the field. But with the introduction of New Economic Policy the government has been offering more and more concessions to the foreign companies nakedly against the interest of the nation.

In 1986-87 the terms offered was on profit sharing basis alongwith the condition that foreign companies would be allowed to drill new areas at their own risk, meaning thereby that discovered fields would be left to be developed by our public sector units only. But immediately after the announcement

of the NEP the Government decided in November 1991 that discovered oil and gas fields would be offered to the foreign companies for development and exploration of crude oil and gas.

Thus fruit of the expertise of public sector and entire painstaking process of discovering oil fields have just been gifted to multi-national companies and the risk which was supposed to be taken by them for such discovery has been eliminated by the Subservient Government.

In the meantime the Government has already offered 43 discovered oil and gas fields for development by foreign oil companies. According to the terms and conditions offered by the Government, "the foreign companies will be allowed a majority stake in joint venture companies. In case of a joint venture incorporated in India, upto 51 percent equity can be contributed by the bidding company. In case of unincorporated joint venture the structure will be in the form of a production sharing contract with the bidding company taking a 60 percent interest in the venture." The fields offered include Bombay offshore: Mukta, Panna, Mid and South Tipti. onshore: Nagaur in Rajasthan, Kharsung in Arunachal Pradesh, Digboi-EDR, Bogapani, Borbil, Teping, Tinali, Sarjini, and Dhoiya in Assam, Ravva Krishna-Godavari offshore, Cavery offshore, Andaman offshore, Gujarat onshore etc.

In this connection it must be noted that for discovering these fields the ONGC and OIL have employed its own skill and efforts. Further, crores of rupees has also been spent for the same and now the government under its NEP is handing over these national natural wealth to the multinational companies. On production of crude oil and gas the country will have to purchase its own natural wealth from the multinationals and that too at international price. Commenting on this decision experts have registered their strong protest. It has been said that—"ONGC scientists and others have worked hard on compiling the relevant data for commercial exploitation of these fields. Massive resources have been invested in prognostication and exploration. Why is the Government not restricting these fields to only Indian Public Sector Companies? The more pertinent question is: Is India needlessly sharing profits from its oil and gas assets with foreign companies?" The Association of Scientific and Technical officers of ONGC in a memorandum to the Prime Minister had said that it is 'totally opposed' to the decision to handover the proven oil fields to private parties. It has been opined that the multinational companies are not expected to honestly follow the norms and regulations of intricate reservoir mechanism and would go for reckless production beyond the permissible withdrawal rates out of profit motivation which would cause immense damage to the oil fields. The latest development is that the Hyundai Heavy Industries of South Korea has been given contract for the Neelam development project of ONGC.

The multi-national oil companies have of late

pressuring the Govt. that not only the drilling of crude and gas should be opened up to them but at the same time they should be allowed entry in refining, transportation, pricing and marketing areas also.

In tune with the demands of the foreign oil companies the World Bank also mounted pressure on the government. Thus it is noticed that the memorandum on economic policies for 1992-93 submitted to the IMF by the Central Government in last June it has promised new pricing system to do away with the 'deficit' in the Oil Co-ordination Committee (OCC) account. Now it has been reported that Union cabinet has cleared a new petroleum pricing formula.

After freeing the pricing control from the Government the next step is taken to open the refining work to the private companies. It has been reported that "In a major liberalisation initiative the Government has decided to allow private participation not only in the development of discovered oil and gas fields but also in the setting up of three refineries, one each in the eastern, central and western regions."

The next point is marketing. It has been reported that the government has decided to allow private companies, both Indian and foreign to own pipelines for crude oil and petroleum products transportation. This step is considered towards opening up of the marketing of crude oil and products to the private sector. It would also facilitate private sector oil refineries to transport crude from the oil fields or from the Cargo, in case it is imported, to the refinery site and subsequently transport the products to the marketing points. That the marketing activities of oil industry is going to be largely privatised is further evident from the fact that plan allocation for the marketing sector has been reduced from Rs. 7,000 crores to Rs. 940 crores only.

Thus under the New Economic and Industrial Policies of the Narasimha Rao Government the oil industry is in the process of fullscale privatisation. It is beginning with handing over of the discovered oil and gas fields and would end in refining, pricing, transportation and marketing.

