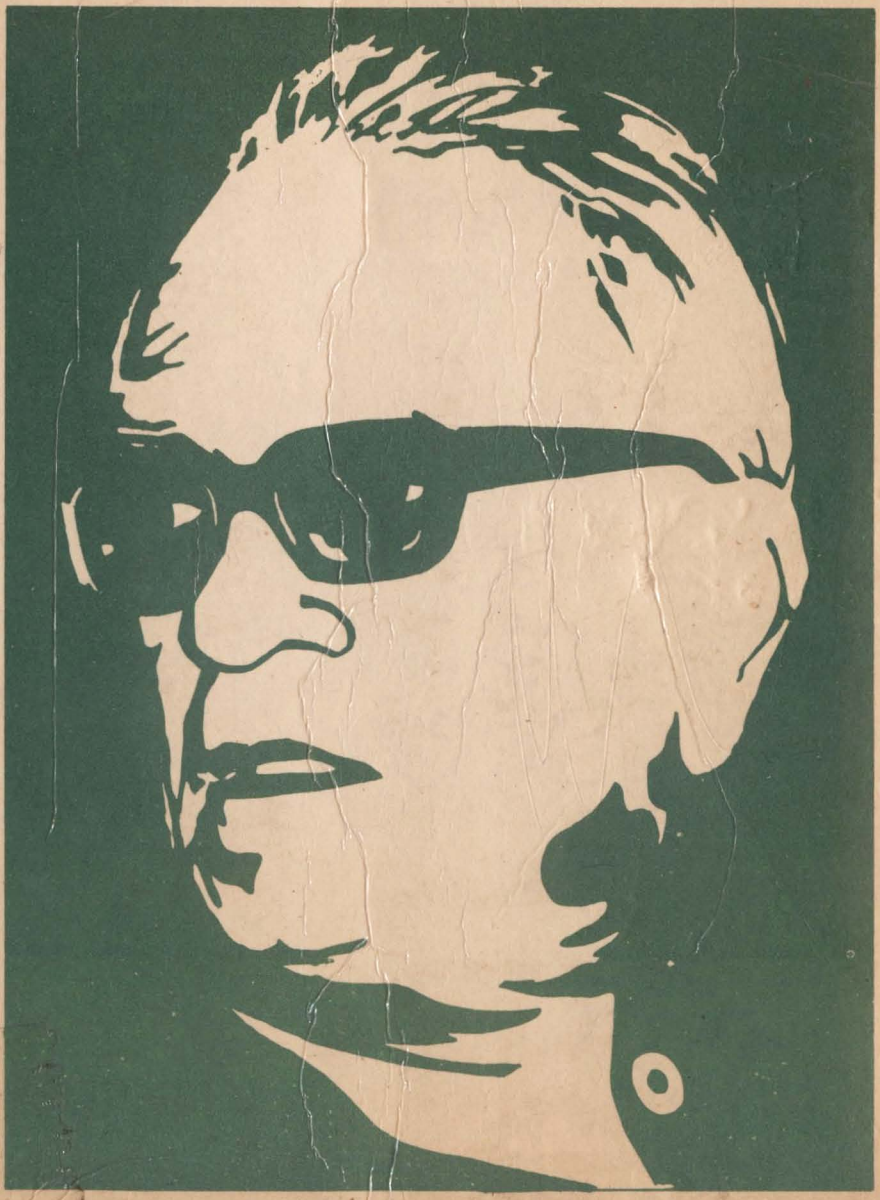
B T Ranadive

ON

TRADE UNION MOVEMENT



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CONTENTS

1. Unemployment and The Working Class 1
2. Make The National Integration Day A Success 13
3. Presidential Address, Working Committee Meeting, New Delhi, September 24-26, 1986 20
4. 11th Congress of The World Federation of Trade Unions — An outstanding Event 40
5. Greetings To The Working Class of Soviet Union 55
6. On To 21st January 61
7. Address To The Orissa CITU Conference, 9-12 December, 1986 64
8. 21st January Strike 73
9. Presidential Address, Working Committee Meeting, Calcutta, February 6 & 7, 1987 76
10. Greetings to West Bengal and Kerala 84
11. May Day To May Day 88
12. Presidential Address, 6th Conference at Bombay, May 18-22, 94
13. The Sixth Conference of CITU 117
14. Save The Peasants 127
15. Greetings to the Peasants, Agricultural Workers and Youths 131
16. Greetings to The Working Class of Soviet Union 135
17. Inaugural Speech, All India Coal Workers Federation Third Conference, 18-20 November 1987 141
18. Presidential Address, Working Comittee Meeting, Chandigarh, December 1-3, 1987 155
19. The Indomitable PR 171
20. On To 15th March 177
21. World Capitalist Crisis 181
22. Concluding Speech, General Council Meeting, Calcutta, March 31-April, 1986 210
23. "History of Railway TU Movement" 224
24. The Successful 15th March Bandh 232

25. May Day and Immediate Task 237
26. Questions Useful for The P & T Workers 243
27. Forward to Further Victories 248
28. A New Step Forward in Trade Union Unity 251
29. Express Solidarity With The Peasant Masses 255
30. Presidential Address, General Council Meeting of CITU, Dhanbad, Sep. 23-25, 1988 260
31. Anniversary Of October Revolution 278
32. On The Trade Union Movement in Research Institutions 283
33. Comrade Gorbachev's Visit 296
34. Contemporary Challenges and The Trade Union Movement 300
35. Speech To The Jute Workers Conference in Calcutta 309
36. Central Budget 318
37. The Working Class and The Peasantry 323
38. Sino-Soviet Summit 328
39. The Mighty Working Class Protest 330
40. The Great French Revolution 334
41. Presidential Address, Working Committee Meeting of CITU, Kalyani, September 4-6, 1989 344
42. Address to the Tamil Nadu State Conference of CITU 371
43. Forward to the Election Struggle 381
44. The Ninth General Elections 386
45. Right To Work And Unemployment Problem 391
46. Unpublished Tape-Recorded Memoirs 400
47. Inaugural Speech in the 5th Conference of the All India Plantattion Workers' Federation Held at Kalpetta Waynad Dt. Kerala on April 1986 434
48. Impact of Religion On Our Present Day Society 445
49. Fight Unitedly For the Cause of the Indian Working Women 456
50. Message on Publication of Working Women Bulletin 460
51. May Day Greetings 462
52. President CITU Greets Women on May Day 463
53. On Working Women 464
54. Last Message to Durgapur Steel Plant Workers Conference 468
55. A Youth Has to be a Rebel in Every Sense 470
Extracts from Com. B.T.Ranadive's Address to 3rd DYFI, All India Conf. at Madras in Dec. 1987)

Foreword

The remaining part of Com. B. T. Ranadive's writings from the period 1985-86 till his death on 6th April 1990 is being published in this volume.

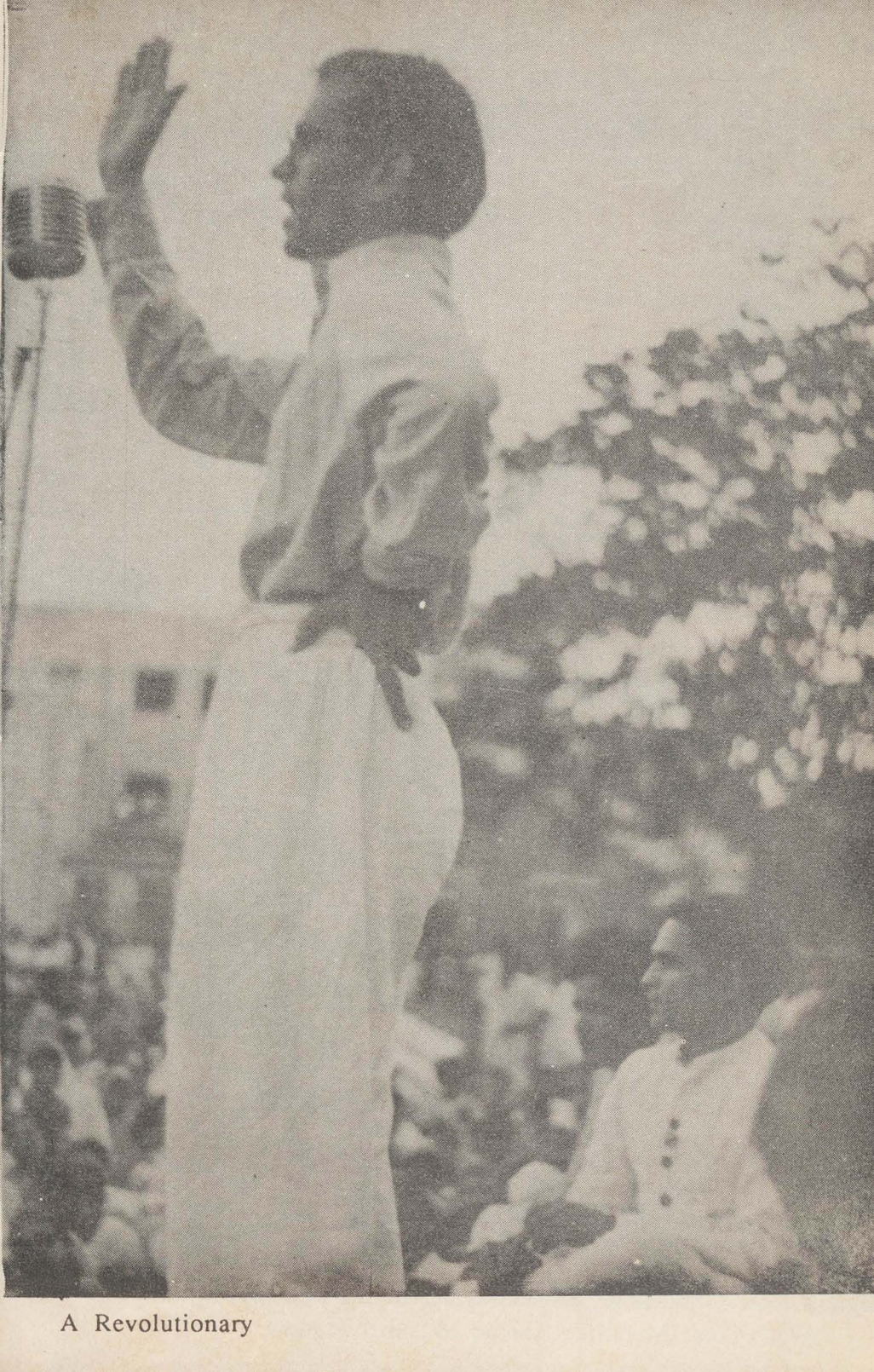
The readers will remember that the first volume of Com. BTR's writing's contained his articles from 1970 to 1980. It was earlier decided to bring out the second volume with his writings upto 1990 but as it would have become voluminous the Editorial Board had decided to bring out his writings from 1980 to 1990 in 2 volumes.

There are many more articles which we would have lored to include in these volumes but inspite of our sincere efforts we are sad that we could not.

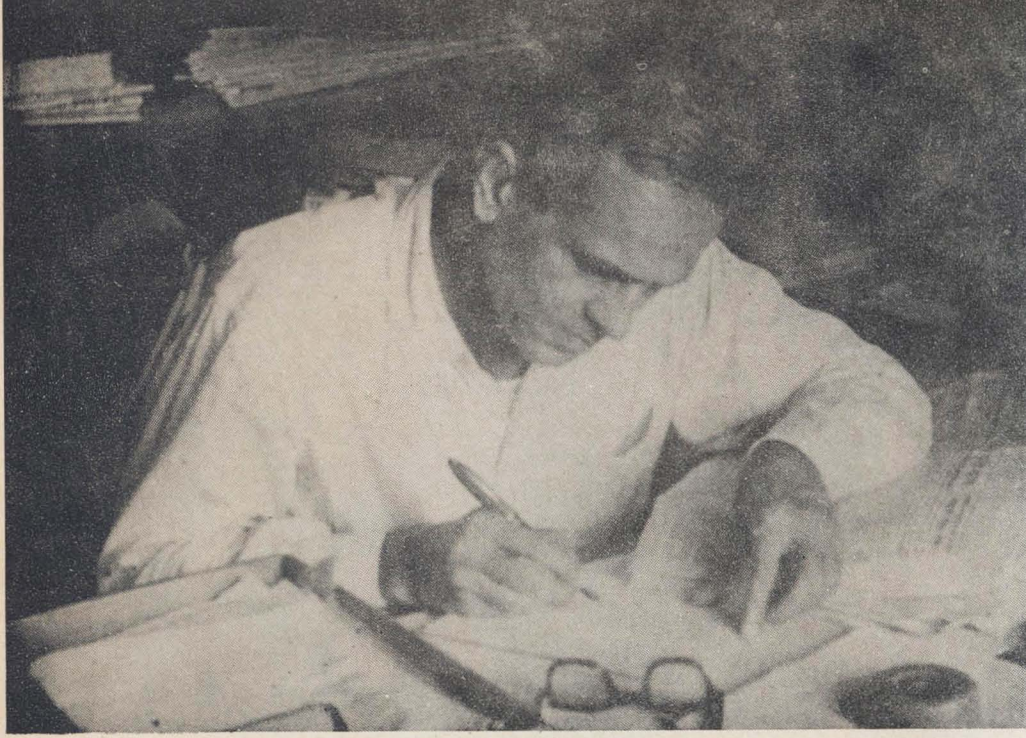
The Editorial Board has a desire to bring out another volume containing his writings from 1928 onwards. We hope we shall be able to include many more articles which we could not gather.

The Editorial Board profusely thanks all those comrades who worked hard in compiling the articles and bringing out this volume.

December 1991 **Editorial Board**



A Revolutionary



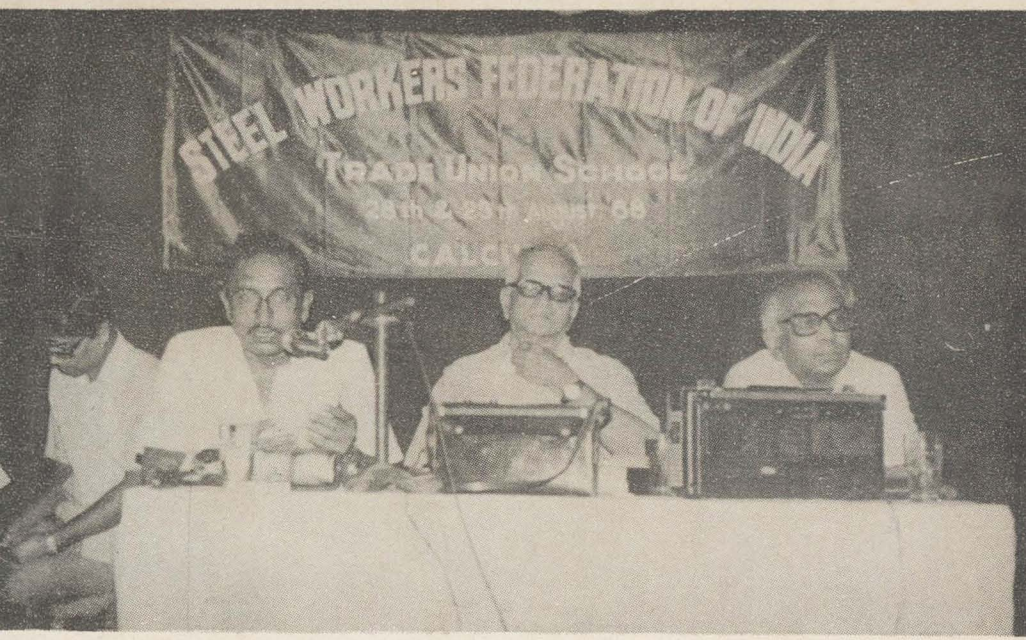
Deeply Engrossed in work

With Com. Muzaffar Ahmed, & other leaders

At an early age

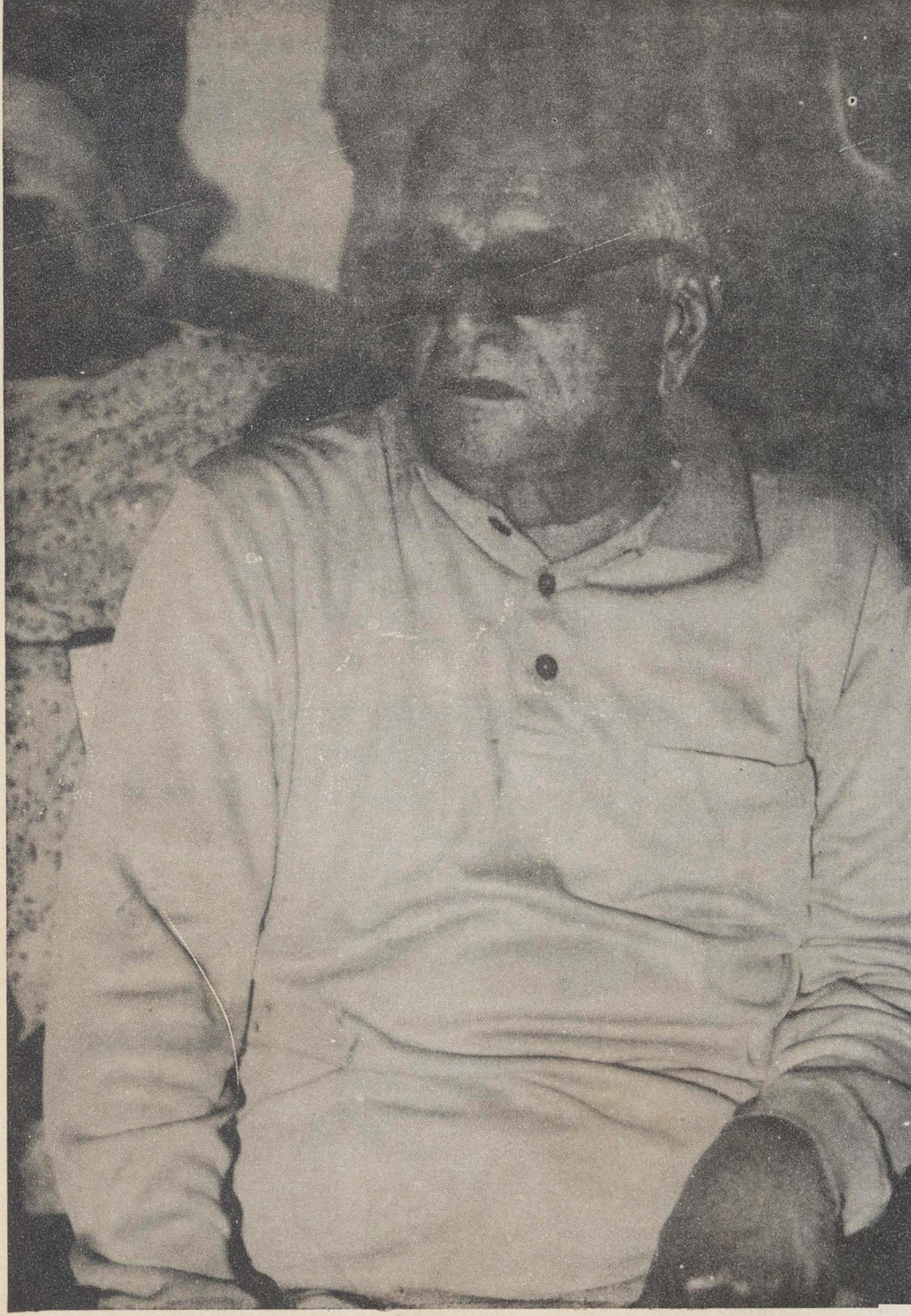
With wife Vimal

Youthful BTR



During a TU School

Addressing CITU Meeting



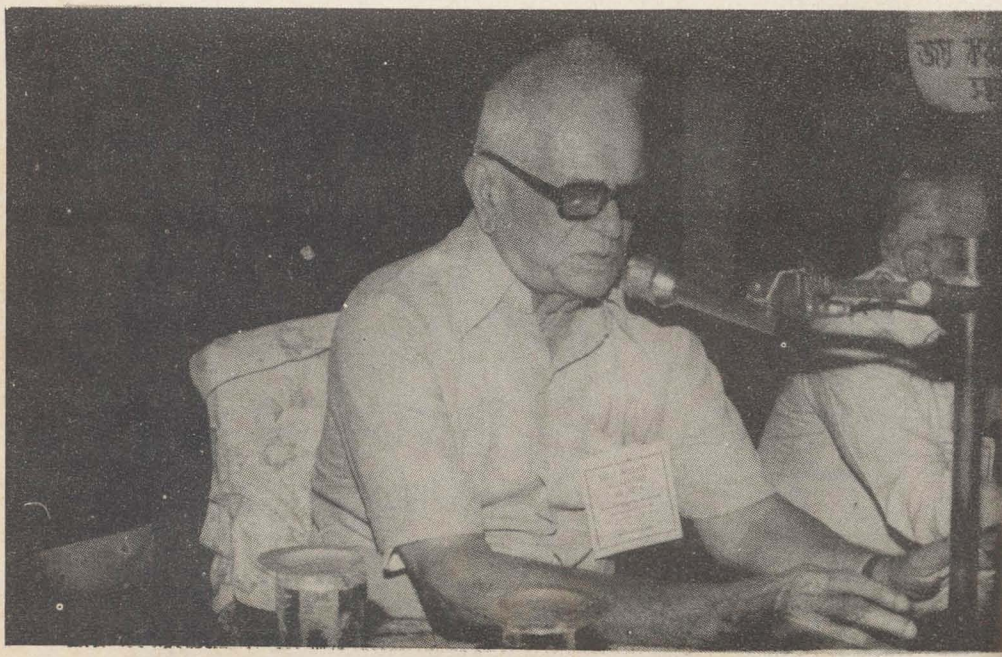
Comrade B.T. Ranadive

Born 19 December 1904 Died 6th April 1990

During a PB Meeting in Calcutta, 1966

During a Conference

With Son Uday



Addressing a Meeting

1

Unemployment and The Working Class

THE unemployment situation in the country has become very critical and threatens to create economic instability and impose economic suffering on those who are out of or seeking jobs. Year after year, the problem instead of getting lesser in intensity, gets intensified and every new year adds a few lakhs or more than a million to those who have no jobs. After the announcement of every successful plan, the backlog of unemployment continues to increase despite the repeated promise of the planners that all new entrants will be absorbed and the backlog will be reduced. The full extent of this unemployment is not really seen because the Planning Commission makes fantastic claims about creating new jobs though in reality the creation of new jobs is in no way commensurate with the jobs required. The gravity of the situation can be seen from the fact that between 1975 and 1981 the growth rate of employment in public and private sector was only 2.3 per cent a year. In contrast there was 14 per cent growth in registered unemployment in one year alone from August 1981 to August '82. In that year, the number of unemployed increased from 17.2 million to 19 million. The 6th plan claimed that its schemes for jobs would provide 34 million new jobs and take care of all the new entrants in the labour market. But where are the job-seekers to get jobs from ? Not in organised industry, not in modern industry but in overcrowded occupations from which people are fleeing in thousands. To quote the 6th Plan Commission, "The major employment generating activities are to be found in agriculture, rural development,

village and small-scale industries, construction and public administration", i.e., mostly in industries with low paid and sweated labour. So scattered are these industries that no one will know whether any increase has taken place and to what extent.

The claims to provide jobs in these industries are now completely blown up. For the last two or three years, the administrative services have put a ban on recruitment.

Ruination of Small Scale Industries

The years since the Sixth Plan have witnessed ruination of village and small-scale industries and also restriction of construction work by the public administration. Ruination of such industries as coir and Cashew-nut industries in Kerala, the havoc that the present ministry has done to job employment in these industries and the restricted employment available are witness to the fact that all traditional industries which employed comparatively larger number of people per unit of capital are facing total ruin.

The planners say that at the present rate of growth the organised sector can provide only 4-5 million regular jobs in the course of the Sixth Five Year Plan. This would still leave large numbers for absorption in agriculture, small-scale sector and other unorganised industries, i.e., they must seek employment in agriculture and non-farm activities characterised by a high degree of under-employment.

Educated Unemployed

The same fate is assigned to the educated. The number of educated unemployed, matriculates, graduates and above at the beginning of 1980 was estimated at 3.87 million. Today, of course, the number is much bigger and may exceed even 5 million. To meet the total demand for jobs from this sector during the Sixth Plan, 6 million job were required. But who will give them? The Planning Commission says that they must provide jobs for themselves. It says, "The increase in employment in the organised sector from year to year has been 0.8 million. Even if it is assumed that any future increase in the organised sector is wholly taken by educated persons alone, we find that there will not be enough room for the educated persons unless they are diverted either into self-employment or the absorption capacity of the organised industry is increased substantially. The second alternative does not seem to be feasible leaving the option of self-employment as the major mode of employment."

neering diploma holders would emanate both from the organised and unorganised sections, those for the higher categories would be generated primarily in industry, banking, transport, communications and public services". It will be seen that for the educated the collapsing old industries, modernised new industries which restrict jobs by thousands and banking and communication which are adopting computerisation to kill tens of thousands and banking and communications of jobs, will be the main source of employment. They are supposed to create 9 million additional jobs. Besides, the New Education Policy with its informal and long distance education will deny jobs to tens of thousands of teachers.

Today, according to official statistics, the number of these registered in Employment Exchanges in the cities is 3 crores. No one has really calculated the extent of joblessness in the rural areas which may be anywhere between 5 to 7 crores, notwithstanding Government claims of providing jobs through programmes like rural employment guarantee scheme and other fringe measures. Here is a country where the productivie capacities of more than 10 crores of people cannot be used for the advancement of the people, for the advancement of the economy and they are thrown out as waste of society out-casts from a decent and civilised standard of living.

Unemployment Benefit

In advanced Western countries, there is a provision for unemployment benefit which the State is bound to give so long as the unemployed person does not find an alternative job. This right of unemployment relief has been product of the organised working class movement and partly also it is due to the fact that some of these countries were placed in a favourable situation to exploit other centres and transfer small part of their super-profits for the benefit of the unemployed. Though the condition of the unemployed in the USA, Britain, France is certainly miserable, the unemployed are not turned on the streets immediately after loss of jobs. The State has to bear responsibility, give them doles and to a certain extent alleviate their suffering.

But in India, there is absolutely no provision for any unemployment relief. The provisions made by Kerala Government under the Nayanar Ministry and by the West Bengal Left Front Government under the leadership of Jyoti Basu could be only a small beginning and assertion of a principle. The main resources

for the relief to the unemployed have to come from the Centre under Central Legislation. There is no sign of any such legislation being passed. Apart from the two States already mentioned, some other States also provide some miserable relief to the unemployed in the cities. The State's responsibility for giving relief to the people is not accepted by the present bourgeois-landlord government. It seems while changing technology and adopting modernisation appropriate to the 21st Century, the Congress Government is not unwilling to carry the unemployment load of 20th Century into the next Century.

In India unemployment dogs the rural and urban areas alike, plagues the future of all young people. What is the prospect before a young man entering the labour market from the peasant or worker's family or a matriculate or a graduate hopeful of contributing his share to the progress of the country? Whereever he goes, he is told that the country has no use for his youthful vigour, for his young talent, for his education. He is forced to live a life of humiliation, dependent on the earnings of an aging father or some distant relative and taking only chance job which neither suits his talent nor does justice to his education. There are now cases in hundreds where graduates and undergraduates consider themselves fortunate if they get a municipal sweeper's job or some such menial work. India therefore offers a bleak future for the younger generation which is now swelling the labour market. This creates an explosive situation with the discontent against unemployment being diverted into fracticidal and communal channels. The recent riots in Gujarat on the question of reservation and anti-reservation when two sections of workers fought each other is the outcome of this diversion of the movement from common class struggle into internal fratricidal strife. When the anti-reservation conflict was going on in Ahmedabad, and workers were engaged in conflict, 14 textile mills were closed throwing out both Harijan and non-Harijan workers, but they failed to combine to fight this common offensive and their distress was diverted into internal conflicts. Such is the prospect for the T.U. movement if the unemployment question is not properly tackled and a common understanding is not going to those who have jobs and to those without jobs.

Two Aspects of Unemployment

The question of unemployment has two aspects. In recent years under the stress of the economic crisis a large number of

factories have been closed or have been locked out and hundreds have gone sick. According to official statistics, nearly 500 big concerns and nearly a lakh of small concerns have gone sick, out of the latter more than 70,000 are considered to be non-viable, which means that they will be permanently closed and the thousands working in them will be jobless. Besides these sick industries there are widespread closures and lockouts all of which have thrown tens of thousands of worker on the streets. Continuing modernisation process in the textile industry for instance, has thrown out nearly 75,000 workers in Bombay city alone. These tens of thousands of workers who have lost their jobs form only a part of the total unemployed in the industrial centres.

But the major part of the unemployed today consists of those who have hardly ever held a permanent job. A substantial part of these have never held any job. They are a floating mass which has never experienced the privilege of a job, the inspiration of a common working class consciousness, never had any tie with any T.U. organisation. They are an exclusive mass which can be easily used by any reactionary agency to fight those who are already employed and direct their ire against the T.U. movement itself. The three crores of registered unemployed in the cities mainly consist of this mass, who live from hand to mouth in the slums, get an occasional job and a small portion of which often indulges in anti-social activities including robbery, dacoity, trafficking in the illicit liquor distillation and so on. Poverty is driving a small section of these new entrants to utter degeneration and thereby renders them easy prey to the wiles of the reactionaries and to act on their behalf.

New Economic Policy

How does the Rajiv Gandhi Government and its Planning Commission propose to meet this problem? It is noted, the 7th Plan has no plan to meet the challenge of unemployment. The 7th Plan line and Rajiv Gandhi's new economic policy are going to add further to the rapid growth of unemployment. Rajiv Gandhi's government is opening the full blast of computerisation and modernisation on the economy, when our country requires steady promotion and nurturing its small-scale industries which have got great employment potentiality. Computerisation, modernisation, automation—these are the new slogans of the Rajiv Gandhi Government under the excuse of increasing competitive capacity of Indian industry in the export market. Computerisattion will de-

prive tens of thousands of employees working in the services industry out of their jobs. Computers have been introduced in railways and railways have stopped recruiting new people. Computers are being introduced in the banks, in the LIC and though in some cases immediate retrenchment is not unleashed, the capacity of these industries to employ people is getting thinner. Once the full offensive of computerisation starts, thousands of people from the Banks, Insurance and the mercantile concerns will be thrown out to add to the number of unemployed. In all Western countries, the service industry has been the biggest victim of computerisation and its working complement has been reduced by 30 or 40 per cent. It is estimated that in the coming two or three years India will be importing computers worth Rs. 10,000 crores. This is a major offensive against the jobs planned by the Rajiv Goverment. It is also estimated that this will also lead at least to the immediate cutdown of jobs of 30 per cent in the banking industry.

Denigration of Public Sector : Freedom to Multinationals

The public sector policy of the Rajiv Gandhi Government promises another offensive against the jobs of the workers and also the officers. Rajiv Gandhi has declared that sick public sector units will be either closed down or handed over to private concerns. The closure of so-called sick units will definitely deprive hundreds of people of their jobs. If these are transferred to the private concerns, then the jobs of public sector workers will be at the mercy of private capitalists who know no other morality than that of profit at the expense of the workers and the common man. However this is not the only danger. The denigration of the public sector, the encouragement to privatisation is further accompanied by freedom given to multinational to enter India. Some foreign companies are being allowed to control management of public sector under the guise of supplying expertise in management. This will tremendously reduce the job potential of industries and again throw large number of people out of work. Firstly, the competition from multinationals will ruin the indigenous concerns, throwing workers out of work. Already voices of protests are coming from Indian industrialists against imports liberalisation and the facilities given to the multinationals. Secondly, the influx of multinationals will result in influx of sophisticated means of production and the job potential under the multi-nationals will be drastically reduced. The policy of disbandment of public sector, of privatisation and encouragement

to multinationals to enter the Indian market is fraught with the gravest consequences for the employment situation in the country. They offer a challenge to the T.U. movement which must accept it, if it wants to protect the jobs of those who are already at work.

Weaknesses of T.U. Movement

In this connection, it must be stated that the T.U. movement on the whole has neglected the question of rising unemployment and left the unemployed to their fate. An organised campaign and fight was neither waged for those who are thrown out of jobs by closure of factories nor any consideration was given to the new entrants into the labour market. Much less was any consideration given to the grim unemployment situation in the rural areas where lack of jobs is leading to widespread destitution and misery inspite of all government claims to have lifted millions above the poverty line.

The failure to link TUs with the demand for relief and other demands of the unemployed has been a major weakness of our TU movement alienating large section of new entrants to the labour market from the organised movement of the working class. If continued, this policy would have incalculable consequences doing the biggest harm to working class unity and solidarity.

The employers and the government have already started pitting the unemployed against the employed, pointing to the latter as a priviledged section. With the slogan of jobs for the sons of soil, they incite the unemployed youths in one State against workers from other States.

Rousing of provincial chauvinism and creating an illusion that by depriving workers from other States of their jobs, the unemployment problem can be solved, is part of the bourgeois tactics and strategy to avoid a joint class action of workers. In the absence of trade union intervention organisations like Shiv Sena in Bombay and similar Senas in other parts succeed in rousing local chauvinistic sentiments against workers from other States shattering both class unity and the concept of Indian unity. It is another form of divisive force attacking the unity of the working class movement and unity of the country and it gets a chance because the T.U. movement does not intervene in time to unite the employed and the unemployed in the common fight against the effects of the capitalist path.

In fact, it has been to some extent the acknowledged policy of the Congress government also to play one section of the people

against another. Many Congress governments have issued instructions illegally and unconstitutionally to the Employment Exchange authorities in the State not to register the names of workers from other States on the exchange list. This is nothing but an attack on Indian citizenship and an attempt to meet the unemployment problem by pitting one section of workers against another. The Congress Chief Minister like Gundu Rao of Karnataka at one time threatened to throw out all Tamil workers from his State because they had gone on strike. The T.U. movement must understand that the ruling class and the ruling party are capable of using any chauvinistic weapon to divert the anger of the unemployed against workers from other States and split the unity of the working class.

Champion the Cause of Unemployed

It is high time that the organised T.U. movement undertook to organise the unemployed and prepared a charter of their demands. The T.Us should take the initiative to organise joint conventions of the employed and the unemployed to focus attention on the problem and pressurise the authorities to grant immediate relief. They should unitedly move to pressurise the Government to embark upon policies to check the growth of unemployment. The TUs should come out with a document outlining the schemes of relief for the industrial and the rural unemployed and championing basic changes in Government's economic policies and measures to check unemployment in the rural areas. The anti-poverty programme, the rural employment guarantee schemes and other devices do not touch even fringe of the problem and are diversionary measures to make people believe that something big is being done in the rural areas. It is noted by many committees that the major part of the funds for these schemes goes into the coffers of corrupt administrators or Congress leaders and ministers and only a very small part reaches those for whom it was meant. Honest officials who really try to administer relief to the people under these schemes are suddenly transferred to some distant place so that the reign of corruption continues undisturbed.

Right to Work

The TUs therefore have to take the question of unemployment and prepare a charter of demands, the immediate aim being to secure adequate unemployment relief for those unemployed. At the same time, the united movement of the unemployed and the employed workers must demand that the right to work should be

embodied in the Constitution as a fundamental right and the Government must accept responsibility to provide job or relief for every citizen who is prepared to work. The right to work is in fact the basis of all democratic rights and without this right many democratic rights become just formal decorative rights. It will be worth while considering whether the united. T.U. movement and the unemployed together can organise a hunger march from the various State capitals of India to the country's capital proclaiming the demands of the unemployed, the unity of the employed and unemployed workers and demanding the right to work as a basic fundamental right to be embodied in the Constitution.

Without intense struggle and activity on the part of the employed workers, unemployed workers will not have justice done to them and if this is not done in time, this vast mass of workers unrelated to any T.U. organisation, denied of the inspiration coming from common struggle, is capable of being used for reactionary purposes against the working class movement, against the nation's interests. The responsibility will be entirely of the T.U. movement. The T.U. movement can no longer continue as the representative only of those who are having permanent jobs. This narrowing down of the T.U. movement has done the biggest harm to India's working class movement.

Socialist Countries Free From Unemployment

One must give a deeper thought to the question of containing unemployment in the country. Some times the ruling party and its leaders say that it is worldwide phenomenon and India cannot escape it. But it is not a worldwide phenomenon. One-third of the world where socialist system exists is free from crisis, is free from unemployment and at the same time, modernisation and automation and computerisation are not barred in these countries. This phenomena of unemployment exists only in imperialist and capitalist countries where the means of production are owned by private capital. Is unemployment inevitable? Yes, it is inevitable only under capitalism. The law of capitalist society, the law of private accumulation, of profit, in competition with other, directly leads to unemployment in the name of promoting social progress. Capitalist law of accumulation demands that each competing monopolist or capitalist should lessen his cost of production to get higher profits. It demands therefore that each should out-bid the other in introducing new labour saving devices so that with a

smaller complement greater production and greater profits can be earned. This means that the larger the capitalist investment in sophisticated means of production, the lesser will be the number of employees per unit of capital. Marx called this the tendency of the increase in constant capital and relative decrease of variable capital which represents the wages of the workers. It is because of this inevitable logic of capitalist society that in spite of tremendous progress in science and industry, a rich country like America has to carry the burden of more than one crore of unemployed. The total number of people unemployed in the Western countries of Europe and America exceeds three crores.

India had the choice of avoiding this capitalist path and turning to a democratic economic order to march towards socialism. But India's leaders chose the capitalist path. Now you find that India is subject not only to the law of increased unemployment, she is also in danger of losing or undermining her economic independence under the pressure of the world multi-nationals. In India the problems are rather complicated because the process of building capitalism demands destruction of old and traditional industries. At the same time, under the capitalist path new industries cannot be built at a rapid rate to absorb all those people who are displaced by the destruction of old industries. What Marx called the process of primary accumulation which meant evicting masses of people from means of production is still going on in India. Traditional industries are still being destroyed but new industries are not absorbing all those displaced. So India experiences two fold destruction, one from the effects of the capitalist law of accumulation and another from the effect of the destruction of old industries which is going on in India.

The only way to escape this misery is to change our economic policies immediately, to the need of fighting unemployment, keeping other things in view. This demands complete change not only of Rajiv Gandhi's new economic policies but also in the concept of planning and further demands that all planning efforts should be completely democratised so that political parties, people's representatives, mass organisations and Trade Unions should have a say in organising the economic life of the country. Only then we will be in a position to tackle the grim problem of unemployment.

In this connection, the worker and the unemployed must know the truth why there is no unemployment in the socialist

countries. When you come to the Socialist countries, you realise the truth that the working class movement is not opposed to modernisation, computerisation and other devices of scientific process. In Socialist society, this is precisely what is happening because the means of production is controlled by the society. They are not anybody's private property. Modernisation, computerisation etc. leads only to the adjustment of labour and not towards loss of labour. It therefore releases the energy of the people for cultural advance and economic advance and does not lead them to lead a life of denial. Because the entire planning is directed towards increasing production with a view to increasing the standard of living of the people and not with a view to accumulate the profits of a few capitalists. Saving of labour time therefore means lesser hours of work and greater leisure for the development of personality. That is why a social system which can really utilise modern advance of science in the interests of society as a whole, that social system alone can really combine modernisation, computerisation with social progress, progress of the mass of the people as a whole.

Right to Work in Socialism

This is due to the fact that under Socialism there is equality of all in relation to the means of production. After all, the economic activity and the means of production are the main sources of living of the society. If there is no economic equality here, the entire social structure will become completely loaded against one section of society. Socialisation of means of production introduces the equality of every citizen in relation to means of production and thereby deprives a handful of men to impose either economic inequality or political inequality on the people. Not only that, it is only under socialised means of production that a constitutional right is given to a citizen—the right to work. Only the socialist constitutions embody this right and declare that every citizen has a right to work under Socialism, thereby the State cannot evade the responsibility to provide work and because of the social system it is able to provide work. The unemployed and the employed must master this experience of the socialist society and redouble their efforts in the end to see that India makes a big transition, abandoning the capitalist path to the path of socialist transformation so that the question of unemployment, crisis, etc., can be settled and people will no longer suffer either from economic crisis or from the crisis of unemployment.

(Working Class, Vol.-15, No 11, July 1986)

2

Make The National Integration Day A Success

ON 9th August all trade union centres will unitedly observe a common day to warn the people against the attack of the divisive forces and call on the workers to take the challenge to defend national unity and defeat its disruptors.

The initiative taken by the trade union movement is born out of its patriotic fervour of trade union organisation and its determination to throw the organised strength of the working class in the battle against the forces of disunity.

The initiative should have come much earlier because of the challenge and its brazen facedness was growing every day. The fact that all the Trade Unions including the INTUC have now taken a common decision to fight these forces is of great importance to the cause of Indian unity and freedom. The tens of lakhs mobilised under the banner of the Trade Union Centres, the Industrial Federations, the Railway Federations, the Confederation of Central Govt. Employees, the State Govt. Employees Federation and Mercantile and Bank Federations constitute a mighty force which unitedly can rebuff the divisive offensive.

The working class composed of all communities—Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Harijans and Adivasis has repeatedly demonstrated its unbreakable class unity in the prolonged strike struggles. The workers have withstood together privations and hunger for months without wavering. Considerations of community or caste did not influence any section to break this solidarity in the class

struggle.

If the working class plunges into the struggle for defending the nation's unity armed by this consciousness and backed by its organised strength, it will inspire all other sections to wage a determined battle to protect the integrity of the country.

The seriousness of the challenge is not yet seen by large sections of the working class and its trade unions. This is not an ordinary challenge of a few communal riots bursting out on this or that issue, over hurt religious feeling of this or that community. Nor can the situation be compared with the earlier years after independence when there were large popular movement for the formation of linguistic states. Today it is a pre-planned attempt to destabilise the country, to cut it into several parts so that it can be easily converted into a dependency. Behind this all pervading conspiracy stands the hand of US imperialist which is out for dismembering the country.

The ruling Cong(I) Party and its Government are now forced to talk about the foreign hand behind the forces of destabilisation. It is now emphatically stated that the Khalistani terrorists in Punjab are trained on the soil of Pakistan and financed from there. Behind Pakistan stands the financial purse of the US and its expertise in organising terrorism and destabilisation in other countries.

The daily murder of innocent persons in Punjab is the handiwork of USA financed elements. The death toll of hundreds of people, the forcible migration of the minority from the state, untold miseries and sufferings inflicted on the innocent people constitute the instrument of the nation's enemies to create permanent discord in Punjab and detach it from the rest of the country. The unscrupulous enemy does not stop at anything in pursuit of its aims of dismembering India.

Earlier it made a similar assault in Assam. Its project Operation Bramaputra Valley was a blue print of secessionist movement to cut off Assam and the North-Eastern region from the rest of India. Those who are now in the Ministry in Assam are still not free from separatist outlook and ambitions, and the secessionist danger in Assam is not yet over.

The British and US imperialists and Canadian Govt. have been openly helping and financing the Khalistani terrorists. UK refuses to send back to India terrorists wanted for murders and robberies. In the USA agencies have been training terrorists for

sabotage. When its patronage for the terrorists got exposed the US authorities made a show of taking some steps against them. In Australia and Canada the local Sikh terrorists are allowed to plan murders and assault Indian diplomats and or visiting dignitories from the country. The imperialists and their stooges have left nothing undone to show their partiality for the secessionist terrorist movement.

Why is it so? Because a free Indian which refuses to join the U.S. bandwagon in international affairs weakens and obstructs imperialist plans for war and global domination. A free India is also an obstruction to unbridled imperialist exploitation of the country. The US imperialists therefore must attack the united strength of the country to reduce it to the status of their satellite. They would like India to be as much dependent on them as Zia's Pakistan.

The secessionist movement, challenges like Khalistan and Gorkha Land are to be fought by the people unitedly as a common struggle to defend the unity of the country. To consider them as a battle of one community against other is to play the game of imperialism. It is the enemies of the country that count on Sikh-Hindu conflicts and riots as a result of the Punjab situation. Some Hindu communal organisations in Delhi and elsewhere are helping imperialist machinaries by rousing Hindu communal feelings over the happenings in Punjab. The situation cannot be met either by organising only the minority community in Punjab for defence as the Shiv Sena is doing there now.

The working class and trade union movement must uphold the banner of Hindu-Sikh unity. The working class of Punjab responded splendidly last month to the visit of the trade union delegation representing all Central Trade Unions and reaffirmed its faith in national unity. Every help is to be given to the trade unions in Punjab to carry on their fight in face of the determined challenge of the disruptive forces. The working class in other states especially in cities which has a sizeable Sikh population must guarantee that the minority is well protected and has no cause for concern from rabid Hindu communal or mercenary agencies of divisive forces.

The working class must also demand from Rajiv Govt. that the Punjab Accord must be immediately and fully implemented, and the transfer of the Chandigarh should not be delayed. This is no time for haggling over a few acres of land when the nation is faced

with a big challenge from imperialism. What is necessary is to rally the entire Sikh-Hindu mass in Punjab to fight the terrorists. The task will be immensely helped by the immediate implementation of the Accord. Delay is being exploited by the terrorists and unscruplous leaders like Badal to torpedo the accord and create a new crisis.

It is equally necessary to assure full protection to the minority in Punjab which are the main target of the terrorists. It has to be noted however that a large number from the Sikh community also have been killed by the same elements. The protection to minority has to be guaranteed by the united people and by the Government. Guarantee of such steps will foil the designs of the enemies of the nation to destabilise the state and end the dream of a seperate Khalistan.

There is no doubt that the Barnala Government has shown a lot of vacilliation in the past and has been unable to fulfill many obligations. It has mixed religion with politics and weakened itself. Nonetheless it has stood by the accord and announced its determination to fight the secessionists, whom it has denounced as elements financed and trained from abroad. Everything should be done to strengthen this resolve of the Barnala Government.

Difficult also is the situation in Kashmir and Assam which again calls for popular unity to defeat the forces of disruption. People do not feel assured either over the Mizoram Accord which has installed in power a person and a party known for their secessionist views and their links with organisations unfriendly to India.

The CITU trade unions in Assam and the working class led by them have been waging a determined struggle against the secessionists in the riots risking their limbs and lives. The entire working class of the country must support this valiant struggle of the workers of Assam and inspire the people all over the country to forge popular unity against the forces of dismemberment.

Equally dangerous is the challenge delivered through communal disruption, communal appeal, riots and sabotage. The communal reactionaries are now well supplied with arms to wreck vengeance on each other. Never before India was subject to so much internal discord as in the last four five years. What is the reason? communal reactionaries financed, encouraged, and patronised by the foreign resources are out to destroy the unity of the

people and create permanent barriers between them. They preach hatred towards other communities in the name of religion to destroy all sense of national unity among the people. This is to paralyse and emasculate the people when the final attack for destabilisation is launched by the imperialist forces.

Muslim fundamentalists appeal to the Muslims as a separate people having nothing in common with the rest of the country. To keep them away from the common democratic struggle, they seek to enslave them to reactionary customs, anti-democratic practices and anti-national outlook in the name of religion. They recently demanded enslavement of Muslim women in the name of religion and opposed maintenance for a divorced Muslim wife as running contrary to the tenets of Islam.

What chance has secularism and national unity before this outlook? The entire appeal to religion is a device to destroy all secular and democratic values which bind the people together.

In opposition to the minority fundamentalism Hindu fundamentalists regard Muslims as virtual aliens and disrupt all sense of national unity. The Christian and the Sikh fundamentalists and others are all busy burying national unity and gathering their community as the separatist force with no obligation to the people and the country as a whole.

The unity that was built through years of struggle and sacrifice and through the blood of Indian people, the unity that chased the British after a heroic struggle is being attacked and buried by handful of mercenaries and reactionaries. Will the working class allow it? Will it tolerate the Indian people to be divided and enslaved again? The working class which has forged unity embracing members of all communities in its struggles must defeat this challenge and gather its forces to fight it. Its trade unions must embrace all sections and show in practice how all of them can unite to defend the integrity of the country. The working class cannot remain a mute spectator during communal riots. Its united strength must be thrown against the rioters to defend the minority and the unity of the people. The unity of the people is not a law and order problem, not an administrative responsibility. It is the political responsibility of the entire working class.

The trade unions and working class must realise that the reactionary forces are often able to activise large sections of people by distorting and exploiting the economic mass discontent generated

by the capitalist path. The stronger the economic struggle against the inequities of capitalist path, the more unitedly it is carried, the more effective blow would be delivered to the divisive forces.

The working class must also note that the Muslim mass which is susceptible to religious appeal, not only suffers from the common economic grievance along with rest of the people but also suffers from discrimination against the minority community. While fighting the appeal of minority communalism the working class must unitedly protect the Muslim mass against discrimination and emerge as powerful champion of the rights of minority community. This will be another blow to the fundamentalist appeals.

The working class and its trade unions cannot but criticise and sharply attack the opportunist policies of the Cong(I) and the Central Government run by it. The Cong(I) and the Central Government compromise with the forces of destabilisation and communalism to protect their electoral following. Under Hindu communal pressure Cong(I) Govt. in UP offered unmitigated provocation to the Muslim mass when it decided to open the Babri Masjid/ Ram Janam Bhoomi Temple. This has led to communal tension all over the country. The Central Government prostrated itself before the Muslim fundamentalists when it sponsored the notorious Muslim Women's (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Bill in the Parliament. This followed its debacle in the Assam elections due to loss of Muslim vote. The Cong(I) Party does not fight the divisive forces politically. It either relies on administrative measures or capitulates under their pressure.

The record of opposition bourgeois parties is also deplorable. They do not see the imperialist designs behind the divisive forces. They are prepared to use them for electoral gains. A leader of one of the opposition parties in Haryana is now openly denouncing the Punjab Accord and helping the game of the terrorists.

In contrast stands the record of the left parties and the united trade union movement of West Bengal. Defeat of Cong(I) in the recent municipal elections in the State was not only a rebuff to the Cong(I) party but also a rebuff to the divisive and communal forces and assertion of national and class unity. This is the model the working class and trade union movement have to follow.

The 9th August day should be widely observed. Every effort should be made to secure the mass participation of the workers and participation of their organisations. Let not any organisation of

trade union remain outside the programme.

It is obvious that the constituents of the programme of the National Integration Day against divisive forces will represent view points which may not completely agree with each other. However, there is a keen desire to isolate the forces of disruption and assert the sense of national unity. All speeches and activities of the programme should be based on this common desire to wage a battle against the enemies of national unity.

Let the 9th August programme be the beginning of a massive and relentless battle against US plans to dismember the country, a battle to defend national unity. Let the disruptors know that the working class and its organisations will have the last word. Experience of modern times shows that only the working class and its organisations can save the unity and integrity of the country over coming all other sectional and sectarian considerations. It is the responsibility of India's working class and the trade union movement to discharge this historic task.

The Working Class, Vol. 15, No. 12, August 1986

3

Presidential Address

Working Committee Meeting, New Delhi, September 24-26,1986

Comrades,

At the outset I must congratulate the Textile workers of Delhi, our CITU Union and all other organisations which headed the recent strike and successfully concluded it keeping the unity of the workers and the trade union movement in tact. The prolonged strike carried on in the midst of an intense crisis in the textile industry and against the adamant management which was bent on closure of some mills was a very very difficult operation and only a sustained unity of the workers and trade unions leading them could have led to an orderly conclusion of the strike. As a result, the confidence of the workers in their organisations and strength has increased their sense of solidarity and unity is strengthened and now vast members realise that unity of the trade union movement constitue an essential success for securing some of their urgent demands. The united conduct of the strike in these circumstances and over a period of more than hundred days, required conscious adherence on the part of all trade unions to a sense of class unity in spite of differences that are bound to arise when handling of strike of thousands of workers. No doubt there were differences and vacillations, and compromises between conflicting view points were essential to maintain unity. We must congratulate our CITU affiliated trade union for adhering to the principled

stand of firm support to the minimum demands of the workers while at the same time showing utmost concern for maintaining trade union unity. There is no doubt that after its successful fight for unity the strength of the CITU union will increase and it will further contribute to the maintenance of trade union unity and solidarity of the workers.

It cannot be said, however, that the Central Government and the Labour Department really discharged their job and did their best to secure justice for the workers. If the administration had exercised strong pressure against the recalcitrant and adamant attitude especially of a section of the management, the dispute could have been settled entirely in favour of workers.

Comrades, the last few months since our General Council meeting have witnessed a big spurt in the activities of the CITU and the joint activities of the trade union movement. The joint observation of 9th August as a day of fight against divisive forces, the observance of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki Day and the big peace demonstrations on September 1 show the rising awakening of our workers to the cause of fight against divisive focres. Besides, the CITU trade unions in many states have started taking up the question of unemployed workers, organised conventions and demonstrations. Equally important is the fact that in a number of states our CITU State Committees are taking up the question of organising the workers of unorganised industries. In some States, State Committees are also devoting their attention to the question of working women and their problems. But we have to note that so far as the question of working women is concerned our activities are marked by general neglect and indifference which is a sign of feudal attitude towards the problem of women. In many states where thousands of women are employed in unorganised industries, like beedi and other industries, the CITU union hardly intervene to organise them and champion their casue. This deviation which weakens the trade union movement has to be overcome in the shortest possible time and every union should have a working women's cell to ensure that the problems of working women are no longer neglected.

Comrades, at the meeting of the General Council in April last we have noted the Rajiv Government's policy of denigrating the public sector and observed that it was leading to harmful effects injuring the interests of the nation as a whole. We also observed that

the new economic policy will mean virtually not only the disbandment of the public sector but also disbandment of purposeful planning. This has been the plea of the World Bank for years and it seems that the new economic policy of Rajiv Government will succeed in fulfilling it.

However, Rajiv Gandhi has been assuring the people that the priority of the public sector in our economy will be maintained and there is no danger of disbandment of public sector. The actual policy pursued by the Government belies this promise. It is also seen that a Cabinet Minister is permitted to open a virtual war against the public sector denouncing it as any mercenary of private sector will do.

Mr. Vasant Sathe, Cabinet Colleague of Rajiv Gandhi in his recent article in Times of India says, "However, the whole concept of public sector was uneconomic and non-viable from its inception. In our enthusiasm to generate maximum employment at the earlier for our people we opted for setting up of public sector industry" Sathe with his enthusiasm for the private sector and international competition forgets that the role of the public sector was to establish strategic industries to curtail and reduce our dependence on western imperialists. He, therefore, ascribes every kind of evil with the public sector calling it labour intensive etc.

Sathe continues, "Thus in the name of Indian socialism all that we have achieved is a stagnant, high cost, inefficient, non-competitive, irresponsible and unaccountable system of production". The World Bank will fully endorse Mr Sathe. It had been using these denunciary words to secure its stranglehold on the Indian economy. In Sathe it has found the worthy storm-trouper. In the name of efficiency Sathe demands what all private capitalist want. He says that, "management must be given continued authority without any limitations of tenure or age, the only criteria being merit or capacity to deliver.... the mangement should be given full powers and facilities to employ modern managerial and technological methods for achieving minimum production and production efficiency. The output for man-shift should be comparable with the best available in the world. It is high time that we did away with the artificial definition between public sector and private must conform to certain basic national aims" Sathe calls not only for the dissolution of the public sector but also for complete freedom of employers to hire and fire workers, the right of management to

introduce technology irrespective of its effects on employment. People's livelihood and jobs are no consideration when introducing efficiency in the production machine. State's remedy is complete sway of private sector over the economy as a guarantee for efficient production when hundreds of private sector concerns in India are sick and revealing the bankruptcy of the private management. Sathe, besides, does not seem to be aware of the plight of the economies of United States and other Western countries where private sector rules supreme along with massive unemployment and chronic crisis.