Apart from privatising the forthcoming activities of the oil industry in all sphere, the existing public sector units of the oil industry are also privatised through the backdoor in the name of disinvestment. 20% equity has already been disinvested from a number of public sector oil and petroleum units. The next round of disinvestment is also in the advanced process. But the most alarming point is that Government is considering the question of allowing foreign companies to have equity participation in the existing PSU units of oil industry. The Business standard dated 14.7.92 has reported that "In an assessment of its future role and prospects conveyed to the Nomura Research Institute of Japan recently the Commission (ONGC) has said "foreign

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Com BTR's Birth Anniversary Observed

The Centre of Indian Trade Unions observed the 88th Birth Anniversary of Com BTR on 19th December 1992. A mass meeting was organised by the Central CITU at Constitution Club, New Delhi on the day. The meeting was presided over by Com. E. Balanandan. Various other central trade union leaders were also invited to speak on the occasion.

Speaking on the occasion Com. Harkishan Singh Surjeet, General Secretary of the CPI(M) recalled the revolutionary activities of Com BTR. He narrated the glorious contribution made by Com BTR in the development of the communist and trade union movement in the country. His guidance for class struggle and united movement of the working class laid the foundation and growth of the CITU and the trade union movement in the country. His repeated warnings against economism and the divisive and communal forces served as the beacon light for the working class movement struggling for socialism and to preserve the unity and integrity of the country. He exhorted on the workers to emulate the path shown by Com. BTR and work assiduously according to the demands of the present situation, when the unity and integrity of the country and the secular state is being challenged by the communal forces represented by the RSS, VHP, BJP, etc.

Among the other trade union leaders who spoke on the occasion were S N Rao of INTUC, B D Joshi of AITUC, D D Shastri of TUCC, K. Ashok Rao of PWTUC and S.B. Bhardwaj, General Secretary, Delhi State CITU. They recalled the activities of Com. BTR during the freedom struggle and the contributions made by him in the development of the trade union movement in the country. They paid glowing tributes to his revolutionary activities.

M K Pandhe, General Secretary of the CITU narrated the activities of Com. BTR and the guidelines given by him on various vital issues concerning the working class. In this respect he recalled his guidelines on the question of fight against communalism and the divisive forces, organising the workers of the unorganised sector, championing the cause of the working women, building up fighting alliance with the peasantry, on the question of trade union unity and formation of a confederation and of the international task of the working class and defending the question of socialism.

Summing up the deliberations Com. E. Balanandan paid glowing tributes to Com. BTR and his political acumen. He explained how Com. BTR's political and ideological guidance led the workers towards class struggle and fight against right and left deviations and reformist tendencies in the trade union movement. He recalled how Com. BTR warned against the rise of communal and other divisive forces which are being egged on by the imperialists with a view to dismember the country. He recalled how Com. BTR repeatedly exhorted upon the workers to fight against these forces to safeguard the unity of the working class and the unity and integrity of the country. He further recalled how Com. BTR emphasised on the international task of the working class to uphold the banner of proletarian internationalism and struggle for socialism, peace and democracy. He said that the best tributes can be made to



Com. BTR only by practically following his guidelines at the present juncture of the national and international situation.



Delhi March For Communal Harmony

A big rally was organised jointly by the Left parties viz CPI(M), CPI, FB and RSP alongwith, JD and the mass organisations at Delhi on 22nd December (photo above). The rally was attended by thousands from the CITU, AITUC, UTUC, TUCC, HMS and the organisations of students, youth, women, kisan and agricultural workers. Other professional workers also attended the rally. The procession started from the Red Fort and marched through the busy areas of Daryaganj, Delhi Gate, Asaf Ali Road, etc. and culminated at the Ramlila Grounds where the public meeting was held. Thousands of banners and placards appealing for communal harmony were carried by the marchers. They shouted slogans denouncing the RSS, BJP, VHP and Bajrang Dal for demolishing the Babri Masjid in a planned way. The special feature of the rally was that it was attended by a large contingent of women and young people. The rally was addressed by the leaders of the four Left parties and the JD. The rally pledged to implement the programme chalked out by the anti-communal convention organised by the four Left parties and their mass organisations at Delhi on

19th December and to carry forward the struggle to isolate the RSS, VHP, BJP and other communal forces to safeguard the unity and integrity of the country and the secular Indian state.

Book Post