It is obvious that Sathe's is not the individual voice of the Cabinet Minister, he is really expressing the real content of Rajiv Gandhi's economic policy and he is therefore permitted to come out with his outbursts against the public sector in open.

Now it seems that the representatives of the efficient private sector are aksed to supervise the implementation of the Central Projects of the Government. In June this year the Minister for Plan Implementation announced a six member National Advisory Council under the Chairmanship of Ratan Tata and other private sector capitalists to monitor the implementation of Central Govt. Projects, removing bottle-necks and evolve methods and their completion on their schedule. All these years the idea was that the public sector should growingly control the private sector. Now the beginning is made to put the completion of the Central Projects under the expertise of the private sector.

The CITU protested against this move as a step towards privatisation and pointed out how in appointing this committee the Ministry was violating the norms of tripartism and the Government's resolution on workers' participation in management. The CITU further pointed out, "it would also render the work of the Committee of Union Minister of Labour irrelevant."

Further, the fact it is that the economic policy of the Rajiv Government leads to a growing discrimination against India's public sector and deliberate preference for foreign capital. It means, that public sector is being attacked from two edns, firstly an attempt to privatise it and handing over to Indian capitalists and secondly to emasculate it and to allow the foreign capital to penetrate into it and dominate it.

According to press reports the Department of Telecommunications (DOT) is reported to be planning massive import of 700

crores of rupees telecommunication equipment, which threaten to ruin Indian industry. The Indian Press now notes that Rajiv Gandhi Government's economic policy is putting public sector under the domination of foreign multinational capital. The Times of India issue dated May 5th oberves, "The Government is planning to deal a bloody blow to the management of some of the most efficient state-owned undertakings stalling them with the socalled non-resident expertise. Though they will be collectively expected to invest substantial sum nearly 200 crores of rupees according to one's estimate in the proposed venture they will have no control over the new company's operation. It will rest in the NRI by virtue of 51 per cent of holding in its equity. But even this by no means is the most obnoxious feature of the scheme. What it will be expected to do and what cost to the orientation of managerial cohesion and morale on the state-owned undertaking is the main issue.

The NRI Company is sponsored by M.S. Pathak, who, to quote a writer in a responsible political weekly, "suddenly left in questionable circumstances the post of the Chairman of the public sector consultancy firm, Engineers India, to serve US multinationals in a relatively junior post. This is the person heading the NRI firm. Having set up the firm, Pathak proposes that the real consultant to the joint venture company would be a US firm, Booze Allen Hamliton, which is one of the three largest management companies in the world. The NRI proposal, therefore, envisages a technical collaboration agreement between the Indian Company and Booze Allen Hamilton. This is where the public sector policy of the Rajiv Government is leading.

It is obvious that the entire trade union movement and the working class should fight the anti-national policy, which will lead to mortgaging of our public sector to foreign capital. It is gratifying to note that our unions in the public sector along with many other union have already seized of the problems and held several conventions and conferences to denounce the policy and warned against this danger. An all-India Convention of public sector union is being called by the NCC to launch an emphatic protest of the working class against this anti-national new economic policy of the Rajiv Government. The entire trade unions must rally behind it to defeat this dangerous policy.

The realisation of the efficient drive in the public sector under the tutelage of US multinational expertise promises to meet direct

attack on the jobs, wages and living standards of the public sector workers. The entire tenor of Sathe's article is to hold labour as a villain of the peace. There are, too many people on job, there is too little work done, productivity is too low compared with international standards— This is the war cry. All this is to be remedied by introducing new technology and throwing thousands of workers out of job. This is virtually the new economic policy.

Demand for increased production by workers, linking productivity with wages, arbitrary fixation of productivity norms, schemes of voluntary retirement, submitted TUs, open propaganda against TUs as selfish and callous organisations not caring for society and the unorganised workers—this has become a stock-in-trade of the Government's and employer's offensive against labour. The demand for wage freeze is also getting louder and louder.

If as yet the general onslaught on the workers has not been launched it is because of the formidable strength of the trade unions which are displaying growing unity to face the common danger. The recommendations of the Pay Commission that the emoluments of the public sector workers should be brought to the level of the Central Government employees foreshadows an attack on the wage standards of the Public Sector workers.

But now it seems that the initiative to curb labour is being taken directly by the Prime Minister himself. Recently he directly intervened to veto an agreement between a recognised trade union and the management of public sector concern, Rare Earths. Neither the Finance Minister nor the Department of Public Sector Enterprises had objected to the terms of the agreement. The arbitrary and unprecedented intervention of the Prime Minister in a settled dispute speaks of mounting hostility of the Rajiv Gandhi towards labour.

Comrades, the drive against labour further expresses itself in the proposed amendments to the Industrial Disputes and the Trade Union Acts whose only purpose is to curb the freedom of the trade union and virtually illegalise all strikes. The ESMA, the power granted to the State Governments to declare any industry as an essential industry are not enough, it seems, to guarantee industrial peace. The Government is arming itself with further power to deny and prevent all direct actions, to ensure that the workers' protection again are stifled from the beginning. Over and above this a

new law for registration of unions and ensure the monopoly of the representation to certain favourites of the Government is coming and finally there is an attempt to curb the bargaining powers of the trade unions. The proposed amendments are based on the recommendations of the Sanat Mehta Committee Report, which the CITU had condemned long ago.

The amendment provides that any trade dispute can be referred to adjudication by the Industrial Relations Commission at the instance of either the State Govt. or the Central Govt. after failure of conciliation. The Industrial Relation Commission is a standing permanent adjudicating body at the disposal of the Govt. to forestall strikes and divert action and compel the trade unions to appear before the Commission. Experience shows that the power of the Govt. is always used to the disadvantage of the workers by depriving them of their only sanction by forces of action and strength of numbers. The Commission will always be guided by the prevailing policy of the Govt. towards labour. This is a device to impose compulsory adjudication or arbitration on the workers and it will always be used when the owners have no case and when the workers are likely to succeed. This is perhaps Rajiv Gandhi's first step towards industrial relation in the 21st century.

To give respectability to this strike breaking appartus, a President of the status of the High Court Judge is to be appointed in consultation with the Chief Justice. He is to be paid away high salary with the permanent or long time job while hired strike breakers get only temporary assignment and lower remuneration. The other members of the Commissions are to be appointed in consultation with this high salaried strike breaker.

Gone are the days when workers can be duped by strike breakers, gowning the costumes of judiciary and posing an impartial authority.

The Labour Courts would have the following functions :

(i) Industrial disputes relating to discharges, dismissal, retrenchment or termination of a workman.

(ii) The application and interpretations of standing orders of establishments and propriety or legality of orders passed under the standing orders.

(iii) Certification of collective bargaining agent/council (including powers for derecognition for unfair labour practice)

(iv) Individual disputes of confirmation, seniority, promo-

tion, reversion, premature retirement, superannuation, leave, disciplinary matters, remuneration and retirement benefits.

In a word all the duties functions of the Labour Commissioners have now been given to Labour Courts thus lessening Govt's responsibility and making it appear as if the workers are likely to get justice from such an impartial body.

Then there are reactionary provisions for trade union recognition. Recongnitions will be based on membership as ascertained and the demand for recognition based on secret ballot of workers is rejected to pamper and favour INTUC unions. The disasterous effect of this anti-working class, anti-strike line of industrial relations has been noted by no less than Vasant Sathe, the fiery crusader against the public sector and Cabinet colleague of Rajiv Gandhi: "A major and catastrophic instance in the recent has been that of the textile industry of Bombay, which had been closed down for over two years, rendering about 200 thousands employees idle and causing the production loss running into billions of rupees during this period. The main reason for this show-down in the textile has been the insistence on the part of the management, unfortunately supported by the Government, that only a particular union (read Congress(I), INTUC affiliated union) will be treated as recognised union. The union is not willing to have its membership or its credibility and support among the workers judged on any democratic criteria, more particularly that of an election by secret ballot. It insists that it should be recognised by some sort of verification which it expects to be favoured by the Government because of its political allegiance.

"It is this which has been a bane of the entire employer and employee relations in this country. When this union had some credibility among the employees did not come to a crisis. But when the so-called recognised union lost its credibility and was not willing to establish itself by any democratic method the matter came to a serious break.

"As a result the whole industry was thrown in turmoil by a prolonged strike. It is therefore imperative to provide that in the present pattern of employer-employee relations, the only rational way of establishing a bargaining agent for the employees must be in the form of electing that bargaining agent periodically, for two years by secret ballot among the employees of the concern. The Industrial Disputes Act would have to be suitably amended to

achieve this object." (Sathe—Social Revolution, Page-182-183).

While Sathe's dialect against the public sector is secretly appreciated by his colleagues, his plea for secret ballot is rejected. The proposed amendment depends on check-off of membership which in the Indian condition means a guarantee of financial supply to a pliant union at the expense of the working class.

Besides, there is an atrocious provision which appeals to an unwilling worker to join the favoured union against his will. The amendment says, "The workmen who are members of an unregistered union may be given an option to join one of the registered unions within a period of three months. In case of workman who does not opt to join any registered trade union within this period of three months his trade union fee will be remitted to the principal bargaining agent, or the council as the case may be." The worker has not only the right to decide the representative character of the union by his vote but he has also the right to abstain from the union in which he has no faith. This is an instant provision. Only Hitler made it compulsory for all workers to join a fascist union. This is where the check-off system leads. You compel workers to join the union and to call it a bargaining agent. The check-off system demands that every worker should reveal his union affiliation to the management. The worker justly fear that they will be victimised if they do not join the favoured union. Now under the new amendment if they do not show their preference for the favoured union they will be deemed to be its members.

The provision for deciding the bargaining agent on the basis of check-off system is an intsrument of promoting client unions in a conspiracy against the growth of militant unions of workers.

Besides, there is a provision that no union can be registered unless it has minimum 25 per cent membership in a concern. Under the present provision the scope for registration to growing militant unions is blocked thereby preventing them from participating in bargaining and negotiations. It is intended to keep monopoly of representation in the hands of certain unions which have no reputation for militancy. In fact the new amendment is a provision to prevent the future growth of militant unions of workers.

Then there is a further restriction on the workers' right to strike. Strike cannot take place even when a majority of workers so decides. Only when 75 per cent of the membership of all bargaining agents vote for a strike then alone it will be legal. Little more than

25 per cent minority can veto any strike. The authoritarian drive against working class is fully explained in the new amendment, which should be condemned and rejected by the entire trade union movement.

The recommendations of the Fourth Pay Commission have come as a source of disappointment to all Central Government employees. There is great disappointment over the summary rejection of the demand for 'parity in wages with the public sector'.

The disparity between the emoluments of the two sections have been growing in recent years to the disadvantage of the Central Government employees, and there was no reason why the principle of equal pay for equal work should not have been applied in their case. But it cannot be said that the fault lies entirely with the Pay Commission. The history of Indian Trade Union movement and working class struggle shows that important demands are never secured unless the employer is directly faced with concerted action on the part of the employees. This precisely was not the case in the present situation. The Pay Commission had taken the full measure of certain leaders controlling the employees' organisations, but will not lead to concerted actions.

Having said this one cannot but condemn the way in which the Fourth Pay Commission has handled the entire problem of emoluments, the salaries and Dearness Allowance of the workers.

In recent years the employees and workers are more and more thrown on the defensive to protect their real wage against the rising inflation and cost of living. The figures of total emoluments worked out by the Pay Commission and the authorities to make it appear as if the workers and employees are drawing a big slice of the national income, do not compensate the workers fully against the rise in prices and living index. Statistically it can be proved that there is hardly any radical increase in the standard of living of the mass of employees. On the other hand in spite of four figure wages employees are facing greater and greater difficulties to meet their family budgets, expenses on education and other needs of a minimum cultured life. The recommendations of the Pay Commissions have been made in disregard of all these considerations. Their main aim is to save as much money as possible for the Govt.

It seems, the government itself was preparing to ensure that the Pay Commission's recommendations did not add much to its expenditure on employees' salaries. Before the Pay Commission

was appointed the Government had adopted a policy of no further recruitment and not filling the vacancies.

In the course of three to four years, nearly 20-24 per cent of the posts have remained vacant and they are not likely to be filled in the near future also. It has been estimated that the saving effected through this reduction of the jobs is equal to the additional expenditure that the Government will have to spend for implementing the recommendations of the Pay Commission. Besides, the Pay Commission recommendations for half yearly review of DA is nothing short of cheating the workers of their legitimate compensation against the rising prices.

Extremely atrocious is the recommendation regarding refusal of maternity benefit to women who have two children. Only an uncivilised group of people can make such a recommendations thinking that they are discharging their responsibility towards family planning in India. If the Government accepts this it will condemn itself as much as it has done by passing the notorious Muslim Divorce Women's Act.

In the report which runs into hundreds of pages there is only one page dealing with working women. It has been correctly described by certain journals as display of male chauvinism. It appears to take into consideration some difficulties faced by working women but has not the courage to make positive recommendations to remove them. It also does not even mention that working women suffer from sexual harassment and every step has to be taken to stop this atrocious behaviour on the part of certain officials. Unfortunately the trade union of employees also have not reacted in a strong manner against this bias against women and the proposal to withdraw the maternity benefit from them.

A point of criticism, and one may say justified criticism, is that the higher echelons of employees and officials have been given very big increment in salaries and emoluments. This stands in contrast to what is being recommended for the ordinary employees. Partly this is due to the fact, perhaps, the higher circles were left out of the purview of the earlier commissions. But this also is not the entire truth. The technical and economic service personnel are being discriminated against and they are also complaining that the generalists of the services are being given special treatment and special concessions. Why? Because while the technical and economic personnel are trying to improve the functioning of capitalist

society the generalists constitute the main guardian army of the State apparatus. They are the defenders of the state against the lower classes and their movement. That is why after straining their loyalty for a few years the dividens are being paid to them and they should be firm in their dealings with the employees and people.

It will be extremely unfortunate if the trade union leaders and the employees after verbal protests again get themselves enmeshed after in dealing with anomalies and petty concessions. They must unite their forces to undo the injustice done to them. If they join their forces the entire trade union movement will stand behind them.

R.B.I. REPORT

The latest RBI report promises that the performance of the Indian economy in 1986-87 will be better than in the preceding two years. According to it with both agriculture and industry set to grow faster, the rate of growth of real national income is expected to be at least 5 per cent against four per cent in 1985-86 and 3.7 per cent i 1984-85. Now five per cent is considered by the World Bank and the Planning Commission to be the minimum necessary rate to avoid further deterioration of the economic situation. And this also if five per cent rate of growth is accompanied by six per cent annual growth rate in exports. It seems that the promised rate of growth will be unattainable as the latest reports suggest that large areas of the country are affected by insufficient monsoon and drought. Secondly, industry also seems unable to pick up as many concerns are closing due to foreign competition, the result of the new economic policy. The number of sick industry is growing and unemployment also is growing a pace. Modernisation which means capital intensive industry is slowing down the rate of employment growth. Recent data shows that between 1973-74 and 1982-83 employment increased only by 3.7 per cent while fixed capital increased by nearly 29 per cent. The Seventh Plan visualises an annual growth of 3.99 per cent in employment. A five per cent increase in national income and 3.99 per cent in employment will only add to the miseries of the people.

This is the protest held by the current year. The RBI report exposes the false claims of the government about its successes in controlling inflation and holding the price line. The CITU has repeatedly exposed these claims. Now the RBI report also draws attention to the fact that Government's alleged success in control-

ling inflation does not give any relief to the people. The prices of essential commodities continue to rise despite this claim.

The RBI report points out that deceleration in the wholesale prices was accompanied by rise in consumer prices defrauding the people of their lawfully earned incomes. The rise in consumer prices was 8.9 per cent in 1985-86 against five per cent in 1984-85 on a point to point basis. On an average basis also the rise in the consumer prices was 6.4 per cent between 1985-86 and 1984-85. Thus while people were being regaled with stories of successes in price control they were more and more robbed through rising prices of consumer goods.

There is not going to be any relaxation in the price situation. Because with the heavy deficit financing programme of the Government, money supply must increase and prices must rise. During the last three years the money supply increased at an average annual rate of 17.8 per cent. The RBI advocates caution for the current year in regard to money supply but there cannot be caution with the government budget providing for huge deficit.

The RBI report promises a better performance in the industry for 1986-87. But industrial production is in doldrums and lot of capacity lies unutilised. The policy of liberalising imports has contributed to industrial stagnation, unutilised capacity and closure. The industry to be affected recently because of excessive imports is the fertiliser industry of the country. The Capital goods industry also is the victim of this charity towards foreigners. While shortage of electricity has played its role over imports of capital goods, iron ore, steel etc have caused serious dislocation in indigenous industry.

The deteriorating economic condition of the people, the continuous rise in consumer prices which affects the purchasing capacity of the people, the reduction of government expenditure on development projects, combined with import liberalisation deny all prospects of better performance and relief. The working class and the people must get ready to face new attacks transferring the burden of the crisis on their shoulders. All these once more underline the necessity and importance of concerted trade union action.

DIVISIVE FORCES

Comrades, at the last meeting of the General Council we discussed the gravity arising out of the challenge of the divisive

forces. Later on all important trade union centres decided to unitedly take steps to warn the people against this growing danger. But in the months that had passed since the General Council meeting, the attack of these forces is getting intensified in some respect while they are being contained to some extent. The situation in Punjab to some extent is much better than what it was six months back with the initiative in the hands of the security forces to protect the integrity and unity of the people. But the situation in the state continues to be dangerous as it was with the major part of the accord remaining unimplemented. The Government of India has delayed the transfer of Chandigarh to Punjab and thereby lost an important weapon to mobilise the people of Punjab against the secessionist activities of the Khalistanis. This is leading to vaciliation in the Barnala Ministry some of whose members are guilty of activities prejudicial to national unity and encouraging the extremist activities. The Punjab crisis can be solved only on the basis of honest implementation of the accord and simultaneous mobilisation of all democratic and patriotic elements to isolate and fight the murderous gangs acting in the name of Khalistan. The struggle for national unity in Punjab cannot be won by treating it as only a law and order problem. The primary instrument must be the political mobilisation of the people and isolation of the extremists. It is a matter of satisfaction that the working class of Punjab by and large has firmly stood by national and class unity rejecting the communal and secessionist appeals. This was in evidence when a joint trade union delegation consisting of representatives from all trade union centres was enthusiastically greeted by thousands of workers comprising of all communities and castes — majority coming from the Sikh community.

The working class must note that the murders of members of a minority community creates repercussions in other states. They are intended to rouse communal passion among the Hindus against Sikhs in other states so that the country is more and more divided on communal lines and the sikh minority is forced to migrate to Punjab while the Hindu minority is forced to leave Punjab. It must be admitted that the mass of people both in Punjab and in other states has displayed utmost sobriety and concern for communal unity by refusing to fall into the traps. The murderous actions in Punjab have been the handiwork of organised groups without the participation of the mass. Similarly the communal actions outside

Punjab have been due to the provocation of certain Hindu communal elements out to create trouble. The mass of people though sometimes agitated has refused to join the campaign of riot and arson. It is a matter of great shame that the BJP leaders both in Delhi and Ahmedabad have by their activities and slogans contributed to the growing communal tension ending sometimes in riots.

The divisive agencies backed and financed from abroad have now opened a new theatre for their operation by launching Gorkhaland movement in the Darjeeling district of West Bengal. The leader of the agitation has left no doubt about his reliance on foreign governments to achieve his aims. He has asked the governments of several countries including Nepal, Pakistan and others for help in his ignoble cause. He is emboldened to call for Pakistani help because he knows that Sikh terrorists are financed and trained from Pakistan.

This is an out and out secessionary and reactionary movement which can be fought with the aid of the people. Already the leaders of this movement have unleashed arson and violence on a number of occasions leading to police firing on their violent procession. Recently they burned down the house of Com. Anand Pathak, member of our Working Committee and Parliament Member from the district. It is a matter of great satisfaction that all parties including the Congress(I) in West Bengal have declared their opposition to the movement as disruptive of national unity. However, some leaders of the All India Congress like Arjun Singh, the Vice President of the Organisation are taking a dubious position and pleading that the movement should not be considered as anti-national. This is nothing but betrayal of the cause of national unity. It is amazing that such persons should occupy leading position in the Cong(I) organisation which boasts of its fidelity and loyalty to the cause of national unity and whose government holds periodical national integration conferences to assure the people that it is deeply committed to Indian unity.

The Left Front government of West Bengal understood that the Nepali speaking population of the Darjeeling district sufferes from backward conditions and from the same grievances regarding employment and economic conditions as the rest of the Indian masses. At the same time it was aware that there were certain special problems which had to be tackled to give Nepali speaking discusses as sense of unity and identity. While therefore launching

schemes to give economic relief and improve their living conditions the left front government declared Nepali as one of the official languages of the state. It also proposed to the Central Government that suitable legislation should be passed for providing autonomy to the area. If these proposals had been accepted by the Central Government the Nepali speaking people would have been considerably reduced.

Unlike in Punjab, the CPI(M) and the CITU are in a position to move their massive strength against the reactionaries and enter the battle for isolating them. The Tea Garden workers following the CITU unions and the workers and the people following the CPI(M) have now unleashed an explanatory and educational campaign among the Nepali speaking people to frustrate the secessionists. The Bandh call recently given by these organisations drew tens of thousands of tea garden workers speaking different languages to protest against the cvoercive attempts of the reactionary forces. Here there is not exclusive reliance on administrative measures and activities of security forces. A major political battle is being waged to win over those who have been trapped by the disruptive leadership. This is possible because the trade unions and the left forces have immense following, secured through political battles. Ultimately it is only this class strength among the people that can decisively defeat the forces of destabilisation.

All CITU unions and the entire trade union movement must convey our warm greetings to the Tea garden workers and Nepali speaking people rallied around the Left Front for their courageous fight to save Indian unity and promise full support to them in everything that they do.

Comrades, all this shows that the trade union movement must marshall all its forces to check the growth of divisive forces before it is too late. If the united trade union movement mobilises the entire working class to actively fight these disruptive forces, to fight them in factories, in offices to carry propaganda against them in meeting in procession and through bandhs they would be definitely put to fight and the country's unity will be saved.

Comrades, I must draw your attention to recent developments in the international situation which is growing tense. Thanks to the war drives of the US imperialists. The latest achievement of these war mongers seems to be explosion of a new device which assures them that Star War, carrying nuclear war into outer space

is a viable proposition. This is being done in the teeth of opposition from all peace loving forces, from all democratic forces and the socialist camp.

While the peace loving peoples in the world denounce these Star War moves they appreciate and applaud the peace proposals put forward by Com. Gorbachev on behalf of the USSR.

The various suggestions made by USSR to eliminate nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction have given a new push to the world peace movement and strengthened the determination and confidence of peoples of all countries and from all walks of life to defend peace at all cost. The warm response of the USSR to the appeal of the Governments of the six non-aligned countries and the unilateral extension of moratorium of nuclear tests have forced the imperialists to change their tactics. The conference of Non-aligned nations in Harare has further exposed the racist outlook of the USA Government which refuses to organise effective sanctions against the apartheid regime. By championing the fighters for South-African freedom and the front line states the Non-Aligned conferences have expressed the genuine desire of the people of the Third World to fight apartheid and end all racial domination. This is a big set back to the USA which was conspiring to organise dissensions in the Non-Aligned camp with the aid of some of its friends. The support given by the conference to Nicaragua and Libya also constitutes a sharp condemnation of USA's aggressive activities. The Government of India played a very important and anti-imperialist role at the Non-Aligned conference. With its forthright criticism of some of the misdeeds of the USA it contributed to the unity of the anti-imperialist forces. This policy of the Union Government which supports peace and opposes US war designs, which supports the liberation and independence of third world countries threatened by the USA is of great help in strengthening the world forces opposing imperialism. The trade union movement and working class must use this favourable opportunity to mobilise the working class against the war designs of US imperialism and its support for the struggle for peace. The Union Government's policy provides ample opportunity to the working class to propagate for the achievement of an international task.

Comrades, all this must make us realise that out contribution to the struggle for peace is yet very little. We are no doubt devoting greater attention to this vital problem but we are too far behind

compared with what is required. We must try to overcome this lag as quickly as possible and should not be satisfied with our big mass mobilisation in one or two states.

We of course congratulate our West Bengal and Kerala comrades for their great success in organising huge peace rallies. We call upon all other states to strengthen the peace movement and follow in the foot steps of West Bengal and Kerala. Comrades, we congratulate West Bengal and Kerala, Tamil Nadu and other states for collecting funds to support the people of Nicaragua threatened by US imperialists. By collecting the necessary help our comrades from the two states have discharged an important international duty. Let their example inspire others so that CITU can say that it has really taken in hand the task of discharging international responsibility.

Comrades, before I conclude I must draw your attention to the attempts to surround India with a hostile atmosphere and hostile governments. The Western border is intensively active with concentration of large number of Pakistani forces near the country's frontiers. The continuous pouring in of arms into Pakistan, the encouragement given to its belicosity and the provocative actions of the dictatorial regime are all calculated to rouse tension to an uncontrollable point. The military dictatorship charged with training and sending armed terrorists in Punjab, continued its misdeeds. It does not even attempt to explain away the charge because it is confronted with facts giving the exact location of training camps and the number of terrorists that are being trained. Such open violation of international norms and such aggressive acts are pursued brazen facedly because of the encouragement and help from US imperialists.

Recently another heinous and dastardly act was enacted in Pakistan with the connivance of the regime. The murder of several Indian passengers travelling by a Pan Am plane was an act of deliberate provocation to create tension and enmity between the two countries. It is significant that the highjackers chose only Indian passengers as their target of murder when their progress aim was to retaliate against the misdeeds of the USA. The way in which the alleged hijackers got access to the plane also speaks of collusion between them and the authorities.

Though some of the Indians killed were US citizens, Reagan administration was not in the least worried and agitated. It compli-

mented the Pakistani authorities on the way they handled the situation. This was nothing but congratulating the hijackers for their shooting skill which hit the Indian targets without touching a white skin.

The Government of India and Rajiv Gandhi was justified in charging the Pakistani administration with indifference and negligence. They were equally justified in saying that Pakistan's encouragement to hijackers of Indian blame was responsible for recent terrorist act.

The murder of Indians is part of the war fare of tensions that the military dictator carries on against India with the backing of the USA. This is a dangerous development which may any day overwhelm the people of the countries. The working class of India must be fully seized of the situation and be prepared to meet any contingents.

The situation can be changed to the advantage of both if the two people remain firm in their friendship and this determination to frustrate the designs of common enemy. The CITU and the working class must warmly support the fight waged by Pakistan's democratic forces against the military regime. Their success and restoration of democracy in Pakistan will cement the ties of friendship between the two countries and defeat imperialist conspiracies against both.

Comrades, it is not fully known among the workers that the TNV gangs who carry on their sorties of murders in Tripura are trained in Bangladesh. the military regime, unable to subdue the fighting chakmas and other tribals, drives them into Indian territory and follows it with sending TNV terrorists into the country.

In Srilanka the campaign of mass murder continues in the mist of promises of peaceful settlement. The Jayewardene Government has been guilty of double talk and duplicity. While it carries on negotiations with the TULF it intensifies its military attacks against the Tamils. The people of India and the working class fully sympathise with the courageous Srilankan Tamils. The CITU appreciates the principled stand of the Communist Party of Sri Lanka and other left organisations. The Union Government has assured Sri lanka that neither the people of the country nor the government supports dissection of Srilanka. All they want is a peaceful settlement and recognition of the just rights of the Tamil minorities.

The fight of the Tamils and India's support to them has

strained the relations between the Jayewardene Government and India. The imperialists are seizing the opportunity to create permanent barriers between two countries.

The CITU unions in Tamil Nadu and workers led by them have been opposing chauvinism of some elements in the state while defending the Srilankan Tamils. This chauvinism plays into the hands of US imperialism which seeks a direct conflict between the two countries to bring Srilanka under its domination.

In all states the working class and the CITU unions should be prepared to resist such chauvinistic solutions while fighting the divisive forces and the destabilising game of imperialism.

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4

11th Congress of The World Federation of Trade Unions— An Outstanding Event

THE Eleventh Congress of the World Federation of Trade Unions which held its session in Berlin (GDR) from September 16 to 22, was one of the outstanding events of the year. It brought together millions of workers from all countries to discuss the problems facing the working class and the world. It brought together millions of workers from Socialist countries who are masters of their economy and millions from advanced and developing countries who are faced with the acute problem created by unemployment and economic crisis. It brought together workers from all continents to fight the growing danger of war and defend world peace. It was a mighty gathering of the advanced class of modern society taking counsel, to solve the acute problems facing the world.

The representative character of the gathering could be seen from the Report of the Credential Commission appointed by Congress. The Report says" "The eleventh World Trade Unions Congress is by far the biggest trade union gathering to take place in the history of the international trade union movement, and the broadest and most representative forum for genuine and constructive dialogue about the concern and fundamental interest of the workers. The Commission informs the Congress that 1014 participants from all the continents of the world, representing 432 trade

union organisations, irrespective of affiliations, representing 296 million members from all over the world, are taking part in the Congress."

In addition, 14 internationally known organisations were also present at the Congress, including the ILO and UNESCO.

Among the total number of trade union organisations participating were 225 national centres in 160 industrial unions and local unions, including 43 from Africa, 29 from Near and middle East, 145 from the America, 93 from Asia and Oceania and 79 from Europe.

Trade union participants, classified by continents, are as follows:

(a) Africa	: 122
(b) Near and Middle-East	: 74
(c) Americans	: 215
(d) Asia & Oceania	: 196
(e) Europe	: 372

Women attending the Congress were 11.5 per cent of all the participants.

However, it is to be noted that the Chinese Trade Union Organisations were not participants in this gigantic international rally.

Unite the Huge Army of the Working Class

The key note of the Congress was all-embracing trade union unity. The WFTU, since its inception, has been endeavouring to bring about all-in unity of world trade unions so that full weight of the trade union movement is felt in international politics and the policy of each country. It has been endeavouring to bring together trade union organisations irrespective of their affiliations and their different outlooks on a common platform to tackle the urgent problems faced by the workers and the trade unions movement.

In fact, it placed before itself the same task that the International Working Men's Association founded by Marx and Engels undertook. In the preface to the new edition of the Communist Manifesto, Engels wrote: "Its (International Working Men's Association's) aim was to weld together into one huge army the fighting forces of the working class of Europe and America.... The international was bound to have a programme which would not shut the door on English Trade Unions, the French, Belgium,

Italian, Spanish, Prudonists and the German Lassalleans."

The WFTU, since its inception in 1945, has been strenuously working to bring together trade union organisations from all continents irrespective of their affiliations and views.

The main document adopted by the Congress ends with an appeal for uniting the trade union forces of the world.

"For the International Trade Union movement, the WFTU included, to be able to contribute more effectively to the shaping of the world to fulfil the dreams of the working people, create the conditions for the use of science and technology for human progress and not for war and destruction, to create the conditions for the full development of the human personality and deal effectively with the immense problems of poverty, inequality and exploitation, it is important to work in unity and cooperation.

"The WFTU will strive to promote broad international trade union cooperation and united actions on these issues, strengthening further its close relations with the ICATU, OATUU, CPUSTAL and other regional organisations, and with many national trade union centres irrespective of affiliation. The WFTU reiterates its principled standpoint of constructive co-operation with other international trade union centres, the ICFTU and WCL—in the spirit of mutual respect and traditions and international solidarity of workers and trade unions.

"The chief target of the Eleventh World Trade Union Congress is to contribute to the cause of unity, to enable the world trade union movement to accomplish its historical task to hasten human progress.

"The world trade union movement should therefore strive to find ways to unite all its force—in all countries, in all continents and in all social systems—in a grand united action for the defence of workers' interest and for social progress and peace".

AFL-CIO'S Sterile Stance

However, in spite of the persistent efforts of the WFTU for broader cooperation and greater united action, reactionary leaders of certain organisations have refused to cooperate and help forward its efforts for greater unification of the world trade union movement. The introductory report of the WFTU General Secretary, Ibrahim Zakharia says: "Mr. Lane Kirkeland, the President of the AFL-CIO, in a circular sent to affiliates in May this yes, has

chosen to reiterate the position taken in 1955, i.e., 31 years ago, to oppose contacts with the WFTU and the trade unions in Socialist countries.

"The AFL-CIO continues its sterile policy of assisting the arbitrary decision of the State Department in refusing visas to trade unionists from Socialist countries".

It is against this policy and this outlook that the World Federation of Trade Unions had to contend, to forge growing understanding between the different contingents of the trade union movement. Nonetheless the representative character of the gathering assembled in Berlin shows that the efforts to bring the different trade unions on a common platform, or for joint action and common dialogue, are succeeding and the ambit of united trade union action is getting wider every day.

Solidarity Affirmed

The Congress passed several resolutions greeting the fighting peoples and workers all over the world. It sent message to the Korean workers and people and expressed its deep concern about the increased US military presence with the deployment of nuclear weapons and preparations for war. It denounced the plot of the US occupation forces and the Government to create two Koreans and perpetuate the division of the country. It expressed solidarity with the people of Korea in their struggle for independence and peaceful reunification of the country.

It sent a message of solidarity to the workers and people of Paraguay who are fighting the oldest South American dictatorship, which slaughters the Paraguayan people, persecuting and killing opposition leaders.

It expressed its solidarity with the Arab people fighting against imperialist and Zionist plans to impose capitulatory policies embodied in the Camp David Agreement and denounced the continuing acts of war and aggression, and the occupation of Arab territory by Israel which has the total support of the US Administration. It also denounced the US policy of imposing its military and political hegemony on the Middle-East region. It expressed solidarity with the Palestinian people and workers in their struggle under the leadership of the PLO against Israeli occupation and brutal repression. It called for the liquidation of military bases and facilities and an end to the imperialist military presence in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Oman, Bahrain, Somalia, the Gulf, the Indian Ocean

and the Red Sea.

Against Apartheid

Expressing its deep solidarity with the fighting people of South Africa, the Congress condemned the racist Botha regime and called upon trade unions of all countries to reinforce their solidarity with, and support for, the anti-apartheid struggle and to strengthen the international campaign for lifting the state of emergency and the immediate and unconditional release of all political and trade union leaders and activists of South Africa and Namibia. It further demanded dismantling the abhorrent system of apartheid in South Africa and Namibia, and called for imposition of comprehensive mandatory sanctions against the Pretoria regime, and implementation of the U.N. Resolutions.

On Central America

In its resolution on the situation in Central America, the Congress condemned the criminal aggression by the United States against Nicaragua including its political, logistic and financial assistance to the counter-revolutionaries and mercenaries who comment acts of terrorism.

It expressed its solidarity with the people of Honduras and demanded the withdrawal of US troops which are occupying the country. It expressed its solidarity with the patriotic forces in El Salvador in their courageous struggle against the policy of genocide and the violation of elementary human rights by the Govt. In its message to the fighting people and workers of Chile, the Congress renewed its support and solidarity. It welcomed the activity of the National Workers' Command, an expression of the united traditions of the Chilean trade union movement, and a factor which promotes broad united action by all democratic sections of the country, most clearly expressed in the formation of the Civil Assembly. The document said, "We emphasise the decisive role of the workers in the recent great actions, particularly the huge national strike in Chile, on July 2 and 3 this year. We pay homage to the people's martyrs, the women and men of all tendencies who have laid down their lives in the struggle for freedom. We condemn with indignation the increasing brutal repression by the tyrant in his last desperate attempt to hold on to power. With all the people of Chile we say that Pinochet must go."

On Divisive Forces in India

Greeting the Indian people, the Trade Union Congress warned

them against the conspiracy of imperialist agencies to disrupt Indian unity with the aid of divisive forces in the country. The resolution welcomed the growing trade union unity in India to fight these forces and for the common demands of the workers.

On Iran-Iraq War

The Congress expressed deep concern over the continuing Iran-Iraq war and said that the presence of the American fleet in the Mediterranean and in the Gulf only expresses the imperialist intervention in the region and menaces world peace. It invited all democratic and peace-loving forces as well as the world trade union movement to intensity their efforts, addressed to the respective belligerents, in order to put into life an equitable peace, ruling out any interference in the internal affairs of the concerned countries.

On Working Women

The Congress adopted a resolution on working women who constitute 35 per cent of the world labour force. The resolution noted that women are the hardest hit by the consequence of the capitalist crisis. In the developing counties the burden of foreign debt and activities of the multinationals further contribute to attacks on their jobs. The Congress called on all trade unions to take initiative for action on the problems of working women such as equal opportunities for employment and promotion and equal remuneration, equal access to education, and vocational training, and social security measures without discrimination.

Experience in Socialist Countries

The Congress discussed the experience of Socialist countries, the economic and social situation in the world, the consequences of the arms race, the situation in the developing countries, the struggles and priorities for action, the struggle for peace, the defence of jobs, the right to work, and defence of trade union rights, and the question of trade union unity.

The main document of the Congress observes: "Millions of working men and women in the Socialist part of the world are already, at the end of 20th century, living in a society freed from the exploitation of man by man and where the means of production are public property. This fundamental transformation has eliminated those tremendous problems which are now hitting the capitalist world. The fact that in Socialist countries all citizens are guaranteed the right to work shows that a policy of all employment and social

guarantees can be formulated and implemented. In these countries, there are no violent dislocations of industry, of the kind the TNCs enforce through their plans of 'restructuring' and 'redeployment', and the effective utilisation of all national resources is ensured taking into account the views of the workers and trade unions."

The plan of rapid economic development of the Soviet economy announced by the 27th Congress of the CPSU underlines the strides that a country can make under the Socialist system. The GDR and other Socialist countries are also forging ahead claiming new economic victories in their advance.

These achievements are rendered possible because of the general principles of development of Socialist society, such as the power of the workers, the leading role played by the working class, the consolidation of the public ownership of the means of production, and on that basis the planned development of the economy in the interests of the whole nation and the development of Socialist democracy. A State representing the interest of the working class can ensure continuous victories in economic advance on the basis of socialised means of production and planning in the interests of the people.

Chronic Crisis in Capitalist World

In contrast, the capitalist world finds itself in a state of chronic crisis and stagnation. The document of the Congress observes: "The claims of a recovery from the economic downturn are now being overtaken by the fear of another recession, and the falling rate of growth of the United States economy. The under-utilisation of capacity continues to be high, along with the high rate of unemployment among industrial workers. The economic situation of the developing countries has worsened due to the monetary and financial policies and protectionist measures pursued by the developed capitalist countries. The unparalleled rise in their foreign debts, high interest rates and other burdens imposed by International Monetary Fund further aggravate the situation in these countries."

Inflation and capitalist exploitation have resulted in a steady decline in the real income of the workers in capitalist countries. The austerity policies pursued by Governments and employers in the name of containing inflation aggravate the economic and social problems. The deflationary policies adopted under the excuse of

controlling inflation in a number of capitalist countries have led to more unemployment, forcing down the living standards of the workers through sharp cuts in purchasing power, with the economic recovery nowhere in sight. The rate of inflation continues to be high in developing countries, reducing the purchasing power of millions of people who are already living below the poverty line. The immense negative consequences of the activities of the Transnational Corporations and Banks are now matters of world concern, observes the document. The monstrous economic power of these anti-labour and anti-people organisations can be seen from the fact that the foreign operations of the U.S. based Transnational Corporations employ as much as one half of the total work force in the manufacturing industries in the USA, and their annual turnover is about 1500 thousand million dollars, or nearly 40 per cent of the U.S. gross national product. In the developed countries, those forced below the poverty line have become more numerous, while in developing countries the problems of unemployment underemployment, inflation, exodus from rural areas, the crisis in housing, transport, education and working and living conditions in general, have become more acute.

Capitalism Uses Technology for Profiteering

The economic misery of the people and the lowering of the living standards of the workers stand in sharp contrast with the new opportunities opened by scientific and technological progress. Capitalism cannot use technological and scientific advance in the interest of society. Socialism with its socialised means of production is able to use advances in science and technology for all round progress, shorter working hours and rising living standards.

The main document of the Congress observes: "Capitalism and the social forces supporting its interests are waging a propaganda battle through the media on the virtues of technology, as if its utilisation were neutral. But in the absence of the widest possible participation of the masses in deciding how to control and direct technology, it is bound to result also in negative consequences such as staff cuts, greater exploitation and profiteering, increase in psychological and nervous stress and isolation of workers from each other and from their jobs."

In underdeveloped countries the attack of new technology introduced by employers and bourgeois-landlord governments does

ten times more damage. These countries like India, suffer from a huge backlog of unemployment, their economies are in a transitional state with a huge number depending on small-scale production and traditional industries. Widespread introduction of new technology, irrespective of the interests of the people concerned, acts as a call to economic anarchy and drives lakhs into beggary and starvation.

The economic crisis and introduction of new technology, together with the growing stranglehold of Transnational Corporations over the economies of the advanced capitalist countries, result in unending attacks on the living standards of the workers, massive unemployment and assaults on the liberties and rights of the trade union movement.

Offensive Against Workers

The main document of the Congress focussed attention on these attacks and the numerous devices used by the employers to deny the workers their legally guaranteed rights. It observes: "Collective bargaining has been divested of its content. Today the employers and governments in capitalist countries are pressurising workers and trade unions to make concessions, and to abandon, the gains of years of struggle. To enforce these tremendous setbacks they are trying to pit workers against workers, practice open discrimination in the recruitment and employment practices, introduce two-tier wage systems and enact anti-labour legislations attacking workers and trade unions."

"This would mean a further rise in the number of unemployed, the number of those who are under-employed and among those with unstable jobs—increase in the number of workers who, in order to live, are forced to accept jobs without any legal protection or social guarantees, without any job security in the so-called informal sectors and in the unregulated black economy.

This is seen in many developing countries in the form of increasing induction of contract labour and intensified exploitation of women workers, young workers, and in many countries child labour as well, in the unorganised sector of Industry."

India—No Exception

This is what is happening in all countries developed and underdeveloped. India is no exception. Over the last few years several legislations have been passed giving authority to the Government to illegalise any strike. The MISA, the ESMA, the

Industrial Disputes Act, are all used by several Governments to ban strikes. Besides, there is suppression of those who participate in legal strikes also. Bilateral negotiations are becoming farcical. More and more the employers and the Government deal only with favoured pliant organisations depriving the workers of the right to use their own bargaining agent.

Recently the Prime Minister himself intervened to cancel an agreement arrived at between a recognised union and the management of a public sector concern.

New proposals are now made to foist compulsory adjudication on workers, to ban strikes trade union legislation is being changed to make it difficult for a militant union to function; recognition of trade unions on the basis of workers' ballot is denied and the check-off system is being introduced to determine the bargaining agent; solidarity strikes are proposed to be banned.

In these years private employers and governments are relying more and more on contract and temporary labour, practising discrimination against women workers, denying equal pay for equal work, and reducing to a farce minimum wage legislation in organised industries.

The Eleventh Congress has succeeded in pinpointing the plight of labour in all capitalist countries.

Rising Military Expenditure of Imperialist Countries

The monstrous rise in the military expenditure of the US and the other imperialist countries, aggravates the economic situation. The Congress notes: "A halt to the arms race, achieving arms control and disarmament could release enormous resources which can directly help to solve the immense social problems in developed and developing countries."

The curtailment and reduction of this expenditure has become a vital question for the millions of the unemployed in the developed countries. Employment in these countries can be increased by converting military industry to civil use. Annual military expenditure in the world today is equivalent approximately to the total accumulation of foreign debt of developing countries. "A mere ten per cent reduction in arms expenditure would be sufficient to finance a 10-year development programme to benefit the millions of workers and people now deprived of even the barest necessities."

The Congress called for massive mobilisation of all the peace

forces and primarily workers and trade unions to secure drastic reduction of expenditure on military budgets.

Neo-Colonialist Exploitation

The Congress underlined the specific features of the situation in developing countries, subjected to brutal neo-colonialist exploitation. It said that in these countries all the negative features of the world capitalist crisis are drastically amplified. The reasons for the widespread phenomena of mass poverty are clear enough. Financial institutions like the IMF and the World Bank are used to plunder the resources of the developing countries. The loot gathered by Trans-National Corporations and banks amounts to over 200 billion dollars a year. The foreign debt of the developing countries is a main factor which aggravates the crisis, prevents any economic recovery, blocks all possibilities of development and jeoparadises the sovereignty of the people.

Further as in India, "The developing countries are under pressure to denationalise their public sector units—a measure which would greatly retard their struggles for economic independence—and to sell the public sector enterprises to TNCs in order to pay back their loans. This is all part of the present capitalist policy in favour of the privatisation of public services."

The Congress further warns—a warning that the working class of India should take note of —"A particularly vicious form of plunder and over exploitation is being developed through the free trade zones and export processing zones in many developing countries, as neo-colonialist enclaves of the TNCs. Here production is openly geared to the exclusive profit of the monopolies. National laws and labour laws are not respected. Trade unions are banned in most cases. In fact the workers have almost become like immigrant workers deprived of their rights and nationals become foreigners in their own country."

Domestic Policies of Reactionary Governments

The Congress draws pointed attention to the domestic policies of reactionary Governments of developing countries which are totally inadequate to meet the crisis. It says; "A key aspect of the 'development crisis. in many countries is the deterioration in the agricultural situation which is directly linked to the failure to introduce democratic agrarian reforms and end feudal and semi-feudal land relations.

The fight against famine and hunger which is part of the

struggle for agricultural and rural development based on fair income-distribution and justice has vital international aspects. The establishment of the New International Economic Order is of direct relevance to their struggle in order to end unequal economic relations inherited from colonialism.

The task of the trade unions in developing countries in relation to the country's freedom and economic independence, defence of the peasantry and the defence of the workers' rights are thus outlined. The establishment of a new economic order occupies a prominent place among these tasks.

Struggle for World Peace

The Congress attached vital importance to the question of world peace and its defence. It analysed the international situation and called upon the trade unions to fight the forces of war unitedly and carry on a united struggle for peace. It stressed the urgency of common actions of all trade unions irrespective of their political affiliations and welcomed the fact that since the Tenth Congress, the forces of peace have developed greater strength and participation of the workers and trade unions have increased in all countries.

The document says, recent efforts have again emphasised the reality that the policy of detente, disarmament, peace and international co-operation cannot be maintained and consolidated except through the vigilance and permanent struggle of the progressive and anti-imperialist forces of the peoples all over the world. It further says, the reactionary imperialist forces which cannot agree with the recent transformation in the world arena and with the general tendency of the historic evolution of society towards independence and social progress, have become increasingly aggressive. Escalating the arms race far and wide, the imperialist ruling circles led by the Reagan Administration, continue the policy of creating and aggravating hotbeds of tension, support the expansionist and aggressive actions of their racist and Zionist allies in the Middle-East and South Africa, and prop up the dictatorship and reactionary regimes in Latin America and Asia. The policies of the U.S. administration, supported by the NATO military circles seeking to achieve military superiority, increase international tension, and the danger to mankind from a nuclear catastrophe is now greater than ever. A new danger is growing right now with the U.S. Star Wars project.

The Congress supported the proposals made by the Soviet

Union in January 1986, which aim for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons by the year 2000 A.D. and to build peace and security.

The document adds, the arms race, the serious nature of its social and economic consequences and the dangers it is bringing about, have caused a renewal in the actions of the workers and peoples. Despite using all means for the campaign to make the Socialist countries responsible for the arms race and to split the peace movement, this movement has broadened. It is taking all varied forms and has enveloped the broadest sections of the population.

Women and young people are becoming more involved in trade union movements regardless of their views, differences of divergences; are taking position against the arms race.

The Congress warns there can be no winners in a nuclear war. There can be no winners in an arms race. Therefore, the guarantee of security becomes a political task. The urgent need of the agenda is the establishment of a comprehensive system of international security, covering military, political, economic and humanitarian aspects. The trade unions and other mass democratic movements have an important role to play in the world-wide mobilisation to fulfil this task.

Therefore, the Eleventh Congress demanded that to defend peace it was necessary to have international detente, peaceful cooperation and mutual confidence among peoples; a complete ban on tests, production, stockpiling and use of nuclear, chemical and bacteriological weapons, all new weapons of mass destruction and the complete dismantling of all such weapons systems; a ban on militarisation of outer space, an end to the arms race, reduction of military expenditure and gradual arms reduction, leading to general disarmament.

Fight Against Unemployment

Calling for defence of jobs and the right to work the Congress said unemployment and insecurity in work and in life have dramatic consequences on the lives of the millions of the people who have to endure them. Trade unions have a vital task to organise all those workers, organise solidarity and the defence of the demands. For this purpose it is necessary to increase the purchasing power of wages, allowances and pensions, to control prices and reduce inflation by attacking the real root causes, profiteering, arms ex-

penditure, financial speculation, all kinds of capitalist wastages, to put an end to all policies pursued by governments which restrict economic growth, to improve the social protection of workers, to put an end to wage discrimination, of which women, youth and immigrants are constant victims, to take steps to guarantee the livelihood of the unemployed and their families.

Moratorium on Debt Repayment

In relation to developing countries the Congress demanded that the problem of external debt which strangles economic and social development, should be tackled by imposing a postponement, or moratorium, or immediate suspension of payments, or the indefinite adjournment of the debt and interest. It also laid stress on the establishment of the New International Economic and Social Order.

For Agrarian Reforms

It further demanded that the developing countries should carry out agrarian reforms formulated and implemented with the active participation of the peasants' and agricultural workers' organisations, ensuring the elimination of all forms and vestiges of colonial, feudal and large land ownership, transferring the land to those who work in it, modernising agriculture, developing rural zones, ensuring equitable living and work conditions for agricultural workers; public control including nationalisation of the main economic activities and management of the national resources, in order to withdraw them from the hands of the leading monopoly groups, both local and foreign, the right to regulate and monitor TNCs and foreign capital operations.

Fight for T.U. Rights

Calling on all trade unions to defend trade union rights the Congress said that under present day conditions, when mass monopolies and Governments in capitalist countries are waging fierce attacks on the trade unions, openly proclaiming their aim to build union free society and using the crisis to justify this aim, the trade unions must promote their struggle in all spheres to withstand such a threat to their very existence, and to ensure the respectability to trade union rights and the protection of these rights.

The Congress, therefore, demanded effective recognition of workers' and trade union's right to participate in the formulation of labour legislation and in all decision making bodies at governmental and company level; on all questions of social and economic

policies, particularly the policies related to the working and living conditions of workers; preservation of the right to collective bargaining without any element of compulsory arbitration or pressure on negotiations to the detriment of the workers' interests; the right to set up trade unions especially in new industries and TNC-owned enterprises, including the right to such trade unions to recognition and to unrestricted collective bargaining, the right to strike including solidarity strikes, ban on fines for so-called illegal strikes, and all court intervention to sequestrate union funds, and end to repression on trade unions and to the interference of monopolies and governmental bodies in the internal affairs of the union, and their attempts to split trade unions and force workers to leave them.

Call for Common Action

Having given this comprehensive programme to the workers to defend their interests to use the organised strength of the trade unions for the furtherance of social progress, the Congress finally asked the trade unions and trade union centres to join together for common action to defend peace, to defend workers' rights, to fight the TNCs and take an active part in solving the capitalist imposed problems of unemployment, poverty and inequality.

The decisions of the 11th Congress of the WFTU should urge India's trade union movement to close its ranks to fight the attack against the workers, the attack against the country's unity and integrity, the danger from the intrusion of the multinationals and the defence of world peace. The unity already achieved, though welcome is too restricted and inadequate to discharge these tasks. The National Campaign Committee continues to have a restricted base and it needs to be widened to secure the active participation of industrial federations and organisations. Similarly greater urgency needs to be shown to fight the divisive forces and the challenge to country's integrity. The trade unions, besides, must give up the practice of symbolic protest and prepare the workers for massive actions to defend their rights and democracy, and discharge their responsibility to the country, the people, and for defending peace.

The Working Class, Vol. 16, N0. 3, November 1986

5

Greetings to the Working Class of Soviet Union

The Centre of Indian Trade Unions conveys its warm greetings to the working class and the people of the Soviet Union on the occasion of the anniversary of the Great November Revolution.

The year that has passed since last November saw the Soviet Union occupying the centre of world attention in all spheres of its activities.

The achievements of the 11th Five Year Plan in the midst of an acute crisis of the capitalist world with its millions of unemployed, the historic session of the 27th Congress of the CPSU and its grand 15 years plan to fully use the potentiality of the industrial and scientific revolution to restructure the economy, the success in maintaining military parity with the aggressive forces of imperialism and finally its great battle for world peace have made the USSR the focus of world attention inspiring millions to fight the scourge of want and need and the growing menace of nuclear war.

These achievements of the Soviet working class and the people have consolidated the unity of the socialist camp, strength-

ened the international solidarity of the working class and rallied the third world countries to support the peace proposals of the Soviet Union and offer a confident resistance to the pressures and blackmailing of the imperialists.

Fifteen Year Plan of Economic Development

The programme adopted by the 27th Congress and the 15 year plan of intense economic development constitute inspiring documents to a world which under capitalism is beset with difficulties, crisis and set-backs. The plan lays down the main target of the economic and social development; national income is to be doubled by the end of the century ; production potential to be be doubled and qualitatively transformed ; labour-productivity to go up by 2.3 to 2.5 times; per capita real income to rise by 60 to 80 per cent; service industry to be highly developed, thereby drastically cutting down the labour expenditure on house work. The key social task of providing a flat or house practically for every family is to be accomplished by commissioning housing complexes with the total floor space of not less than 2000 million square metres. It is planned to continue the course towards the accumulated growth of social consumption funds which are an important instrument for the further development of the national system for free public education and health service and of social security and for improving recreation and leisure facilities for the working people. The volume of these funds is to be approximately doubled.

All this is to be achieved on the basis of rapid development in industrial and agricultural production.

Recession in Capitalist Countries

No country in the capitalist system is able to promise such development and achievements in the interest of the people. For the USA and the major capitalist countries economic recovery is not yet in sight. On the contrary they are plagued by fear of another recession. The problem of unemployment is proving intractable. They cannot cope with the developed forces of production under the revolution in science and technology. But the socialist society can

do it. Hence its grand plan of rapid development in the next 15 years.

Planned Socialist Economy

This is possible because a socialist society with its socialised means of production, planned production for serving the people and the fundamental right to work is capable of harnessing the achievements of modern science and technology without creating any disturbance in the economy. The plight of the capitalist society shows that modern productive forces cannot be contained within the private property relations of the capitalist society. The contradiction between the socialised form of production and private form of appropriation is extremely intensified under the new technological advance.

Defence of the Socialist System Vital

The plans of social advance do not ignore the vital question of Soviet defence. It has been repeatedly stated by the Soviet Union that while it works for peace it will never allow the imperialists to secure military superiority over it.

The plan of restructuring Soviet economy and maintaining its defence capability are matters of vital importance to the world working class and the nations and the people fighting US imperialism and its racist allies. Their success will further change the balance of world force in favour of peace, freedom and socialism and will act as a rebuff to US aggressive ambitions of global domination.

The working class and the progressive forces in all countries wish success to the Soviet workers and people in their great endeavour to re-structure and re-organise Soviet economy and society and unleash new productive forces to further improve their living standard.

Socialist System Rejects War, Fights for Peace

The year that has passed since last November has witnessed

a series of peace initiatives coming from the Soviet Union. The Socialist system rejects war and its foreign policy is based on peace and peaceful co-existence. Since its emergence the Soviet Union has consistently upheld the policy of peace.

Every effort to aggravate international tension is meeting with new proposals for peace from the Soviet Union sharpening the contrast between the foreign policy of the two systems and exposing imperialism to a barbaric system which requires war and massacre for its survival.

On January 15 this year Soviet Union made its historic proposals for elimination of weapons of mass destruction and for reduction in other weapons. The 27th Congress of the CPSU reiterated these proposals and suggested a constructive programme of measures aimed at ending the arms race, achieving disarmament and ensuring peace and security.

The War Designs of US Imperialism

What has been the response of USA to these proposals? The Reagan administration refuses to accept moratorium on nuclear tests. It refuses to abandon its project of Star War, carrying nuclear weapons into outer space.

The USA besides, is set on building a pacific counter part of the NATO in the Asian Pacific region, centering round Washington-Tokyo-Seoul axis. This is an effort to open another nuclear front against the USSR and simultaneously pressurise and blackmail the nations of the region to submit to US designs. Two years back Japan was drawn as an active partner for defence of the global security of the imperialist. The Japanese Government recently decided that its private firms and public institutions will participate in the research phase of the US Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI) —Star War project.

Working Class Defends Peace

If the imperialist provocateurs, the leaders of the military-industrial complexes refuse to respond to the Soviet proposals, the

working class and the People hail them and appreciate the Soviet Union's struggle to defend peace. The Soviet proposals are leading to a new upsurge of anti-war movements. All efforts of the imperialists to hold the socialist countries responsible for the arms race and split the peace movement have failed. The peace movement is broadening and spreading to new sections. The participation of women and young people is increasing. And there is greater trade union unity to fight the war menace regardless of differences and divergence. The fight for peace is getting the support of non-aligned countries. The Harare Conference spoke with one voice in favour of peace giving a rebuff to US war mongers. The fight for peace is getting the support of all anti-imperialist forces in developing countries threatened with imperialist aggression.

On 7th November, the international working class raises its banner in support of the Soviet proposals. All must raise their voice to demand that Reagan enters into a meaningful dialogue at the meeting in Iceland and agrees to an immediate ban on nuclear tests.

The working class and the people of India send warm greetings to the working class and the people of Soviet Union and wish them success in the great battle for world peace. They fully endorse the proposals of the Soviet Union and demand a proper response from the USA.

Indo-Soviet treaty Strengthens Struggle for Peace

India and Soviet Union have developed firm ties of friendship based on equality. The Indo-Soviet Treaty of Friendship has cemented these ties and has been of great help in resisting the imperialist pressures on our country. Gorbachev in his Vladivostok speech expressed warm sentiments for the people of India.

Praising India's role in the non-aligned movement, he said "We highly assess its (non-align movement's) contribution to assert standards of equitable co-existence and justice in the international community. Friendly relations between the USSR and India

became a stabilising factor on a world-wide scale." The working class of India understands the international importance of Indo-Soviet Friendship and resolves to strengthen it as a part of its struggle for peace.

9.10.86

The Working Class Vol. 16, No. 3 November 1986

6

On To 21st January

THE public Sector workers belonging to all organisations will go on a complete strike on 21st January giving an exemplary demonstration of their unity and solidarity in spite on multiplicity of organisations. They will do so in accordance with the decision taken by the convention of public sector organisations held in Delhi in October last. It was the largest gathering of public sector organisations with the participation of no less than 800 delegates. It was also attended by a number of officers organisations.

What is the compelling reason for this strike action. It is a direct action of the working class not simply for some immediate demands of its own, the workers are primarily striking for safeguarding the economy of the country, for protecting its independence, they are striking in national interest. It is a protest against Rajiv Government's policy of denigrating and destabilising the public sector without which India by now would have been a helpless victim of the imperialist dominated economy of the West.

The strike notice given to the Government of India asks it to take several measures to defend and the public sectors. They include a halt to the policy of privatisation of the public sector, prohibition of entry of multinationals and monopolies into sphere of activities of the public sector, stopping of import of technology and goods deterimental to the indigenous development, ban on introduction of modernisation, computerisation, etc without prior approval of the trade unions and opposition to farming out or offloading of jobs of regular workers to private contractors. Apart

from these the notice calls for settlement of some of the immediate demands of the workers.

This protest of the working class against the economic policy of the Rajiv Gandhi Government is of great importance. The year 1986 will go down as a year of the offensive of the new economic policy of Rajiv Government. To the usual four afflictions of economic policy misery and poverty; unemployment, floods and drought is now added the offensive of the new economic policy which threatens to multiply all these evils and in the bargain create a danger of enslavement of the economy by the multinationals.

The central point in this new offensive is the systematic attack on the public sector so laboriously built by previous governments to create an independent base for Indian economy is now being liquidated with a crusader's zeal. The crisis of the economy brought about by the capitalist path is compelling the Government to accept many demands of the World Bank and open the country to the blast of multinationals. Recent figures show that our country, if this policy is pursued for long, will enter into a debt trap from which it will find it difficult to get out. What are the dangers and consequences of this policy? In the first place there is every danger that the public sector will be invaded by the agencies of multinationals and independence of Indian economy will be threatened. Secondly, increase in unemployment. The government itself if discriminating against public sector and placing orders with foreign multinationals. While orders have been denied to the BHEL, they are passed on to the Italian or some other companies. Preference for foreign companies over the public sector is also seen in the contract handed over to a foreign company in Kashmir.

Besides, the capital goods industry is facing recessionary conditions due to import liberalisation. Foreign producers taking the advantage of the new policy are dumping their goods in the Indian market and ousting domestic capital good producers. The capital goods industry showed a growth rate of 3.6 per cent in 1985-86. On the other hand the trade deficit expanded from Rs. 5500 crores in 1984-85 to Rs. 8600 crores in 1985-86, mainly on account of larger imports, among others, of machinery and machine tools. Of the 9 machine manufacturing industries, rubber machinery showed a decline of 14.5 per cent in 1985-86 compared with 1984-85; mining machinery of 10.2 per cent; paper machinery 6.2 per cent; sugar machinery 2.7 per cent; printing machinery 1.9 per cent and drugs

and pharmaceuticals 1.1 per cent.

Such is the damage done by the present import policy and the invitation to foreign multinationals to compete in the Indian market. Now these multinational are competing for Government contracts which are often given to them in preference to the bids of the public sector companies. The threat of penetration of multinationals in the public sector is a real threat.

This economic policy if it continues will have devastating effect both in the employment situation in the country and the economy of the country. It will lead to virtual scuttling of all planning and place ordinary people completely at the mercy of the multinationals and private monopolists. Needless to say this will definitely compromise the independence of the economy and all talk of self-reliance will have to end.

It is against this calamitous policy which endangers national interests that the public sector workers are voicing their protest and going in for strike action. They are doing a patriotic job and striking a new path for the trade union movement, the path of intervening in the economic policies to defend the interest of the nation and the people.

All sections of the working class, all trade unions and all section of the people must support this action of the public sector workers, they should develop solidarity actions including a strike action wherever possible to voice protest against Rajiv Gandhi's economic policy. Let 21st January be the day of the widespread solidarity and unity of the working class for defence of the national economy, defence of the public sector against the penetration of the multinationals. All sections of the trade union movement should remind themselves that the task of working class is not only to defend its immediate interests but to take a lead for protecting the interests of the people, country and the nation against the compromising policies of the government. Let all sections of the working class contribute to the success of 21st January strike.

The Working Class, Vol. 16, No. 5, January 1987

7

Address To The Orissa CITU Conference

9-12 December, 1986

Comrades,

Let me offer my congratulations to all of you, workers and leaders of the CITU unions for the brave and courageous fight you have been carrying on in defence of the interests of the workers and trade union rights. The Cong(I) rule in Orissa State and its ministry show scant regard for the basic fundamental right of organisation guaranteed by the constitution. The Orissa ministry is one of the worst violaters of the fundamental rights not only of the workers but also of the peasants, the adivasis, the journalists, and the press. A large number of scandals have appeared in the press regarding the functioning of the ministry, involving some ministers themselves. There have been reports of molestation and rape of adivasis women, illegal arrest of journalists and kidnapping and murder of a wife of a journalists also and repression of students, of course there have been firing on striking workers, arrest of their leaders and so on. The Bihar and Orissa Ministers of the Cong(I) stand in a class by themselves for sheer violation of fundamental rights, unlimited repression of the people and violation of all norms of decent public life.

The unions in Orissa have sufficient experience of this. All this shows that the trade union movement is not a bed of roses but a battle field where the interests of the exploiters and exploiting classes clash. It demands heroism and sacrifice in the common

cause and our Orissa comrades have given ample evidence of their capacity to suffer for the cause of the working class. I pay my homage to all those who have sacrificed their lives for workers' cause. I also express my profound sympathy for all those who lost their near and dear ones like our Comrade Rout.

Comrades, our movement here is weak but we have made progress since our last conference. Our activities in mining areas have increased and our work in the Steel plant has also been strengthened. We have to our credit a number of dourly fought battles in the textile industry.

What can be compared with the prolonged struggle of textile workers against an illegal and unjustified lock-out, a struggle which means starvation and sufferings for the families of workers? But they did not dampen the spirit of our unity and solidarity. It is because of our steadfast loyalty to the workers, because the management and the Cong(I) wage an illegal war against us. The latest instance is of the management of Bhaskar Textile Mill which illegally suspended some of our workers in its efforts to stifle the growth of the Jharsuguda Industrial Mazdoor Union. This again shows who disturbs industrial peace and disorganises production. This intimidating activity however will not succeed. The workers are bound to rally round the union which fights their battles and does not sacrifice their interests.

It is a matter of shame of the Cong(I) govt that on 22nd July this year the mine workers of Sundargarh and Keonjhar districts had to organise a protest day against police repression and non-implementation of mine acts and labour laws and goonda attacks. Labour laws day by day are being reduced to a farce by all Cong(I) govts in the states and the Central Govt. itself. Their utility to the Cong(I) govt is to create an impression abroad that India is a civilised country and observes conventions of ILO.

Comrades, I must warn the mining workers, the steel workers and others that a big offensive against their jobs is being planned under Rajiv Gandhi's new economic policy, which in the name of efficiency calls for greater privatisation of industry and offers invitation to multinationals in the name of introducing advance technology. The growing weakening and liquidation of the public sector is on the agenda. This will have dangerous consequences not only for the workers but also for our entire people and nation. The public sector, laboriously built by the previous governments,

which offered a base for independence of our economy, will be open to the growing influence of foreign multinationals whose only aim is to exploit the workers and the nation as much as possible and finally to enslave them. The multinational companies do not tolerate nor observe any labour laws. They demand absolute right to hire and fire the workers as it suits them, regardless of workers' interest and effect on their jobs.

Rajiv Gandhi's new economic policy, besides, stands for allowing greater and greater freedom to Indian big private concerns who also demand a free hand in dealing with labour. To meet this demand the Rajiv govt. proposes to introduce new labour legislations which will favour pliant unions and virtually illegalise militant and honest unions. The proposed legislation further attacks the workers' right to strike and compels them to join a union recognised by the management. Recently Rajiv Gandhi intervened and vetoed an agreement arrived at between the management of a public sector concern and the union of the workers in that concern.

The government's quest for modernisation and computerisation is going to kill tens of thousands of jobs. The middle class employees are threatened by the assault of computerisation and it will be ruinous for them and their organisations not to join the common trade union movement and refuse to affiliate themselves to all India trade union centres. The miserly concessions given to the central govt. employees by the fourth pay commission and that too at the cost of increase of hours of work and the inability to put-up any resistance against this shows the pathetic condition of their organisations standing aloof from the working class trade union centres.

Comrades, we are in the midst of a situation which threatens jobs of lakhs of people. Unless we all, our unions and the entire trade union movement stand united, we will be overwhelmed by the attack. Unemployment problem has become very serious and registered unemployment has reached three crores. Many times more are unemployed in the villages. The government want to add this number by its modernisation programme. The Central Govt advertises its schemes of rural relief and employment and claims that every year lakhs of people are raised above the poverty line. These claims are unsubstantiated as it is clear from the following: The official statistics reveal that there were 26 lakh families which benefited by the major poverty elimination schemes of integrated

rural development programme, (IRDP) during 1985-86 as against the target of 40 lakh families. The concurrent evaluation of the programme however discloses that in 23 per cent of the cases surveyed there has been no increase in the income from assets provided. In 30 per cent of cases the assets were not intact, that is, either old, fully perished, partly perished or defective. This will show that the claim that all beneficiaries of the programme are automatically lifted above the poverty line is baseless. Here the majority of beneficiaries do not experience any change in their income or economic status.

Comrades, in these circumstances it is absolutely necessary to organise greater and greater trade union unity to fight the offensive against jobs and wage earnings. It is necessary to strengthen our ranks to fight the effects of the government's new economic policy and save the public sector from being liquidated. It is a matter of some satisfaction that the National Campaign Committee of several trade union centres is active and contributes to the growing unity. But much more remains to be done in the trade union movement to really assert its strength and defeat the coming onslaughts. I am glad that our Orissa CITU has taken several steps to forge common front with other organisations on the question of divisive forces, national integration, and peace. It is also gratifying to see that the Orissa CITU has already started addressing itself to the question of unemployed workers.

But comrades, all this is not enough. Unless now we examine the recent past of our trade union movement, understand the changes that have come not only in the situation affecting the working class but our country and our people, we will not be able to plan our activities to meet the new developments. I am putting before you what exactly constitutes the present day situation facing the working class of India. Since independence, over the last 40 years, the situation in our country has radically changed and the working class, like the rest of our people, has to face new urgent problems alongwith the defence of its daily interests.

The tasks of the working class, its duties and responsibilities are not identical with the trade union struggle, its immediate struggle against exploitation. The workers are part of the nation, they are the citizens of the country and like the rest of the people they have to discharge their responsibilities regarding the defence, unity and integrity of the country.

The trade union movement is a part of the great democratic struggle of our people for protecting and expanding democracy to march forward to socialism which alone will abolish exploitation of man by man. The struggle for political power in the hands of the working class and the people, the struggle to establish a state of People's Democracy is a part of the working class struggle to achieve socialism and power of the working people.

During the freedom struggle and subsequent to it, a major part of India's working class put its trust in National Congress and its bourgeois leadership. Year after year they voted for the Congress and sometimes for other bourgeois parties not committed to radical social change, much less to socialism. Only in certain states like Kerala, West Bengal, Tripura they voted for CPI(M), CPI and the Left parties. This was to a certain extent inevitable in the earlier years. The Congress led the freedom struggle of the country. After independence some laws favourable to the working class were passed. Important among these were the eight hour working day, leave with pay and some other legislations. This was a period when the Indian bourgeoisie were capturing the home market, protecting it against the foreign competition and were in a position to make some concessions to workers.

This together with the political confidence in the national leadership made the workers confine themselves only to their daily demands leaving the conduct of the state, its economic policies, planning and the fate of the country into the hands of the bourgeois-landlord Govt.

The result of this tailing behind the bourgeois leadership has been disastrous. The economic actions of the successive Congress Govts. were based on pursuit of the capitalist path for India. Its results are today seen in huge unemployment in urban areas, still bigger unemployment in rural areas, immiserisation of the peasantry, cheated of agrarian reforms; high prices; inflation and attack on the democratic rights of the workers and the people; The emergency was a big warning to the working class to defend democracy and not to confine itself to day to day struggle for immediate demands.

It is in this background that we have to discuss the urgent tasks facing the working class. It is clear that the working class will not be able to play its role in national politics and defend the interests of the country unless its own strength is well organised.

The trade union movement defending the daily interests of the workers is the starting point of its organisation. The Govt. and the employers denounce it because they know it is an effective instrument for fighting their exploitation. In the last 40 years the trade union movement has grown, thanks to the sacrifices, and suffering of the workers, many of whom had to lay down their lives to defend the elementary right to organisation.

Under stress of the attacks of the employers and the impact of the economic crisis, the sense of trade union unity is growing. The all India trade union centres are attracting more organisations. Though the organisations of the middle-class employees, LIC, Bank, Govt. employees have not yet come to the point of joining a common organisation alongwith industrial workers, greater cooperation on common issues is seen. The National Campaign Committee of several all India trade union centres including CITU, AITUC, BMS, HMS, UTUC is a powerful expression of the growing unity of the movement. Its calls are responded to by other industrial employees' federation also.

Recently, the INTUC which holds aloof from the National Campaign Committee took initiative to have joint convention for peace and fight against the divisive forces. All this, however, is not enough to build a massive strength of the trade union movement. The activities of the National Campaign Committee are mainly symbolic. Besides, the trade unions are not changing their old practice and therefore unable to organise the entire working class. They neglect the mass of unemployed workers, working women, the casual and temporary workers, who form a big part of the factory employees and above all, workers in unorganised industry and contract workers who form the biggest mass. The trade unions also neglect the special problems faced by the Harijans, Adivasis and Muslim minority workers, who because of this neglect keep away from the common mass struggle.

Recently the question of job reservation has tended to divide the workers as was seen from the developments in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka. In Gujarat, there was conflict between two sets of workers on this issue. This need not have been there, if the trade union movement while assuring protection to the backward sections in relations to jobs had united all sections of workers on the question of right to work as a fundamental right under the Constitution. The neglect of unemployed workers had led to the present

situation. While protecting the interests of the discriminated sections through reservations, the trade unions should be in a position to tell all that reservation will not solve the basic problems of poverty. A united struggle to change the social order and dethrone the capitalist class is necessary to achieve the aim.

The growing organised strength of the trade unions should enable the workers to devote their attention to the urgent question of national policy and questions regarding the future of our country.

One of the foremost national tasks of the organised working class movement is to protect the mass of the peasants and agricultural workers who constitute the majority of the Indian people. All talk of democracy and socialism are meaningless unless the working class movement gets united with the agricultural workers' and peasants' movement to defend their interests and overhaul the entire rural set up by breaking the land monopoly of the few.

In the passage of time new problems are facing the working class because they are facing the country. The govt. of India's economic policy is undergoing a dangerous change. Under the pressure of the World Bank and in consequences of the crisis of the Capitalist path, the Union Govt. is disbanding the public sector, encouraging privatisation and calling in multinationals to its help.

This is the logical conclusion of the capitalist path, danger to economic independence and political freedom. The policy of invitation to multinationals is ruining Indian industry and leading to unemployment of workers. Above all it finishes all claims to a self-reliant economy and threatens to hand over India to the exploitation of the most merciless exploiters. The entire working class has to fight this anti-national policy and force the govt. to retreat. The workers in the public sector have already awakened to the danger. It is a national danger and the working class as the most organised force must take a lead in fighting it and saving the country. The growing collapse of the bourgeois-landlord administration is seen before our eyes. The Congress(I) is unable to maintain democratic norms and every day the democratic rights of the people are attacked. The common man can any day be murdered by police with impunity in police custody. The authoritarian drive against the people continues. It is accompanied by corruption, inefficiency and treachery as was seen in the collapse of security arrangements of the Prime Minister on the Gandhi Jayanti Day. The fight against

this inefficient administration and for the restoration of democratic rights has to be carried on by the working class. The CPI(M) and the Left Parties embody this fight and they deserve support of the entire working class. The Left Front Govts in West Bengal and Tripura constitute the advanced outposts of Indian democracy in the people's struggle against authoritarianism. The working class must champion the struggle for left and democratic unity and a left and democratic alternative.

As a result of the conspiracies of imperialism, the opportunism of the Cong(I) and the attack of the divisive forces, our country is threatened with dis-integration. US imperialism is trying to disrupt the unity of the country and dismember it so that it can be re-enslaved. The Khalistanis in Punjab, Gorkhaland in Darjeeling, the happenings in Assam, Mizoram all utter a grave warning to the working class that the unity of the country is in danger. It is also being assailed by the Muslim fundamentalists, Hindu reactionaries and linguistic and caste chauvinists. Along with the national unity the unity of the working class is also being threatened.

Who will protect this unity of the country, if not the working class? The Cong(I) and all other bourgeois-landlord parties have revealed their bankruptcy. Till recently they failed to see the imperialist hand behind the secessionist forces. They all attempted to placate these forces and use them for reaping electoral advantages. They all use the genuine grievances of the Muslims, Harijans, Adivasis, backward classes, not to unite all toilers but to divide them.

Rajiv Gandhi's stand, certifying the Gorkhaland agitation as a legitimate agitation is a piece of anti-national compromise. In these circumstances who will defend the national unity and defeat the forces of disruption except the working class? The workers led by the CPI(M) and CITU in Punjab, Assam, Tripura and W. Bengal are defending national unity, sacrificing their lives. This is the historic duty of the working class. The example of Vietnam, China, Korea show that only the working class can defend national unity. This is one of the most great urgent tasks before Indian working class.

If the working class in any country forgets that it is an integral part of the world working class movement, if it ignores its international task, it falls victim of opportunism. Today the working class is called upon to fight the menace of nuclear war that is being

organised against the USSR for destroying socialism and ensuring US plans of global domination. Tens of millions all over the world are engaged in fighting this menace. But in India the working class consciousness about struggle for peace is weak. This shortcoming has to be overcome. The Indian workers are in a far more favourable position to wage the struggle than many others, because India follows a policy of non-alignment, which stands for peace. The Indo-Soviet Treaty of Friendship is a great stabilising factor in the world situation, supporting the peace forces. The working class must strengthen this friendship as a part of its struggle for peace.

Complicated as the tasks are, some of them entirely new, there is no doubt that India's working class can fulfil them if they close their ranks, unite their entire trade union strength and move as a single contingent to defend the people, the nation and its unity in their march towards socialism.

The Working Class, Vol. 16, No. 6, February 1987

8

21st January Strike

THE magnificent action of more than 2 million public sector workers on 21st January constitutes an important step forward of the trade union movement in defence of the national economy. The public sector workers deserve congratulations from the entire trade union movement for their unity and solidarity. Never before did the country witness such a wide, sweeping action embracing almost all public sector units and extending over all parts of the country. The big industrial complexes at Bangalore and Hyderabad, the mining and steel belts, the oil and other industrial centres, all were affected, the workers joining the great protest action against the Government's policy towards the public sector.

The strike notice given to the government of India asked it to reverse its policy regarding the public sector. It called for a halt to the policy of privastisation of the public sector, prohibition of entry of multinationals and monopolies into the sphere of activities of the public sector, stopping of import of technology and goods detrimental to indigenous developement, ban on introduction of modernisation, computerisation, without prior approval of the trade unions and opposition to farming out or off-loading of jobs of regular workers to private contractors. The strike notice further called for immediate wage negotiations stalled by the Government and settlement of some of the immediate demands of the workers.

It was not simply a strike in support of some immediate demands of the public sector workers but an action to defend national economy, its self-reliance and independence and call to urge the Government to reverse its economic policy, its policy of

destabilising the public sector. For years the trade union movement concerned itself only with the partial demands of the workers leaving our questions of economic and national policies to be decided by the Government. The public sector workers' strike makes a break with this pernicious practice and asserts labour's intention to intervene and shape the direction of the country's economic policy. It is an orientation which India's trade union movement requires if it has to act as a great democrtaic and socialist force.

The all India protest of the public sector workers, the support it got from the patriotic officers and the sympathy it secured from among the patriotic minded executives, will it induce the Government to reconsider its policy? A government sensitive to public opinion will definitely respond to such a protest and have second thoughts about its policy, but not the Rajiv Government which cares little for public opinion and which with its hostile attitude towards labour shows utter disregard for workers' opinion.

The battle, therefore, must be strengthened and carried on with greater vigour. The strength of the entire trade union movement has to be mobilised for this fight. The Coordination Committee of the public sector organisations should meet and take further steps to consolidate and deepen the unity of the workers and overcome whatever weakenesses or fissures were seen during the strike. The National Campaign Committee, Central Trade Unions and Federations all must join the battle and take a more active part in demanding the reversal of Rajiv Gandhi's economic policy.

The public sector workers have done their job with remarkable success. Their victory would have been much greater and more effective if some organisations and sections of workers, which should have joined them in the common action, had not kept away from the strike and let down the workers.

The leadership of the INTUC by refusing to join the protest to defend national economy has done a big disservice to the cause of the people, of the country and the workers. The leadership of the AIRF, the Defence Workers' Federation have not added to their stature by refusing to take an active and supporting part in the protest and letting down the workers. The Defence Federation is facing the same problems—privatisation, transfer of work to contractors and they had protested against it also. If both these organisations had rallied their mass of workers to join in solidarity

demonstrations and meetings, it would have added to the strength and the might of the protest and cemented working class unity on a wider scale. But traditional reformist and sectarian outlook of some leaders is doing great harm to the trade union movement and obstructing it in the discharge of its responsibilities to the country and the people. This is nothing but selfish economism gone mad. The workers in these organisations must understand how they have failed to play their role in the common battle.

The LIC, the Airlines and the Bank employees deserve congratulations for their awareness and activities in making the call a success. It is after a long time that a call for protest action was given and these employees and their organisations by their unity and action have shown that they are prepared to march alongwith the requirements of the time. The same cannot be said about all sections of the Government employees. Only the Federation of the State Government employees and few others called for solidarity demonstrations.

These weaknesses have to be overcome. More and more the trade unions and the working class will be called upon to use their organised strength in defence of national interest and those who lag behind will be rendering a disservice to our people and our country.

The giant strike of the public sector employees reveals the capacity of the trade union movement to rally lakhs of people overcoming communal and caste differences in the common cause of defending national interests. The two million who participated in the protest action came from all communities and castes and they acted as a single army, notwithstanding the communal, caste and divisive appeal that plagues the country. This capacity of the organised trade union movement to unify the people and contribute to national unity has been underestimated both by the leaders of the movement as well as by its opponents. More the trade union movement is able to launch such common actions in defence of national interests the more the divisive forces would be put on the run and the organised movement will come forward as a big unifying and integrating force.

The Working Class Vol. 16, No. 6, February 1987

9

Presidential Address

Working Committee Meeting, Calcutta, February 6 & 7, 1987

Comrades,

We are meeting in this short session of the Working Committee to draw up the agenda and the work of the CITU Conference to be held in Bombay from 11 to 15th May, 1987. (The dates have since been changed to May 18-22-Ed.)

At the outset let me on behalf of all of you and myself congratulate the Maharashtra CITU and its newly elected President Comrade Sanzgiri for undertaking this heavy responsibility on their shoulders inspite of many difficulties facing them. They have done it realising that our strong holds will not have the time to prepare for this conference as they will be busy with the Assembly elections till the end of March. We would have been in a very sad position had they not come forward to undertake the task of organising the Conference.

Comrades, the coming session of the All India CITU has an importance of its own and every thing must be done to make it an organisational and ideological success. We have to plan the discussions and the agenda on the basis of the requirements of present situation and put an end to routinised way of discussion.

Firstly, comrades, it should be our endeavour to develop and deepen our international connections and fraternal relations with the trade union movement of other countries, above all the trade unions of socialist countries. Since our Kanpur Congress which was attended by the representatives of the Soviet and Chinese

trade union organisations, the representatives of the Yogoslavia Trade Unions and the World Federation of Trade Unions, our contacts with the international organisation and the contingent of international trade union movement have increased. We received invitations from world organisations and trade unions of a number of socialist countries and also from the trade union orgainsations of Italy. We responded to their invitations and attended their conferences. Our representatives have attended the world conference of World Federation of Trade Unions, the World Peace Conference, the Congress of Italian Trade Unions. Now this month Comrade Samar Mukherjee, our General Secretary will be attending the conference of AUCCTU, the organisation of Soviet Trade Unions. We have also received invitation from the Trade union Congress of the German Democratic Republic.

Comrades we wish to reciprocate by inviting representatives of international organisations and national trade union centres from socialist and other countries.

Comrades, we will be meeting in the midst of rapid developments in the trade union movement in our country and in the international world. We will have to plan our discussions taking into consideration the immediate needs of the CITU and the trade union movement to orientate themselves to meet the changing situation.

In our country there is a great upsurge of working class actions dominated by a growing sense of unity. The great strike of Bihar NGOs that has now entered 3rd week preceded by the massive strikes of Rajasthan, UP, and Andhra NGOs, and the magnificent and gigantic action of the public sector workers on 21st January—all point to a rapidly growing sense of unity and urgency. I must take this opportunity to congratulate our CITU unions in the public sector and the federations in which our unions are working for the initiative and persistance they showed in organising the strike. It will not be an exaggeration to say that the strike could have lost its widespread character if our unions has not shown the initiative that was expected of them as CITU unions. I must also congratulate the Bank employees, the LIC, and other employees for joining in this great and mighty action of the public sector workers.

The importance of the strike is seen in the fact that it was not simply a strike in support of some immediate demands of the public sector workers but an action to defend national economy, its self reliance and independence and a call to urge the Government

to reverse its economic policy, its policy of destabilising the public sector. For years the trade union movement has concerned itself only with the partial demands of the workers leaving questions of economic and national policies to be decided by the Govt. The Public Sector workers strike makes a break with this pernicious practice and asserts labour's intention to intervene and shape the direction of the country's economic policy. It is an orientation which India's trade union movement requires if it has to act as a great democratic and socialist force.

The All India protest of the public sector workers, the support it got from the patriotic officers and the sympathy it got from among the patriotic executives should induce the Government to reconsider its policy. A Government sensitive to public opinion will definitely respond to such a protest and have a second thought about its policy, but not the Rajiv Govt. which cares little for public opinion and which has a hostile attitude towards labour and shows utter disregard for workers opinion. It will be the height of folly if the authorities instead of appreciating the motive of the workers and their patriotism decide upon disciplinary measures against the workers' leaders. The entire trade union movement must warn the Govt. against the measures contemplated by some authorities in the public sector.

The battle to save and the strengthen the public sector must be carried on with greater vigour. The strength of the entire trade union movement has to be mobilised for this fight. There is no doubt that the forthcoming meeting of the Co-ordination Committee of the Public Sector organisations will take steps to further consolidate the unity of the workers and overcome whatever weaknesses were seen during the strike.

The public sector workers have done their job with remarkable success. Their victor would have been much greater if some organisations and sections of workers which should have joined them in the common action had not kept away from the strike and let down the workers.

The leadership of the INTUC by refusing to join the protest to defend national economy has done a big disservice to the cause of the people, the country and the workers. Some of them are now openly joining hands with the Govt. to decry the strike. The leaders of AIRF and the Defence Workers Federation have not added to their stature by refusing to take an active and supporting part in the

protest. The Defence Federation is facing the same problem: privatisation, transfer of works to contractors and they have protested against this also. If both these organisations had rallied their mass of workers to join insolidarity demonstration and meetings it would have added to the strength of the protest and cemented the working class unity on a wider scale. But traditional reformist, economic and sectarian outlook of some leaders is doing great harm to the trade union movement and obstructing it to discharge its responsibility to the country and the people.

It should be remembered that besides raising the question of disbandment of the public sector and penetration of multinationals the workers have demanded ban on introduction of modernisation, computerisation, without prior approval of the trade union movement. Even this demand which protects the jobs of workers in all industries failed to evoke solidarity support from the reformist leaders.

The four strikes of the State Government employees and the gigantic strike of the public sector workers demand a much wider basis for embracing trade union unity. At present the major instrument of trade union unity is the National Campaign Committee. But all these wide mass actions of recent time have been organised and conducted by mass organisations which do not have an effective say in the working of the National Campaign Committee. The National Campaign Committee and its unity mainly hinges on the unity or participation of five or six central trade union organisations. The big federations some of whom are bigger than many members of the National Campaign Committee have the status of invitees in the activities of National Campaign Committee. It is now necessary to widen the basis of the National Campaign Committee enabling these big federations to have an equal say in the matter of convening meetings and deciding on issues of common policy and actions. The National Campaign Committee has rendered very big service towards the development of unity and common understanding in the trade union movement. That task has to be furthered by widening the composition of the National Compaign Committee and inviting the participation of the new developing forces in the trade union movement in the decision making process of the Campaign Committee. Taking into consideration the existing situation in the trade union movement, the inevitable differences on certain matters because of different politi-

cal outlook, the CITU long ago suggested the formation of a Confederation of all Trade Union Centres and federations where decisions can be taken unanimously and where all issues concerning labour and the economic policy can be discussed freely. It is time that we at our conference reiterate our proposal for a confederation and decide to pursue it with greater vigour.

Comrades, the period since our Kanpur Conference has to be examined and our activities had to be assessed not only in terms of the struggles we have led but also whether the required orientation of our movement was given by us, by our state committees and leaders of trade unions. It is a fact that in spite of the tremendous upsurge of working class resistances, the struggles we have led, the harrowing conditions of workers under the impact of the crisis and growth in our trade union influence, membership of our organisation very rarely corresponds to the work we have done, the sacrifices we have made and the influence we exercise. On the other hand, in the weaker areas there are instances where the reformist leaders are able to lead big mass actions leaving us high and dry. All this is due to the fact that we have not yet succeeded in getting out of the traditional rut of conducing the affairs of the trade unions. These weaknesses have been repeatedly pointed out but we are not yet able to get out of old habits. The weaknesses relate to lack of democratic functioning of the unions which prevents the active and vigorous participation of the rank and file workers in policy making decisions. This has its consequences in the inability of the unions to be in contact with mass all the time and results in restricted membership of the other weaknesses are failure to take into consideration the demands and plight of the non-permanent workers, of women workers, and confine union activities mainly to the defence of the interests of the permanent workers. A very important lacunae in our functioning relates to the total absence of consideration of the special problems of the minority and oppressed caste workers. We all know that without the special attention and drawing these sections into the common struggles real blow cannot be given to divisive forces. Yet, we hardly find any mention of this activity in any of our report.

You all know that unemployment is growing day by day and there are lakhs of people fresh from the school or the rural areas or the training institutions who have never seen a job. Yet, inspite of constant guidance by the CITU most of the State Committees and

trade unions have refused to take note of this problem. This is the dangerous situation because this new generation of unemployed has no links with the organised trade union movement and its anger can be easily directed by the ruling classes against the organised trade union movement itself. The elementary consciousness that the unemployed are part of the working class and that it is the duty of organised working class to protect their interests is lacking. It is due to this neglect that in many places the anger of unemployed is directed into chauvinistic channels against workers from other states. This is one more divisive force which is getting license because of the failure of the trade unions.

Comrades, our CITU Session will not be fruitful if these problems do not occupy major attention in our discussion. Now that we have got the reports from all states about their activities we do not need further elaboration of them in our all India Conference. What we do require to go ahead is a proper assessment of how we have been tackling these concrete problems of orientation in the course of our activities. It is therefore necessary that at the all India CITU Conference our speakers from various states speak on these questions giving a factual account of what has been done. In my opinion it is necessary to devote on session specifically to the question of working women and our work. It is necessary therefore that each state sends a larger number of working women in its delegation. In fact we should have held a separate conference of working women alongwith the CITU Session. But in the present situation with lack of finance etc it was not found possible to spare an extra day for the working women's conference. It is also necessary to devote special attention in one session to discuss the problems of unemployment and minorities.

Comrades, I do not wish to discuss in detail the political development in our country as well as international developments. We will be drafting our resolutions for the conference taking all these into consideration. We will be also dealing with them in our speeches and reports. I will now suggest that the Resolution Committee should be formed here so that it can meet in time and prepare all the resolutions.

Finally, I have to say a few words about what is happening to our country. It is matter of great satisfaction that Comrade Gorbachev's visit to this country produced a Joint Declaration which strengthened the cause of peace and protest against nuclear

war preparations of imperialist powers. The Joint Declaration has made people aware of the menace of war and who is responsible for it. It has also made the people aware of the great importance of the policy of non-alignment pursued by our country and its Government and every effort should be made by the working class to strengthen and deepen the policy of non-alignment. The visit of Com. Gorbachev has also deepened the friendship between India and the USSR, a symbol of which is the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Friendship which also guarantees the security of India. The working class and trade union movement consider this as a big advance. It is our responsibility to see that wide mass of our people is drawn into the struggle to defend non-alignment and world peace.

Internally the situation in our country is deteriorating rapidly. As against the good developments on foreign policy issues and the issues of non-alignment the economic policy of the Rajiv Government threatens to undermine our self-reliance. The working class through the public sector workers' strike has already protested against it. Simultaneously the attack of the divisive forces against the integrity of the country, the helplessness and paralysation of the Central Government before it, create the danger of growing dissention and destabilisation. In Punjab, the extremists and the communal fanatics have mounted a new offensive whose aim is to drive out the Barnala Government and rally all Sikhs on religious basis. This offensive seems to be tuned to the delicate situation on the Indo-Pakistani border with massive concentration of Pakistani troops in combat readiness in the border areas. There is also the disruptive movements for Gorkhaland which is again intended to divide the people and carry on secessionist activities. If its suspension for two months really means a rethinking and return to the democratic path then things might prove easier. But considering the financial supporters and ideologies of the movement, it is difficult to imagine that sanity, loyality to the nation and the country are reasserting themselves in the minds of the leaders. The mass of Nepali speaking people is a part of our toiling mass and we must always defend its democratic interests. This is what the left front Government has been doing.

Along with these challenges comes the challenge of communal forces. The Cong(I) Party notwithstanding its tirade against those who are supposed to be communal is not prepared to leave its alliance with the Muslim League in Kerala. The compromising

policies pursued by the Congress towards communal parties, the complicity of the administration during the riots are all playing into the hands of Muslim communalists. The great task of saving the country from communal and secessionist danger devolves on the working class and its organisations. Our capacity to play our role in this issue is totally underestimated often by ourselves and always by our opponents who consider the trade union movement to be a great evil. The fact that our strikes like the gigantic strike of public sector workers, the strikes of State Government employees in four states can draw lakhs of people from all castes and communities into the common front is of great importance today when every effort is made to eliminate the common class consciousness of the people. These common actions and the massive mobilisation of student, youths, and women in common organisations irrespective of caste and faith constitute our reply to the challenge of divisive forces. Our working class contingents in Assam, Darjeeling Dist. and in Punjab have already shown how a determined class can wage a fight against the divisive forces. That example should be followed by all our units so that the working class is able to play its role in defending national unity.

Finally comrades, I will ask all of you to remember that West Bengal and Kerala, the people and the working class of these two states will be seen engaged in a political battle against the ruling party and its allies. It will be a battle between the advancing democratic forces and the authoritarian forces which would like to reverse the progress of the people. It is also a battle between forces which compromise with communalism, ally with communal unity and forces which take a firm stand for national unity fighting against all communal and secessionist forces. Every effort is to be made to see that we win these two battles and register advance of the entire democratic movement in India. It is the duty of all our trade unions to render help to the left forces in the elections to ensure the victory of the left front in West Bengal and Left and Democratic Front in Kerala.

The Working Class, Vol. 16, No. 7, March 1987

10

Greetings to West Bengal and Kerala

The Centre of Indian Trade Unions warmly greets the workers and people of Kerala and West Bengal on their electoral victory. The Left Democratic Front of Kerala headed by the CPI(M) has secured majority in the Kerala Assembly ousting the anti-national unholy alliance of Congress(I), Muslim League and Kerala Congress, i.e., Muslim and Christian castiest elements. In West Bengal the Left Front headed by the CPI(M) and Jyoti Basu, Vice-President of the CITU has secured a smashing victory over the Congress(I), virtually routing it. The Congress(I) was unable to secure even 50 seats out of 294 and its tally is now lower than what it was five years ago.

The CITU and the working class heartily greet this victory of the forces ranged against the bourgeois-landlord alliance. The Left parties and forces represent the democratic and socialist aspirations for which the trade unions and workers are fighting. They form an integral part of the struggle for democracy and socialism.

In this election battle the Congress(I) and its leader Rajiv Gandhi resorted to all kinds of untruths and unscrupulous propaganda to tarnish the image of the Left. The Congress(I) in West Bengal resorted to open falsehoods and ran a slander campaign charging the Left parties and their Government with violence and every possible accusation. The Panjas and Das Munishis stooped so low that their election propoganda lost all political arguments and became an unending string of lies.

But they were not the only culprits. Their leader Rajiv Gandhi resorted to the same tactics and made full use of untruthful statements to attack the Left Front Government and the Left and Democratic Front in Kerala. He repeated the lie that the Left Front Government of West Bengal could not make full use of the resources provided by the centre. He lyingly talked about the collapse of law and order in West Bengal when it had really broken in Congress(I) ruled States, like Bihar and others. He made falsified statement about the earlier Left and Democratic Front Government in Kerala and charged it with ruining Kerala's industries when the fact was that the utter ruination of traditional industries had taken place during the last five years of the ruling Congress(I) Ministry.

In his hunt for electoral vote Rajiv violated the electoral code of conduct and electoral norms. He went on announcing new concessions, new reliefs to West Bengal and Kerala and the Election Commissioner meekly accepted his claims to disburse such largesses as part of his electoral propaganda. The Kerala Chief Minister Karunakaran and others followed in his foot-steps and went on announcing big financial grants for Panchayat development and other projects during the election meetings. The ruling Congress(I) party refused to accept any code of electoral conduct.

But all this unscrupulous trickery was of no avail. The intelligent electorate saw the hollowness of the Congress(I) claim and refused to trust Rajiv's words. After their 5 years of experience of Karunakaran Ministry the Kerala masses were not likely to be swept off by Rajiv's promises of big financial sums to bolster traditional industries. After their experience of the gangster outlook and morality of Congress(I) leaders the West Bengal electorate was not likely to be impressed by Rajiv's promise that he himself will take interest in the West Bengal administration if Congress(I) were elected to power.

Rajiv Gandhi's tour bolstered by the Press fell flat. The visits of tax-evading cinema stars who followed him were treated by people as free street entertainment and not serious politics. All this because the people of both the States were facing serious problems to which Rajiv Gandhi and the Congress(I) had no answer. They were suffering from poverty, high prices and increased unemployment. The State of Bengal has been one of the worst sufferers from the crisis of the capitalist path—closure of jute mills, small engineering concerns ending in huge rise in unemployment. The

Congress(I) and Rajiv Gandhi thought of turning the anger of the people against the Left Front Government. But the people knew better. They had seen the Left Front Government trying to mitigate their suffering imposed by the capitalist path. They could not forget that the Left Front Government demanded and worked for nationalisation of Jute industry but the Centre rejected the proposal. They had seen that the Bengal peasant was the biggest beneficiary of the Left Front rule. They have seen that their liberties and rights were protected by the Government, against the anti-democratic legislations of the Central Government. No promise of Rajiv could do away with these realities. No illusions could be created in the background of the ghasly reality obtaining in the neighbouring Congress(I) ruled states like Bihar and Orissa. In Kerala the people were facing the evil effects of the Congress(I) misrule for the last five years and no other propoganda was needed. Rajiv foolishly talked about stability in Kerala saying that only Congress(I) Ministry can last for the entire term of 5 years, when the people wanted to get rid of it as quickly as possible. Apart from the economic ruination of Kerala during the last 5 years, the Thankamani episode, where the entire village with its women folk were outraged, beaten and tortured by police became the symbol of Congress(I) rule. What chances had Rajiv's against this reality ? Knowing this Rajiv & the Congress(I) decided to depend on the worst communal forces to rescue themselves from their isolation. Rajiv's hypocritical talk against communalism, for separation of religion from politics in the North and the Cong(I) alliance with the communal forces in Kerala were noted by the electorate, with adverse results for Congress(I) opportunism.

This was really the Achilles heel of the Congress(I) in both States. The five years since the last elections in the two States witnessed the rising challenge of divisive and communal forces threatening the unity of the country. The Punjab, Assam, Mizoram and Gorkhaland events together with rising spate of communal riots in Congress(I) ruled states were the manifestations of this challenge. The CPI(M) and mass organisations like the CITU, DYFI, SFI, AIDWA were in the forefront in fighting this challenge in Punjab, Assam, Darjeeling District etc. The CPI also played an important role in Punjab in defence of national unity. But the Congress(I) had nothing to show except opportunistic compromise, retreat and often joining hands with communal forces. In

West Bengal, the brunt of fight against Gorkhaland agitation was borne by the CPI(M) cadres and mass organisations led by it. In West Bengal, the Left Front Government and its policies assured security and equal treatment to minorities and maintained communal peace and unity. This was a different situation from that obtaining in Congress(I) states where communal riots erupted with regular frequencies and minorities were the worst sufferers. This fact was noted by the minority masses and the entire democratic opinion resulting in the rout of the Congress(I).

In Kerala, the CPI(M) had already taken the cause of Muslim women and was in conflict with Muslim fundamentalists who were opposed to the Supreme Court judgement in the Shah Bano case. The Congress(I) surrendered the fight of Muslim women to the fundamentalists while the CPI(M) campaigned against all shades of communalism. The mass of people, especially the younger generation in Kerala, noted the rising danger from communalism and were impressed by the CPI(M) campaign against it and its rejection of electoral alliance with communal forces. At this critical juncture the Congress(I) strengthened its ties with the communal forces and surrendered to their blackmail. Democratic and secular opinion revolted against the Congress(I) and brought about its defeat.

It will be seen that in the two elections, two lines confronted each other. The Left represented the line of national unity, the line of fighting the divisive forces and communal forces. The Congress(I) represented the line of compromise and alliance with forces of disruption of national unity. The Left represented the line of economic self-reliance, the defence of the public sector and opposition to the entry of foreign capital. The Congress(I) represented the line of destabilising the public sector, of undermining the economic self-reliance of the country and an open invitation to foreign capital. The election struggle was a confrontation between these two lines. The people of Kerala and West Bengal have defeated the line of compromise undermining of national unity and economic self-reliance. Their example must be followed and the working class all over India must lend its full support to the left forces to defeat the line of compromise and undermining of national unity.

26.3.87

The Working Class, Vol. 16, No. 8, April 1987

11

May Day To May Day

THE year that has passed since last May Day which saw the Centenary celebrations of May Day has been as year of intense distress for the working class and the people of India. Closures, lay-offs, retrenchment, computerisation all have combined to attack the jobs and the living standards of the workers. The problem of rural and industrial unemployment has intensified manifold. The working class and the entire people are now the full victims of the crisis of the capitalist path chosen by the ruling classes of our country.

The economic stewardship of V.P. Singh and Rajiv Gandhi has landed the country in difficulties intensifying the crisis of the economy. The foodgrains production during the year 1986-87 according to the latest Economic Survey is expected to increase by a mere 0.6 per cent over the previous year. Though the foodgrains production for 1986-87 is estimated at 151.50 million tonnes i.e. one million tons more the figures for 1985-86, it is lower than the figure of 152.37 million tons for 1983-84. In this situation the plight of the rural masses in the current year with widespread drought and famines and hardly any relief measures from the state and central government can be easily imagined. The callous administration in Orissa refuses to recognise that famine deaths are occurring in the famine striken area. For long time the Minister concerned refused to visit the area and was compelled to do so only after a resolution of the Assembly. Situation is no better in some other states. In

Maharashtra the widespread drought is not only leading to migration from the villages but suicides and sale of children are now reported in part of the State. The peculiarity in Maharashtra is this that the part of this drought is man made. It is due to the robbery of the water resources by the sugarcane capitalist farmers who also own the so called cooperative sugar factories. Perhaps in no part of the country along with land and money capital this monopolisation of water resources has taken place. It is because of this robbery of water that the underground water level has gone down with the result tens of lakhs of people are not only not able to grow any crop but also have no drinking water.

It is in this background that the recent Economic Survey of the Government of India makes claims of healthy industrial growth but it is unable to conceal the reality. Industrial sickness has now become endemic affecting both traditional industries, the big units and the modern industries. According to the Survey itself industrial sickness is a major area of concern. No wonder, because, at the end of December 1985 itself sick units in the portfolio of commercial banks stood at 1,19,606 involving outstanding bank credit of Rs. 4207.93 crores. Between March and November 1986 the consumer price index number for industrial workers increased by 7.8 per cent. The annual rate of inflation which declined to 4 per cent up to August 1986 went up to 7.1 per cent by October 1986 and 6.1 per cent in January 1987. The Survey considers the price situation a matter of grave concern. Debt service burden of past borrowings is also increasing.

The recent Budget of Rajiv Gandhi foreshadows further attacks on the living standards of the people. The provision for Rs. 8000 crores of deficit financing is bound to lead to a fleecing process of the common man through rapidly rising price level. The import liberalisation policy and the open door to multinationals are going to further ruin number of Indian industries including capital goods industry. The problem of unemployment is going to be extremely acute this year and larger and larger masses of the rural population are going to be reduced to utter destitution, notwithstanding the claims of the Government of India that they are succeeded in raising the millions above the poverty line.

It is against these conditions that the working class had to fight and wage a continuous battle to maintain its living standards and ward off attack by the employer and the Government. The workers

of the public sector did a big service to the Indian people by organising a one day protest strike on 21st January to protest against Rajiv Gandhi's policy of liquidating the public sector. By opposing this policy the public sector workers were striking in defence of national self-reliance and national planning addressed to the needs of the people. There were many agitations and strikes waged by the working class, the employees, the teachers, professors and many other sections of the people. There were many widespread peasant agitations, many of them under the leadership of certain reactionary agencies. But nonetheless the peasant mass by voicing its grivance and expressing its protest refused to be the sacrificial goat of the bourgeois landlord economy.

The most outstanding result of this rising discontent and its growing consolidation was the spectacular victory of the Left Front in the elections in West Bengal and Kerala. It is beyond doubt that in these two big victories the working class of West Bengal and Kerala guided by the CITU played an important role in uniting the working class to defeat the Congress(I). The West Bengal elections were fought under very difficult circumstances because the industrial areas of Calcutta saw closure of large number of jute mills and increased unemployment. But the CITU and its following knew that the economic policies of the Rajiv Government were responsible for their plight and they stood solidly by the Left Front Government. They along with the peasantry knew that the Left Front Government headed by Jyoti Basu, Vice President of the CITU, was doing everything to protect the interests of the common people. Therefore, they succeeded in maintaining their unity and fighting back the slander campaign of Congress(I). The battle in both states. West Bengal and Kerala, also involved important issues of deep concern to the people. The CITU and the Left Parties have been fighting against communal and divisive forces all along and this became a major issue in the electoral fight. In Kerala especially there was direct confrontation between the Left and Democratic forces and communal forces working in alliance with Congress(I). That is why the victory in these elections has been hailed by all sections of people from other States. It has added great strength to the forces of democratic opposition to the Congress(I) regime. This electoral victory of the working class and its allies surpasses the importance of all other achievements in the last year. It indicates the growing political weight that the organised trade

union movement is achieving in the course of its united actions and struggle.

But the same process of consolidation of working class unity, rise in its political consciousness and confidence born out of united mass activities has also shaken the stability and overcrowning confidence of the ruling party. No previous leader of the Congress(I) party was returned by such an overwhelming majority in the Lok Sabha as Rajiv. Even Jawaharlal Nehru was unable to win so many seats for his party in the first election of independent India. But within a couple of years Rajiv Gandhi has growingly lost the support of the people and his parliamentary majority is day by day becoming an anachronism, a majority without popular support. The bankruptcy of the Congress(I) ruling party in tackling the issues of Punjab, Assam and others, its compromise with divisive forces—all created a growing gulf between the aspirations of the people for national unity and the opportunist compromise of Congress(I) policies. Its disgusting and revealing compromise on the Ramjanambhoomi and Shah Bano case and its alliance with the forces of communalism in Kerala have isolated the Parliamentary majority from the people as nothing else. And that is why the Rajiv Government is now rocked with one scandal after another. Corruption and scandals concerning bourgeois parties and bourgeois administration are not only not rare but are the constant accompaniment of all bourgeois administrations. But such scandals lead to a critical situation, to a crisis in the ruling party, resignations of ministers, only when parliamentary majority and the Government represented by it gets thoroughly isolated from the people and loses all credibility. This is what has happened to Rajiv Government. Therefore Fairfax, German Submarine and the Bofors deal scandals all are creating a critical situation for the Government and it is really unable to defend itself and resorts to all kinds of devices to escape from truth. This however, is not simply the result of the corruption scandals but is the result of the crisis of the parliamentary system of a newly liberated country.

The crisis of the system is also seen in the growing disintegration of the ruling party itself and further its inability to conform to any parliamentary norms to carry on the administration. The inner conflict inside the Congress both at the States and the Centre are too well-known. The expulsion of Kamalapathi Tripati from his post and the demotion of many others and the rise of upstart leaders

well trained in sychotsphancy of Rajiv Gandhi was a part of this process. The organisation is unable to hold its election because in the first place every one fears everybody and secondly there is hardly any regular recruitment of membership. The complete degeneration of Congress (I) organisation was seen in West Bengal. During the elections which were vital for the Party, the Congressmen could not unite, they continued to fight each other, one section raiding the offices and control of another section. The result was that local leaders could hardly carry on any electoral propaganda and relied on Rajiv Gandhi to do their job. This concentration of Party's interests in one man is a sign of bankruptcy and degeneration. Nonetheless large sections of people continue to vote for Cong(I). In West Bengal the vote of the Congress(I) did not go down. All this shows the powerful pull that the bourgeois ideology exercises over the people inspite of the organisational collapse of the ruling party.

While the working class notes this important feature of the present situation, while it notes that its organisational consciousness is growing and the ruling party is collapsing, it also notes that other forces are busy trying to fish in troubled waters. The isolation of Congress(I) from the people is often exploited by reactionary and communal forces and does not automatically lead to consolidation of left forces, unless they are able to fight the reactionaries. The working class also sees that in the situation created by the corruption scandals it is not only the democratic and left forces that are active but are also certain foreign and reactionary forces. The working class is always conscious that every critical situation in the country will be utilised by the imperialists and their agents to their own advantage to disrupt the unity of India and erode faith in democracy and democratic advance. That is why it is very vigilant against the attack of the forces of destabilisation. The working class is also aware that corrupt elements which pilfer people's money which even endanger the security to satisfy their lust for money must be thoroughly exposed and hounded out from the public life. These elements cannot be relied upon to defend national interests. They are most likely to be utilised by inimical forces against the interests of the country.

The Congress(I) Working Committee's appeal and warning against the forces of destabilisation therefore cannot be taken seriously unless the ruling party and its Government show the

courage to expose every corrupt element and gather the confidence of the democratic forces. In the present situation a large number of honest people think and rightly so, that the Working Committee's warning is a device to protect the corrupt. Nontheless, the working class like some other parties does not pooh-pooh the idea of danger from abroad. These bourgeois parties belittle imperialists' machinations against our country and think that the imperialist danger is an invention of the Cong(I) to keep itself in power. Such an outlook is extremely dangerous for the country and has to be fought.

The Year that has passed sees the ruling bourgeois party in a state of disintegration and crisis. It feels itself isolated notwithstanding its parliamentary majority, its credibility among the people is at the lowest level. While the democratic forces are fighting the corruption under this regime the reactionary forces are also utilising the situation for their own aims. The voice of the democratic forces and the working class is far more powerful. It fully supports the fight waged by the left and other opposition parties in the Parliament against the corruption scandals and their demand for Parliamentary investigation. The year also sees the growing strength of the democratic movement and the political consciousness among the workers which has enabled it to score two big electoral victories against the Cong(I). This advance of the working class and the democratic forces, of the left front must be consolidated in the coming years so that the political weight of the left parties, the working class and the democratic movement continue to increase and the reactionary forces do not get any chance to manipulate the situation to their own ends. If the united forces of the trade union movement understand the present problems and pull their weight together, the defeat of the corrupt regime as well as the defeat of the reactionary forces is imminently possible. They all must work towards this end drawing in larger and larger sections of people including the peasant masses and the support of all secular parties.

The Working Class, Vol. 16, No. 9, May 1987

12

Presidential Address

6th Conferences at Bombay, May 18-22

Comrades,

The years that have passed since our last Conference in Kanpur have been years of rapid change in our country and the world. They have also witnessed the loss of valuable comrades and important leaders of the international movement. I offer my homage to the memory of those who are no longer with us and who left the world fulfilling their duty in the cause of working class movement.

I honour the memory of those from our country and elsewhere whose precious lives were cut short by the bullets of the oppressors.

Comrades, we all are aware of our irrepairable loss of the common movement by the passing away of Comrade P. Sundarayya, leader of the CPI(M) who was also a leading figure in the armed struggle of the Telengana peasants.

Comrades, you will miss at this session the dynamic figure of Comrade P.K. Kurane who undertook the responsibility of organising our session when we met here in 1975. Our CITU in Maharashtra has suffered a big blow with the passing away of Comrade Kurane. The loss is no less to the all India CITU movement because Comrade Kurane was one of the leading figures.

I welcome on your behalf the presence in our midst of fraternal delegates from the trade union organisations of Soviet Union, People's China, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Afghanistan and the representatives of the COSATU and WFTU. Their presence should strengthen international solidarity and impel us to discharge our

international responsibility with greater vigour.

On behalf of all the assembled delegates let me express my warm appreciations of the State Committee of the Maharashtra CITU and its indefeatable President Comrade Sanzgiri for undertaking this ardous task of organising the All India Conference under very difficult conditions.

Rapid Changes in the World

Comrades, rapid changes have taken place in the international world since our last All India Conference in Kanpur. The dominant feature of these years has been the relentless struggle for peace waged by the Soviet Union and other socialist countries and irrepressible struggle of people from all continents against US imperialists' plans of global domination. From South Africa to Nicaragua, from Chile to Angola, the flame of freedom continues to blaze with US imperialism unable to extinguish it. On your behalf I send our warm greetings to the heroic anti-apartheid warrior Nelson Mandela who has become symbol of African freedom.

The persistent refusal of the US administration to respond to the peace proposals of the USSR and exposure of its deals with Iran to fund counter-revolutionaries in Nicaragua have brought down the credibility of Reagan and his policy makers. The Soviet Union's peace proposals continue to impress the world and strengthen the peace movement. At its 27th Congress, the CPSU raised the question, must the inevitably of war between the two social systems be accepted ?.If so, it meant without nuclear war there is no possibility to advance, i.e. there is no escape from destruction of world. It came to the conclusion that the world can be saved from this destruction if all endeavour for security for all countries. The Soviet foreign policy is now based on ensuring an all-embracing system of international security. Its core is the Soviet proposals for elimination of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction. The acceptance of these proposals by the US and other imperialist will change the face of the world. But US continues to build its 'Star War' project.

Nonetheless the efforts to set the world on the path of nuclear disarmament are vigorously pursued. The February proposals of the USSR to remove medium range missiles from both sides of Europe have again impressed the world. They are hailed all over Europe and elsewhere. They offer assurance to the people of

Europe that peace can be maintained and security ensured. This will lead to proportionate reduction of MRaMS of both sides in Asia ensuring security and peace for the Asian-Pacific region. If accepted by the US they will initiate process of reduction of nuclear weapons and open the way for further progress.

The year 1986 was declared International Year of Peace by the United Nations and many anti-war activities in the year were held under its aegis. Naturally, therefore, the peace consciousness and peace movement of the year were dominated by Soviet moratorium on nuclear tests which attested to the seriousness with which the socialist country treated the call for International Year of Peace. No imperialist Government showed any response to the UN call and the US went on with new tests and building up its 'Star Wars' project. More than a year ago the Soviet Union advanced a plan for destroying the stockpiles of nuclear weapons in stages and suggested a moratorium on all nuclear tests. This was a concrete step appreciated by the people of all countries, but the imperialists refused to respond.

Important Peace Initiatives

Three important events of the year in the struggle for peace were (1) Soviet proposals for a nuclear free world (2) Reykjavik Summit (3) the joint Indo-Soviet Delhi Declaration. They showed the new initiative of the USSR to prevent nuclear war; the refusal of the US to respond to any genuine proposal to check the drive towards nuclear war and the close understanding between non-aligned India and the Socialist Soviet Union on the question of peace. The Delhi Declaration expressed the will of the non-aligned nations to co-operate with the Socialist world to save peace, freedom and check aggression and war.

This persistent struggle for peace, this exposure of the imperialist war mongering designs is producing results, changing opinions, attracting new organisations and new sections to demarcate themselves from their former stand and overcome their hesitations to support peace proposals of the Soviet Union.

Changes in Socialist Countries

Along with these are the outstanding developments within the Socialist countries which are reaching a new stage of development and ushering in striking changes to expand socialist democracy, activise socialist economy and introduce radical changes in management and planning to take full advantage of the socialist

system of production combined with the advantages of the industrial technological revolution. The 27th Congress of the CPSU and the February Plenum following it have given a new dimension to the development of socialist society and have revealed the outstanding possibilities of development in economy and democracy which the socialist system has.

Socialist China with its new economic reforms has set a new course of rapid development of productive forces hitherto hampered by rigid and fixed outlook. It is also expanding the democratic rights of the people and advancing Socialist democracy along with the success of its planning efforts. While doing this it is aware of bourgeois liberal tendencies which in the guise of expanding democracy attempt to derail the economic and the proletarian democratic system.

Strengthen Peace Movement

The continuing war danger, the great efforts of the Soviet Union to counter it, the massive peace movement in the world—all urge the working class of India to participate in this great battle of world peace and strengthen the peace movement in our country. Our trade unions have of late been active in conveying the message of peace but much more has to be done. The major part of the Indian trade union movement and India's working class are far from realising the dangers of the nuclear war, so weak has been the peace movement in our country patronised by international organisations. It is a matter of great satisfaction that steps are being taken to widen and deepen the peace movement and involve the mass organisations of the workers, peasant and other sections in the activities. The CITU will definitely play its part in this urgent endeavour to carry the message of peace to the mass of our people, to all sections of our countrymen. Our Conference must call upon all our Trade Unions to address themselves to this important task of making the peace movement a vibrant militant and all inclusive movement in our country.

Fight the Drought

Comrades, before I turn to the problems facing us I must refer to the drought conditions in Maharashtra. Lakhs of peasants are victims of famine and drought and are forced to leave their homes. The visitation of drought and famine has become almost an endemic feature in the state inflicting utter starvation on the rural masses. There are reports that peasants are forced to sell their

children for paltry sum. In Orissa also there are reports about deaths due to starvation.

In Maharashtra part of the drought and famine is class made. The people have no drinking water because of the continuous robbery of water resources by the capitalist sugar cane farmers who also own the so-called co-operative sugar factories. Here you find not only the monopolisation of money and capital but also of underground water resources.

On behalf of you I offer sympathies to the affected peasants and express solidarity with them. Our Conference must demand adequate relief to the famine striken peasants of Maharashtra and Orissa from the Central and State Government. The drought and economic distress expose the false claims of Cong(I) Govt., which is often given a good bill abroad by ignorant foreign correspondents.

False Claims of Growth

The recent Economic Survey of the Govt. of India makes claims of healthy industrial growth but it is unable to conceal the realities. Industrial sickness has now become endemic affecting both traditional industries and big units and modern concerns. According to Survey, industrial sickness is a major area of concern. No wonder, because at the end of December 1985 itself sick units in the portfolio of commercial banks stood at 1,19,606 involving a outstanding bank credit of Rs 4207.93 crores. Between March and November 1986 the Consumer Price Index Number for industrial workers increased by 7.8 per cent. The annual rate of inflation which declined to 4 per cent upto August 1986 went up to 7.1 per cent by Oct. 1986 and 6.1 per cent in January 1987. The survey considers the price situation a matter of grave concern. It also notes that debt service burden of past borrowings is also increasing.

The food grain production during 1986-87 according to the Survey is expected to increase by a mere 0.6 per cent over the previous year. Though the foodgrain production for 1986-87 is estimated at 151.50 million tonnes, that is one million tonnes higher than the figure for 1985-86, it is lower than the figure of 152.37 million tonnes for 1983-84.

Further Attack on People

The recent budget of Rajiv Gandhi foreshadows further attacks on the living standard of the people. The provision for 8000 crores of deficit financing is bound to lead to fleecing of the

common man through rapidly rising price level. The import liberation policy and the free entry of multinationals are going to further ruin a number of Indian industries including the capital goods industry which is already threatened. The problem of unemployment is going to be extremely acute this year and larger and larger masses of the rural population are going to be reduced to utter destitution notwithstanding the claims of Government of India that they have succeeded in raising millions above the poverty line.

Shadow of World Bank Diktat

Rajiv Gandhi's New Economic Policy of destabilising the public sector, free competition from abroad and import liberalisation is not only adding the distress of the people but undermining self reliance of the economy, national planning and opening the economy to continuous depredation of private monopolists' capital. But the World Bank not fully satisfied and it is demanding complete de-regularisation of the economy, lifting of controls, complete freedom for monopolists and ruin of small concerns and freedom to retrench. Its reports on India published in December 1986 concerning industrial regulatory studies demands the following: Immediate removal of licensing barriers for capacity growth considerably narrowing the number of industries subject to capacity licensing and simplifying the procedure for technology and foreign investment license and increasing focus on firm conduct with individual firm size and some of the structural features of the industrial market. A shift away from reservation policies for the small scale industries and towards the promotion of growth and modernisation of small firms, increased expediency of shedding activities, the transfer of assets and the redeployment of labour (with mandatory compensation) in the context of stricter lending guidelines and a fully implemented Govt. commitment to avoid taking over sick units, and the progressive control of industrial prices and greater focus on the impact price regulation upto investment innovation and competitive behaviour. In addition, improvements are needed in trade and fiscal policy to stimulate export activities and to allow greater import competition."

It is quite evident that the economic policies pursued by the Rajiv Govt are developing more and more in conformity with these demands of the world Bank which are intended to make Indian economy helplessly dependent on western aids and subject to the shackles of private monopoly capitalists.

Rajiv Gandhi's statement before a gathering of international capitalists held in February in New Delhi made it clear that the earlier caution concerning import of technology is being given up and foreign equity capital is being sought in the name of using advanced technology.

Fight the New Economic Policy

The CITU and the working class had to carry on their economic battle and at the same time fight this new economic policy which endanger the self reliance of our economy. It is known that it was the CITU that took the lead in uncovering Rajiv's policy regarding the Public Sector. Its effective exposure led to the organisation of the Public Sector workers' strike on January 21, a strike in which two million workers participated demanding withdrawal of Government's reactionary policies. By this strike the working class warned the people about the dangerous character of the new economic policy and called on them to defend the independence of our national economy.

Innumerable battles have been fought by our heroic working class against the attacks on their jobs and their livelihood. Big battles have been fought by middle class employees against the computerisation threats. Lakhs of State Govt. employees of several states waged successful strike struggle to raise their wages. In these three years the industrial workers and the workers of unorganised sectors had to undergo a heavy load of repression and face jail, lathi charge and bullets. In a large number of cases the brunt of retrenchment offensive has been borne by women workers. Hundreds of them in coal mining, tobacco industries and others have been retrenched. Factory workers have faced lockouts extending over months. And in the city of Bombay itself more than 50 thousand textile workers are roaming the streets rendered jobless after the last strike. The trade union struggle of this period have been an extremely harsh battle and the workers and their families have undergone intense sufferings.

Menacing Unemployment Problem

Comrades, the problem of unemployment has reached menacing proportions during the last three years and unless the trade union movement takes it seriously and organise the unemployed both in the rural and industrial areas incalculable harm will be done to the working class splitting its unity.

Today according to official statistics, the number of those reg-

istered on employment exchanges in the cities has reached nearly 3 crores. No one has really calculated the extent of joblessness in the rural areas which may be anywhere between 5 to 7 crores, notwithstanding Government's claims of providing jobs through programmes like Rural Employment Guarantee schemes and other measures. Here is a country where the productive capacities of more than 10 crores of people cannot be used for the advance of the people, for the advancement of the economy and they are thrown out as waste of society, deprived of a decent standard of life.

The Seventh Plan does not offer any viable policy to control and lessen the unemployment. It pursued the same line as advocated in the 6th Plan, that is reliance on finding more employment in the agricultural section, reliance on traditional industries which are getting ruined. Once more the main source of employment is to be the overcrowded agriculture. This is nothing but necessary to draw large sections from agriculture to industry and the industrial growth must take place at a rapid rate. This is not possible under the plan. The so-called National Rural Employment Programme has hardly achieved anything to lessen the rigours of rural unemployment.

The planners claim that they will not only provide jobs to all new entrants to the labour market but absorb the backlog also, which they place at 9.3 millions though the number of registered unemployed in the cities has reached nearly 3 crores. They claim that they will provide jobs for 38 million new entrants to the labour force and also provide 9 million jobs to absorb the backlog from the 6th plan. This is based on an anticipated annual growth rate of 5 per cent GDP for five years, a growth rate which has not been achieved in the past. There is nothing in this promise except the statistic fantasy. The unreality of the claims is already witnessed in the last couple of years which have seen the growth of large scale unemployment.

Increase in Educated Unemployment

Unemployment for the educated classes is also increasing and will continue to increase under the plan. According to its conservative estimates, "during 85-90 addition to the economically active persons of the educated categories would be nearly 10.6 millions. The backlog of educated unemployment at the beginning of 1985 works out at 4.7 millions—3.5 millions metric and higher secondary and 1.2 millions graduate and above. The Commission ob-

serves, it would imply the need for creation of 9.4 million jobs for the educated over the plan period if unemployment rate is not to deteriorate. Is there any possibility of achieving this restricted objective of controlling the unemployment rate—no. For the planners rely on doubtful sources of job creation. The Commission observed, "while the job opportunity for the metric, higher secondary passed and engineering diploma holders would emanate from the organised, unorganied sections, those of the higher categories would be generated primarily in industries, banking, transport, communication and public service". It will be seen that for the educated the collapsing old industries, modernised new industries which restrict jobs by thousands and banking and communication which are adopting computerisation to kill tens of thousands of jobs are to be the main source of unemployment. They are supposed to create 9 million additional jobs. Besides the new education policy with its informal and long distance education delinking of education from jobs and its discouragement for higher education is going to deprive thousands of jobs.

Grave Situation

The gravity of situation can be seen from the fact that between 1975 and 1981 when the economic situation was not as serious as it is today, the growth rate in public and private sector was only a 2.3 per cent year. In contrast there was 14 per cent growth in registered unemployment in one year alone from August 1981 to Aug. 1982. In that year the number of unemployed increased from 17.2 millions to 19 millions. The proportion between the rate of employment and growth rate of unemployment has very much deteriorated since then.

Face the Challenge

Comrades, the massive challenge of unemployment is not yet properly seen by our trade unions. They often confine their understanding to unemployment created by closure and retrenchment. What we do not see is that millions of new entrants to the labour market are denied any productive work. These people have never seen inside of a factory or a concern. They have no tradition of working class unity and solidarity. In this situation unless the trade union movement forges links with them they can be easily used to break working class unity and its resistance during the struggle.

Those at work do not realise the grim prospects facing a young

man from working class, peasant or middle class family. His youthful urge to do productive work for society is killed and he is told that he is no use for society. He is faced with the bleak prospects of eking out his existence on the starvation salaries of his aged parents. Should we wonder if these younger elements become the victims of communal and caste forces or embark upon criminals activities to maintain themselves. Ruling classes are exploiting this situation and organising strife between the sections of working class and rousing regional feelings or caste feelings. The easiest way to divert attention from the serious problem of unemployment is to play reservation and go on widening its hope. If the working class movement remains indifferent to the problem of unemployment it will remain only the movement of the permanently employed workers and loose its credentials to represent all sections of the class and in the end facilitate the game of the ruling classes to split its class unity.

March Against Unemployment

Our conference must call on all our trade unions to intervene vigourously against the growing unemployment and organise solidarity meetings and actions for the unemployed. The entire trade union movement must demand immediate unemployment relief for the unemployed in the industrial and rural areas and put in the forefront the right to work for inclusion in the Constitution as a fundamental right. The entire trade union movement irrespective of difference can be mobilised in defence of right to work and right to relief. I think CITU should think of giving a call for a joint meeting of our Working Committee and the Working Committee of the agricultural workers' organisation to decide upon a massive unemployment march from all capitals of the states and converging on the Capital of India. This joint call will have to be given by the National Campaign Committee and other interested organisations so that the unity of the entire working class, of the entire rural poor, of the employed and unemployed is reflected in the march demanding right to work and immediate relief.

Reorientation Very Much Needed

Comrades, the period since our Kanpur Conference has to be examined and our activities have to be assessed not only in terms of the struggle we have led but also whether the required orientation to our movement was given us, by our state committees and leaders of trade unions. It is a fact that inspite of the tremendous

upsurge of working class resistance and the great struggles we have led, the harrowing conditions of workers under the impact of crisis, growth in membership of our organisation very rarely corresponds to the work we have done, the sacrifices we have made and the weaker areas there are instances where the reformist leaders are able to lead big mass actions leaving us high and dry. All this is due to the fact that we have not yet succeeded in getting out of the traditional rut of conducting the affairs of the trade unions. These weaknesses have been repeatedly pointed out, but we are moving in a very slow manner and we are not yet able to get out of the old habits. The weaknesses relate to lack of sufficient democratic functioning of the unions which prevents the active and vigorous participation of the rank and file workers in the policy decisions. This has its consequences in the inability of the unions to be in contact with the mass all the time and results in restricted membership of the unions. The other weaknesses are failure to take into consideration the demands and plight of the non-permanent workers, of women workers, and confine union activities mainly to the defence of the interest of the permanent workers. a very dangerous lacuna in our functioning relates to the total absence of consideration of the special problems of the muslim minority and oppressed caste workers. We all know that without special attention to them and drawing these section into the common struggle, a real blow cannot be given to the divisive forces. Yet, we hardly find any mention of this activity in any of our report.

Similarly there is neglect of work among workers of unorganised industries and also of working women. It is because of this that we are holding a half day session at this conference to consider the question and problems of working women. I hope all delegates will take effective action in this regard.

New Attacks on Trade Unions

Comrades, it seems the ruling class and the government are not satisfied with the repressive machinery at their disposal to curb the trade union movement. The Central Govt. is planning a new offensive with a new legislation to control and ban the growth of militant trade unions, to create conditions for promoting unions favoured by employers, to restrict the workers' right to strike and deny the workers the right to choose their representative union. Demand made by the CITU that recognition of trade union should

be decided by secret ballot of workers in factories is rejected by the government. The reason is obvious. A management favoured union is not likely to get the confidence of mass of workers. The trade unions and National Campaign Committee have protested against this proposed legislation. Every effort should be made to see that Govt. is pressurised to drop this obnoxious piece of legislation.

Fake Workers' Participation Scheme

Comrades, the trade union movement and workers are often being charged with self centredness when they defend their rights and living standard. This is propaganda to demoralise the workers and set other sections against them. Because only the working class and their trade union movement have been able to give a stiff resistance to the attacks of the employers and the Government, their struggle and organisation have created greater confidence among the democratic masses. So far as the working class is concerned it has always shown its preparedness to do its social duty towards production. The CITU has repeatedly expressed its desire and its willingness to accept responsibility for organising production and participating in production management provided the workers are given equal status along with the management and provided all documents concerning purchase of raw materials, finances, credit are placed before the workers. Neither the Govt nor the employes have shown any willingness to accept this offer. The Govt. on its part prepared a fake scheme of workers' participation in management which the CITU has rejected.

Growing Trade Union Unity

Comrades, I congratulate all our state committees and our unions on the persistent struggle they have carried on for achieving trade union unity often under very difficult and provocative circumstances. Reports from various states and unions reaching our Central office show how our unions had to overcome obstacles at many places and build unity despite them. But on the whole in the last three years because of our persistent efforts, because of the growing sense of unity among our partners and workers, trade union unity has grown, it has been strengthened and it is on the eve of reaching to wider sections.

Comrades, while we are satisfied that the consciousness of unity has grown and trade union unity is strengthened, there is no reason whatsoever to be self complacent. The fact has to be recog-

nised that inspite of our endeavours and growing cooperation from our partners the united strength of the working class has not succeeded in stemming the tide of economic offensive. Most of our actions including the very important public sector workers' strike have been protest actions unable to affect the policies of the government. On vital questions like unemployment, discrimination against working women, virtual collapse of labour legislations and the pitiable and pathetic conditions of the unorganised sections, we could not go beyond some protest actions. Through our united actions we are expected to develop that power and strength which the ruling classes in the government must respect and take into consideration when deciding their policies. We are far from achieving this objective therefore to overcome our present limitations and adopt steps to ensure widening and strengthening of trade union movement.

We must therefore study the changes that have taken place in recent months and plan new organisational measures embody the widening sense of unity.

Problem of Trade Union Unity

The National Campaign Committee during its existence last few years has played a very important role in organising and strengthening trade union movement. But its unity mainly hinges on the initiative and leadership of five or six central trade union centres. The big federations some of whom are far bigger than many members of National Campaign Committee. They are not full fledged partners. That is why some of the recent massive battles have taken place dependently of the National Campaign Committee that the Committee hardly having any role to play in it. The big strikes of NGO's of Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar in which millions of workers participated were conducted and fought independently of National Campaign Committee. The common organisations to which these employees belong also attend the meetings of National Campaign Committee but only as an invitee. This means the with the represent organisational structure National Campaign Committee is unable to coordinate and guide mass activities embracing millions of peoples. It is time that thought is given to create an organisational structure which places the Committee at the head of all the growing struggles.

It will be unrealistic to think that these mass organisations which at present have only the status of invitees will continue to be

satisfied with it for all time. Murmurs are arising in some of these organisations against the invidious status given to them and questions are asked why they should respond to the call of National Campaign Committee when they do not share participation in decision making. In any case monopolisation of the main decision making in the hands of few organisations will be injurious to the developing sense of trade union movement.

It is therefore necessary to make the National Campaign Committee organisation more responsive to the needs of the situation.

The problem before the Indian trade union movement is really how to gather together all trade union centres and federations with their different political outlooks and background, with their different international perception and their different outlook on trade union movement itself. This is the hang over of the old colonial period and also of the bourgeois influence on the trade union movement which seeks to confine the movement only to economic questions. It is a fact to be noted that there is hardly any common organisation for the factory workers and middle class employees. It is also to be noted that various sections of middle class employees also do not have a common organisation.

Call to Form Confederation

Taking into consideration the existing situation in the trade union movement, the inevitable differences on certain matters because of different political outlook, the CITU long ago suggested the formation of a Confederation of all Central Trade Union Centres and Federations where decisions can be taken unanimously and where all issues concerning labour and the economic policy can be discussed freely. It is time that we again reiterate our proposal for a Confederation and decide to pursue it with greater vigour. Steps for immediate expansion and certain re-organisation of the National Campaign Committee and a determined effort to include all trade unions and federations in a single Confederation is absolutely essential for not only protecting the immediate interests of the workers but also for defending national economy, its independence and self reliance against the corrosive economic policy of the Congress(I) Government. Signs are not wanting that day by day more and more massive resistance is coming from the employees and workers. Situation is heading towards a united massive action of the entire working class of India, if the trade union movement discharge its initial responsibility to unite the rising

discontent. The CITU must assiduously work for this grand unity of the working class which alone will enable to fight the challenge of anti-national divisive forces, the new economic policy of the Government and serve the cause of our people and national unity.

Solidarity with the Peasants

Comrades, the CITU and its unions must again recognise a major weakness of our trade union movement, not only its indifference but its callousness towards the peasantry and agricultural workers. Excepting one or two states the questions of the peasantry, solidarity action with them hardly occupies the attention of any union. This is a deviation which cuts off the trade unions from the basic support of the peasantry and enables the ruling class to drive a wedge between the two. The innumerable atrocities against sections of the peasantry, the untouchables, the adivasis, hardly attract the attention of the organised workers. Very rarely strike action is resorted to in protest against these atrocities. It must be recognised that all talks of socialism, democracy and working class advance will end in sheer words if working class movement does not work in close alliance with the peasantry and does not defend it against repressive attacks.

Defend the Minority

Comrades, our weakness regarding the defence of Muslim minority has been revealed in many places. In Maharashtra and many other states, in Delhi during the anti-Sikh riots after the assassination of Smt Gandhi, the working class was unable to intervene. The counter-revolutionaries had a field day. Only in West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura and in Orissa you find the actual intervention of our movement keeping the communalists at bay. Because of our weakness new communal forces have arisen like Shiv Sena in Bombay whose activities evoked protests from all parties in the State Assembly. It serves the interests of the imperialists to divide the working class and the people on communal lines. It is the minimum duty of our trade union movement to fight this poisonous communalism and assure by word and deeds that the working class movement with its completely secular outlook stands guarantee by the rights of the minorities and for its protection against all injustice.

Fight the Divisive Forces

Comrades, the three years since Kanpur have witnessed great intensification of imperialist conspiracy in our country. The assas-

sination of Indira Gandhi was followed by an intensive offensive of divisive and communal forces against national unity, an offensive which is financed and organised in many cases by direct agencies of imperialism. It is part of imperialist plot to divide the country and enslave it. The happenings in Punjab, Assam, Mizoram and finally in Darjeeling District of West Bengal—all point in the direction of a sinister plot to disintegrate Indian union. The bankruptcy of the ruling party in dealing with this critical situation stands exposed before all. Unable to isolate the secessionists by means of political struggle the ruling party makes the question of national unity a law and order question. And finally compromises with the divisive forces endangering the unity of India. The bourgeois-landlord government finds no other way because its politics are unable to solve problems of backwardness, unemployment and economic distress. More and more it is being revealed that the capitalist path chosen by India's ruling classes will not only solve the economic problem but will end in disrupting the national unity.

That is why while addressing ourselves to the immediate needs of the national situation the working class must wage a continuous fight for ending the capitalist path and taking the nation to the alternative path.

In these three years the consciousness of some of our working class contingents was put to serve test and we are all proud that they fully passed the test standing by the people and by the flag of national unity. They are all proud of the great fight carried on by our Punjab comrades and CITU workers in the fight against the Khalistanis, by our Assam comrades and workers against the divisive anti-national elements, by Tripura comrades and workers against the disruptive anti-national activities of TNV and by our Nepali speaking tea garden workers' fight against the Gorkhaland disruptive agitation.

Comrades, in all these three states many of our comrades had to sacrifice their lives, many got wounded and hurt, but the fight continues. In the Darjeeling District of West Bengal more than 200 houses of our workers have been burnt but they are courageously holding aloft the banner of unity. We all must salute the memories of those who have laid down their lives and express our high appreciation for those who had suffered and continues the fight.

Defeat Communalism, Casteism

In these three years the working class and the left movement

had not only to fight the divisive forces, they had also to combat the challenge of communal forces, Muslim and Hindu fundamentalism. The compromising policies of Rajiv Government on the Shah Bano judgement case and Babri Masjid/Ram Janam Bhoomi issue intensified the communal atmosphere all over the country and many cities and localities have become a power keg ready for explosion. The working class and the trade union movement must reckon with this situation and fight back the booming offensive. In contrast to all other states, in West Bengal dominated by Left Front Government headed by Com. Jyoti Basu Vice President of CITU and leader of the CPI(M), these three years have been completely free of communal riots with the Muslim minority completely assured protection of its democratic rights. This is the success of working class and left politics. The CITU has the strongest unit in West Bengal and it is no surprise with the class ideology preached by it, the mass of working class is able to fight fundamentalist appeal and keep itself united.

Hail the Left Victory

Comrades, these last three years the working class and left parties have been consistently fighting the challenge of divisive forces. The most outstanding result of this struggle together with the growing consolidation of mass discontent under the working class and left forces was the spectacular victory of the left front in the elections in West Bengal and Kerala. It is beyond doubt that in these two big victories the working class of West Bengal and Kerala played an important role. The West Bengal elections were fought under very difficult circumstances because the industrial areas of Calcutta saw closure of large number of jute mills and increased unemployment due to the result of Government of India's policy. But the CITU and its following knew that the economic policies of the Rajiv Government were responsible for their plight and they stood solidly by the left Front Government. They along with the peasantry knew that the Left Front Government headed by the CPI(M) was doing everything to protect the interests of the common people. Therefore, they succeeded in maintaining their unity and fighting back the slander campaign of Congress(I). The battle in both states, West Bengal and Kerala also involved important issues of deep concern to the people. The CITU and the CPI(M) have been fighting against communal and divisive forces all along and this became a major issue in the electoral fight. In Kerala

especially there were direct confrontation between the left and democratic forces and communal forces in alliance with Congress(I). That is why the victory in these elections has been hailed by all sections of people from other states. It has added great strength to the forces of democratic opposition to the Congress (I) regime. This electoral victory of the working class and the left parties surpasses the importance of all other achievements in the last year. It indicates the growing political weight that the left parties led by the CPI(M) and the organised trade union movement is achieving in the course of its united actions and struggle.

Support Left-Front Governments

It is the duty of all the CITU trade unions and the trade union movement to consolidate this achievement by strengthening trade union unity carrying the lessons of this victory to the mass of workers and organising support for the three left front Governments. It is the duty of all our unions to lend support to the CPI(M) and left parties in their struggle for unity and advances.

Improve Neighbourly Relations

Comrades, the CITU session must take note of the developments in neighbouring states and the deterioration in the relations between India and her neighbours.

It is a matter of great satisfaction that both India and China are committed to settle the border dispute peacefully. But the relations with other neighbours have rapidly deteriorated. The grim happenings in Sri Lanka and the massacre of Tamil militants have already created a situation of alienation and bitterness between the people and the Government of Sri Lanka and the people and the Government of India. The CITU had repeatedly stated that the solution of the Tamil problem can be solved within the frame work of sovereignty and unity of Sri Lanka and justice to the Tamil minority. This also has been the position of the government of India. But some where the diplomacy have failed and hawks in Sri Lanka are determined to seek military elimination of Tamil resistance. In Lanka itself contingents of Israeli, British and South African mercenaries are already there. All have it eye on the Trincomali harbour. Unless quick steps are taken to restore friendly relations between the two countries it will lead to further alienation helping imperialist conspiracies against the freedom of the subcontinent.

Comrades, the situation on the Indo-Pakistani border is still

more serious. The continuous arming of Pakistan by the US, the possession or near possession of nuclear weapons by Pakistan, the promise of AWACS and other sophisticated weaponries to the military regime create constant danger to the security of our country, asking our working class and our people to be vigilant. The massing of troops by both sides on the borders on the Republic Day was a warning about the growing seriousness of the situation. The gravity gets strengthened when it remembered that on the Republic Day the Muslim communalists were to organise the boycott of the Republic Day celebration and Khalistan was to be pronounced from the Golden Temple. This was a warning that the enemies from outside and inside were organising concerted action to endanger the security and integrity of the country. Tensions between the two countries, any conflict between them will imperil the freedom and liberty of both and this danger has to be jointly fought by the working class and people of Pakistan and the working class and people of India. On behalf of our Conference I send greetings to the working class and trade unions of Pakistan and its heroic people who are waging a determined struggle of restore democracy in their country. May their efforts succeed in liquidating domination of the military regime so that the two people can unitedly fight the efforts of US imperialism to subjugate both. The CITU warmly appreciate the struggle of advanced forces of Pakistan against the growing domination of US over the economy and country.

Defeat Imperialist Machinations

Comrades, in the meanwhile it is our duty to be vigilant against imperialist machinations and fight all imperialist devices to create conflict, war and tension. It is our duty to support all genuine efforts to defend the country against external offensive. We cannot but remember that the Indo-Soviet treaty of friendship and alliance has been a great factor in stabilising the situation in the subcontinent and strengthen our security. The CITU and its union must continuously work for strengthening Indo-Soviet friendship which has been consolidated over last four decades.

The November visit of Com. Gorbachev and the Joint Declaration have further strengthened this friendship based on mutual respect and assistance.

Strengthen Non-Aligned Movement

Comrades, you are all aware that the policy of non-alignment

to which our country has been committed since independence, has been a great source of strength to maintain our independent foreign policy, our freedom in international affairs and our free initiative to support people fighting for their liberty and freedom. It has enabled us to maintain our independence in all matters and kept us away from becoming a hanger on of any power. Those who have given up non-alignment and have entered into pacts with the imperialists have reduced themselves to an appendages of other powers as is the case of some of our neighbours. The CITU, its trade unions and the entire trade union movement must guard and strengthen non-alignment and protect it against internal assaults from reactionary political parties. Till now the mass of workers has not been enlightened about the importance of non-alignment in maintaining our self reliance, about the importance of our friendships with the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. It is high time that the working class takes an active interest in strengthening the policy of non-alignment and fights any vacillation on the part of the Government and assaults of reactionary parties who talk of two super powers and of genuine non-alignment by which they mean a tilt towards US imperialism.

Rally Behind Left Forces

Comrades, the three year since Kanpur have witnessed big advance of the forces of left unity supported by the working class. To consolidate these forces and expand them further in all the states is an important task of the CITU and its trade unions. The Conference must give a special call to all our unions to see they growingly rally behind the forces of left unity and ensure further retreat on the ruling party.

The same process of consolidation of working class unity and rise of its political consciousness and confidence born out of united mass activities has shaken the stability and overweening confidence of the ruling party. During these year the ruling party showed scant regard for the democratic rights of the people and got itself further isolated from them. The authoritarian tendencies in the administration have virtually led to collapse of all democratic norms at the bottom. This has accelerated the process of Congress(I) isolation. No previous leader of Congress(I) party secured such an overwhelming majority in the Lok Sabha as Rajiv. Even Jawahar Lal Nehru was unable to win such a huge majority in the first election of independent India. But within a couple of years Rajiv

Gandhi has growingly lost the support of the people and its parliamentary majority today is becoming a majority which is fast losing its popular support. The bankruptcy of Congress(I) ruling party in tackling the issue of Punjab, Assam, Mizoram and Gorkhaland and its compromise with divisive forces have all created a growing gulf between the aspiration of the people their urgent desire of national unity and the opportunist compromise of Congress(I) policy. Its disgusting and revolting compromise on the Ram Janam Bhoomi/ Babri Masjid and the Shah Bano case and its alliance with the forces of communalism in Kerala have isolated the parliamentary majority from the people.

Corruption Unbounded

And that is why the Rajiv Government is now rocked with one scandal after another corruptions and scandals concerning bourgeois parties and bourgeois administration are not only not rare but are the constant accompaniment of all bourgeois administration. But they lead to a critical situation, to crisis in the ruling party, to resignation of ministers only when the parliamentary majority and the Government represented by it get thoroughly isolated from the people and loose their credibility. This is what has happened to the Rajiv Government. Fairfax German Sub-marines, and the Bofor's deal scandal have all created a critical situation for the Government which is now unable to defend itself convincingly and resorts to all kinds of devices to escape truth. This however is not simply the result of corruption scandals but reflects the crisis of the parliamentary system.

Developing Crisis of the System

This crisis is further reflected in the differences between the Prime Minister and the President. There is no doubt that the Prime Minister failed to conform to Constitutional propriety when he failed to keep the President informed about the activities of his Government. In addition he made a misleading statement before the Parliament saying that the President was duly informed. They brought out the differences between the two in the open and has now led to lot of speculations and controversies. It will be wrong to think that these differences arose out of a wrong personal equation between the two. They are part of the developing crisis of the Parliamentary system. The Congress(I) party with its anti-people policies is unable to observe all the norms of the Constitution and rides rough shod over them. The indifferences towards

the President, the refusal to keep him informed was part of this policy of subordinating Constitutional norms to its own requirements.

It has also to be noted that both the President and Prime Minister have to observe these norms and none can override the supremacy of the Constitution and the Parliament. There were alarming reports that the President was being advised to intervene and dismiss the Parliament. Leading papers had to comment on these developments and warn against the consequences. This would have been nothing but a coup against the constitution.

Guard Against Destabilisation

While the working class notes this important feature of the present situation, while it notes that its organisational consciousness is growing and the ruling party is collapsing, it also notes that other forces are busy trying to fish in troubled waters. The isolation of Congress(I) from the people is often exploited by reactionary and communal forces and does not automatically lead to consolidation of the left forces. The working class also seen that in the situation created by the corruption scandals, it is not only the democratic and left forces that are active but are also certain foreign and reactionary forces. The working class is always conscious that every critical situation in the country will be utilised by the imperialists and their agents to their own advantage to disrupt the unity of India and erode faith in democracy and democratic advance. That is why it is very vigilant against the attack of the force of destabilisation. The working class is also aware that corrupt elements which pilfer people's money, which even endanger the country's security to satisfy their lust for money must be thoroughly exposed and hounded from the public life. These elements cannot be relied upon to defend national interests. They are most likely to be utilised by inimical forces against the interests of the country.

The Congress(I) Working Committee's appeal and warning against the forces of destabilisation therefore cannot be taken seriously unless the ruling party and its Government has the courage to expose every corrupt element and gains its confidence of the democratic forces. In the present situation a large number of honest people think and rightly so that the Working Committee's appeal and warning against destabilisation forces is a device to protect the corrupt. The working class like some other parties does not pooh

pooh the idea of danger from abroad. These bourgeois parties belittle imperialist machination against our country and think that the imperialist danger is an invention of the Congress(I) to keep itself in power. Such an outlook is extremely dangerous for the country and has to be fought.

Comrades, I urge on all of you to take into consideration the complicated political situation in our country and conduct the trade union struggle in a way which meets its immediate needs as well as the national needs of our people.

13

The Sixth Conference of CITU

THE Sixth All India Conference of the CITU met in the midst of an explosive economic and political situation. The years since the last conference saw the growth of these explosive elements and saw the CITU Unions carrying on a fight against the new challenging forces, the divisive and disintegrating forces and widespread economic distress arising from unemployment, closures and lockouts.

Struggle Against the Divisive Forces

The General Secretary's report and the speeches of the delegates gave ample evidence of CITU's relentless fight against the divisive forces and against attacks on jobs and living standard.

So many of our comrades in Tripura, Assam, Punjab and the Darjeeling district fell fighting these forces and defending national unity. The murder of our young Comrade Dhawan from Punjab while the session was in progress warned the delegates that the old peaceful period in which problems of the nation could be taken at leisure was over once for all and the working class has to be in the fore front to defend unity.

This was the experience of several states while other unions and state committees were combating the growth of anti-national fissiparous tendencies in the old way. How some of our unions mobilised the people in the midst of the murderous attacks, is seen from the report of the Punjab CITU State Committee. Moving in face of widespread terrorist attacks and the orgies of murder "the Punjab State Committee of CITU conducted a state wide campaign

to expose and isolate the Khalistani terrorists, to prepare the industrial workers and people at large for waging a determined struggle for the preservation of the unity and integrity of the country and to mount a massive offensive against communalism of whatever variety. In the course of this campaign travelling the length and breadth of the state the CITU jathas covered 41 small and big towns and the CITU leaders addressed sixty rallies, approaching in the process lakhs of people, industrial workers, employees and middle class people belonging to both the principal communities—Hindus and Sikhs. The CITU undertook this campaign in a grim situation of escalating terrorist violence in the state, with terrorist gangs armed to the teeth taking a heavy toll of human lives. This was the situation when the left, especially the CPI(M) has been singled out as a special target of the extremist fury, the two of its leaders having fallen to the terrorist bullet in the preceding weeks and few others having escaped by a whisker."

The CITU unions in the states mentioned above have been in the forefront of the struggle against the forces of national disruption. Many workers have sacrificed their lives in this sacred cause. This was the new situation after the Kanpur Conference and the Sixth Conference took full note of it.

In other states the CITU unions had to fight communal and chauvinist forces. In West Bengal and Kerala the working class and its unions under the guidance of CPI(M) were able to defeat the communal forces. In other states the unions have often intervened but their intervention was not effective.

Notable has been the fight put up by the Tamilnadu State Committee of the CITU against the attempts to rouse passions and chauvinism on the issue of Tamils in Srilanka and the dangerous slogan of military intervention. In 1982, "when attack on Tamils intensified to massacre in Srilanka and the arrival of refugees in India increased, Tamilnadu people were justifiably worried and even angry. Chauvinistic forces led by DMK started using it for their ends. Vying with the DMK was also a good number of AIADMK leaders. All of them including CPI and AITUC leaders demanded direct intervention of the Indian army. CITU and other fraternal organisations had to face this situation and go on an extensive campaign against the demand while condemning the inhuman attacks against the Tamils." The State CITU had also to conduct a wide campaign against linguistic fanaticism disrupting

the unity of the working class and the country.

It will be seen that the conference met in the background of the solid work to fight the divisive forces. Very few central trade union organisations and their unions can boast of this continuous fight for unity on the part of working class and unions and their leadership. And without the growing and effective intervention of this class national unity cannot be saved.

This provides a new picture of the working class intervention to solve national problems in contrast to the earlier situation when it confined itself wholly to its immediate demands.

Struggle for Peace

The conference took note of the international situation and the increased war danger. It praised the Soviet initiative for peace and noted the weakness of the peace movement in our country. It denounced US imperialist for its SDR project and their refusal to enter into meaningful negotiation for curbing the nuclear arms race. It praised the achievements of the Socialist countries—Soviet Union, People's China, GDR and others, and the new endeavours and steps to utilise the full advantages of the socialist system and the industrial, technological revolution.

Relations with Neighbouring Countries

But perhaps no previous session of the CITU conference had to devote such close attention to the developments concerning the countries in the subcontinent. The question of international solidarity of workers of the sub-continent and maintenance of peace and good neighbourly relations between the countries of the subcontitent has become an urgent issue in the recent times. The conference took note of it. Its resolution on Relations with Neighbouring Countries said, "The Sixth Conference of CITU expresses its grave concern over the deteriorating relations between India and her two neighbours—Pakistan and Srilanka. It warns the people of the three countries that US imperialism is out to exploit the situation to create further alienation in order to achieve its objective of dominating the countries of the sub-continent. Only the combined efforts of the working class and the people of these three countries can beat back the offensive and protect their freedom."

In connection with Sri Lanka it says, "The ensuing tension is being used by the imperialists and their allies to spread themselves in the Ireland kingdom under the guise of help to Sri Lankan Gov-

ernment. This creates the danger to the security of both the countries, Sri Lanka and India. It is urgent that the political solution is found to the Tamil problem to restore the atmosphere of friendship between the two countries and ensure their security."... "The CITU stands for a political solution of the Tamil problem within the framework of Sri Lanka's integrity and sovereignty."... "The conference sends its fraternal greetings to the people of Pakistan and Sri Lanka. It expresses confidence that working class solidarity will succeed in warding off the common danger."

Non-Aligned Foreign Policy

The conference also warned the working class about reactionary attempts against the country's foreign policy of non-alignment. The warning was necessary in view of increased pressure against non-alignment arising from the effect of the new economic policy and the mechinations of the imperialists and their allies. The conference asked the unions to remain vigilant regarding the policy of non-alignment, checking official vacillations and fighting the design of India's reactionary political parties. It also emphasised the importance of Indo-Soviet treaty of friendship for the defence and security of India.

The two resolutions gave concrete guidance to the unions and workers on how to fight national chauvinism, protect international solidarity and defend independent foreign policy.

Significance of Victories in Kerala and West Bengal

The conference hailed the two electoral victories of Kerala and West Bengal and registered their political importance in the working class and people's struggle against the Congress(I) misrule. The two victories it said, were victories against the communal, anti-national forces and the assertion of class and national unity.

The fact that inspite of Muslim communal propaganda on Shah Bano issue, huge Muslim masses in West Bengal voted for the CPI(M) and the left front is not only a tribute to the performance of the Left front ministry but a powerful indication of class and national unity nurtured through common struggle. It at the same time warned that the dissatisfaction arising form Cong(I) mis-rule was being diverted into anti-national channels helping the destabilising conspiracies of the imperialists. It warned against the treacherous attitude of some bourgeois opposition parties who belittled the danger and objectively helped its plan for destabilising and disintegrating the country. The conference also noted that

the Cong(I) talks of destabilisation only when it is in danger of loosing the confidence of the people.

Serious Economic Situation

The Conference took note of the serious economic situation and the distressing conditions faced by the workers.

Lock outs closures, lay-offs, dismissals, massive unemployment, attacks on living standards, collapse of labour legislations, looting of workers' provident funds, repression of struggle, massive discriminatory attacks against working women and utterly helpless conditions of the unorganised workers—these are conditions against which the CITU unions have been fighting.

Their fights have been prolonged and their sacrifices have been immense. From police repression to goonda murder attacks—everything has been used to suppress the CITU unions. Sometimes units of fraternal organisations have joined against this police hunt against us. The CITU has grown. It has grown because it was guided by correct outlook and has the courage to defend the interests of workers at all costs. No other organisation can claim such a powerful and consistent record of unremitted struggle.

The trade union struggle conducted by the CITU in the rapidly changing situation is also now entering a new phase. The CITU has been repeatedly asking the trade union movement to overcome its exclusive concern with immediate economic demands and turn to questions of policy to anticipate attacks on the daily living condition. Now during the course of the last three years because of economic crisis, the closures and lockouts, the call for nationalisation of jute and cotton textile industries has become a live slogan of action for thousands of workers. Under stress of circumstances the slogan has been supported by almost by all trade union centres and in West Bengal it is supported by all political parties including the Cong(I).

The CITU was the first to raise the question of the defence of the public sector against the liquidationist policies of Rajiv Government. Once more seeing the imminent danger the workers came out in defence of the Public Sector and intervened to oppose official policy. The support to nationalisation of jute and textile industries and the defence of the public sector are the first steps which the working class is taking to wage a battle for a national policy. This is a result of the continuous fight waged by the CITU in the last three, four years.

On Trade Union Unity

The CITU unions not only individually fought for workers' interests but guided by the CITU they have been waging an unremitted struggle for growing trade union unity. The messages and speeches delivered at the CITU session by fraternal delegates from AITUC, HMS, BMS and UTUC also reflected the great desire for trade union unity which is now accepted by almost all important trade union centres. But whatever has been achieved today is to a large extent the result of the activities of the CITU unions, their initiatives, and their patient work to overcome the obstacles created by units of other organisations. The report of the General Secretary contains many complaints by the State Committees about the difficulties in trade union unity created by the constituents of some all India organisations. There were complaints that these constituents while not opposing the call for united action coming from the National Campaign Committee, at the same time refused to throw their mass in the common activities. This often restricted the sweep of the united action and obstructed its progress. The CITU unions therefore had to attach great importance to their independent initiative and action in the struggle for unity. Big results of course were produced where the CITU initiative was matched by equal initiative on the part of others. The tendency of many CITU unions to depend on initiative of others or to wait till the others move into action is harmful. The CITU conference called upon its unions to continue to develop initiatives for common united action.

Confederation

Assessing the results of its struggle for unity the conference appreciated the role of the National Campaign Committee, but expressed its opinion that achievements of unity fell far short of the needs of the movements. Its resolution on Trade Union Unity said : "The Conference is of the opinion that the achievements of the united struggle are far from being commensurate with the needs of the movement. They have not yet succeeded in creating an impact on official policies and the policies of the employing class... The present constitution of the NCC with its focus on few central organisations requires to be very much broadened to ensure equality and effective participation of industrial federations and others, so that mass activities at various levels in various industries can be coordinated."

Taking into consideration the fragmented character of the Indian trade union movement, the absence of one central organisation guiding the entire trade union activities and the existence of different outlook towards the aims and objective of the trade union movement the CITU reiterated its earlier call for a Confederation of all trade union centres and federations where decisions will be taken unanimously and free discussions on matters affecting labour and economic policies of the country can be carried on. This will ensure a continuous dialogue between all sections of the trade union movement and will help creating a cohesive outlook towards certain problems of immediate importance. This continuous dialogue and growth of cohesive outlook will immensely strengthen the capacity of the labour movement to influence the country's economic policy. At present there is no other way of gathering the various organisations of middle class employees, factory workers and others in a common organisation except the one proposed by the CITU. This is necessary today because the National Campaign Committee itself is unable to gather all the forces of trade union movement and therefore further steps need to be taken. A fight has to be carried out against all those individuals who seek to keep away the trade union organisations from the common stream.

On Working Women

But an important feature of this Conference was the attention it devoted to overcome the weaknesses in the functioning of the CITU unions which are becoming a big handicap in its struggle for mobilising the workers. The Session pinpointed some of its weaknesses and decided to take immediate steps to remedy them. For long the CITU has been asking its unions to take the question of working women, fight against discriminatory practice towards them and secure their effective participation in running the trade unions. But unfortunately though some State Committees like the Tamilnadu State Committee did take significant steps in this direction the major part of the CITU committees either ignored the problem or made some cosmetic changes in their practices. It was therefore decided by the working Committee to involve the entire conference in the discussion of the problem. A special report on the question of working women was presented to the conference. Apart from enumerating discriminatory policies of the employers and the government towards working women it also revealed step motherly treatment given by the trade union leadership to working

women and their problems. It also showed how this attitude led to ineffective participation of women in the activities of the trade unions and their failure to occupy important positions in the unions. Earlier the CITU Secretariat had asked all State Committees to increase the strength of women's delegation and this time the number of women delegates was much higher than before. An entire day was devoted to the discussion of the report and 19 women took part in the discussion. It is necessary to note that except for the State of Tamilnadu no male delegates participated in the discussion.

It was thought to be a concern only of women. The speeches of women delegates also were not always up to the mark. Some talked about women's problems in general and some gave account of work among women. There were enough delegates among the women who could have spoken on the working women's conditions in their industries, and also on the attitude of the trade unions. It seems that the state leaders did not give much attention while choosing the speakers. Another thing to be noted is that for the discussion on the General Secretary's report not one state thought it fit to put up a woman comrade though some of the states had four or five speakers. All this show that the attitude towards the working women requires a drastic change. Nonetheless, the one day discussion, the informations and points raised in the special report and the speeches of women comrades—all should activise our trade unions to move in the proper direction. During the last few years, some initiatives and steps have been taken by the State Committees, but they constitute only a conscious face saving change.

Unemployment, Unorganised Labour, Minorities in Trade Union

The other shortcomings related to the question of the unemployed, the neglect of unorganised workers, lack of democratic functioning and special efforts to draw into the trade unions workers from the minority communities and the Harijans. All these have become very urgent problems in recent years, but the CITU unions have failed to pay proper attention to them. Thereby they have unremitingly restricted trade union appeal and the scope of the trade union movement. Even now by and large the CITU unions like the rest of the trade unions in the country confine themselves mostly to the defence of the wages of the permanent workers leaving out the defence of the temporary and non-perma-

nent workers and other sections mentioned above. The CITU again warned the unions that in the present condition it will be fatal to the trade union movement if it continues to neglect the all important problems of the unemployed and neglect the defence of the temporary workers in unorganised industries.

Taking note of the situation, the resolution on Unemployment drew the attention of the State Committees and the unions to the "vital task of organising the unemployed labour force which is a part of the working class", and called for launching direct actions with direct demands for the unemployed. It said, "The Conference draws the attention of the State Committees and the unions to the urgent necessity of mobilising the army of both the urban and rural unemployed in action programmes as an essential part of the organised trade union movement. Raising direct demands for incorporating the right to work as a fundamental right in the Constitution and payment of relief to the unemployed will rouse the confidence of this vital section of the labour force to come into the main stream of the trade union movement and fight the Government's policies unitedly with the employed. The Conference asks the State Committees to convene conferences of the unemployed and demand on their behalf adequate unemployment relief and right to work as a fundamental right in the Constitution. The Conference further asks the unions and the State Committees to organise joint demonstrations of the employed and unemployed workers in support of these demands."

Alliance with the Peasantry and Agricultural Workers

Another area of major weakness which the conference noted was the indifference and callousness of the trade union movement towards the peasantry and agricultural workers. Noting this lack and calling for solidarity actions in their support, the resolution said, "It however points out that the trade union movement stands isolated from the mass of the peasantry and the agricultural workers and the solidarity actions have been only of a token nature. The Conference therefore calls upon the State Committees to take further initiatives to forge alliance with the peasantry and agricultural workers and lead the struggles championing their demands."

There is no doubt that the discussion in the conference and the important resolutions adopted will enable the CITU unions to break through their old practices and orient themselves in the new directions to mobilise the full strength of the working class and

achieve wider successes for trade union unity.

It is absolutely essential that these shortcomings are quickly overcome for it appears now that the working class is getting ready for another stormy period. The number of mandays lost in lock-outs and strikes has been decreasing since 1982. But it now appears that the working class is getting ready for another period of resistance which will require much greater organisation to ensure that its actions result in achievements. A reorientated trade union movement taking issues of national importance and issues of economic policy will definitely play a very big role in influencing national developments, if it is backed by widening trade union unity. The CITU Conference has therefore asked its unions to get ready to meet the responsibilities by overcoming the shortcomings.

21.6.1987.

The Working Class, Vol. 16, No. 11, July 1987

14

Save The Peasants

The country is in the midst of an unprecedented drought. A major part of our country's peasant mass is affected by it. The millions who could not escape the status of a destitute even in the year of a good crop, even after toiling for more that 12 hours a day are now faced with starvation, disease and death.

For years India had not seen a devastating and widespread famine. The 40th anniversary of independence was announced with the approach of this nationwide calamity. For years India has not seen famine deaths in tens of thousands. This year unless the entire force of our people moves, we will be reminded of what was happening under the British rule at the end of the last century.

The rural areas are today without work, without food and without water. The cattle is being perished in thousands in every state. There is neither water nor fodder for it. The peasant having lost his crops has no resources to buy food or anything else he needs. Tens of millions of our peasants, who by their labour produce thousands of crores of wealth, now constitute a helpless lot dependent on the charity of the Government to save their lives and the lives of their wives and children.

If will be a lie to describe the calamity as a natural calamity beyond the control of society and the Government. The drought is the direct result of the depredations of forests under the Congress rule, depredations permitted by the corrupt regime for the benefit of the contractors and traders. Warnings against this looting of the forest wealth were given from time to time but the administration

which was interested in protecting the monetary interests of landlords, contractors, blackmarketeers, did not heed them. In recent years drought became chronic in certain areas but the State Governments concerned did not move. The present famine which threatens the lives of lakhs of people is the direct result of the selfish policy of the Congress Government. The Congress Government stands branded as promoter of droughts and famines.

The question before the working class and the people is how to save the peasants, the great mass of our rural people. They cannot be left to the mercy of a callous Government which is totally insensitive to the sufferings of the people. The peasant besides cannot be saved by heaping curses on the Cong (I) regime.

The working class, its organised strength must activise itself to protect the peasant. The working class must demand that the organisation for combating drought should not be left with the administration alone. The administration with its traditional incompetence, its bureaucratic attitude and its corruption will be totally incapable of discharging the job. The starving people, the mass of Indian citizens, will be humiliated, insulted and terrorised by the bureaucrats if the administration is allowed to handle the situation single handedly. The working class must demand that drought relief should be made a national concern and all political parties and mass organisations like the trade unions should be actively associated with the task of relief. The working class, besides, must announce its readiness to do everything possible for the famine striken peasant. It should give a call for and contribute liberally for the famine relief fund and express its readiness to do everything possible inside and outside the factory which helps the peasant. It should besides despatch workers' delegations to oversee the relief arrangements in the rural areas. It should form its own committees to look after the mass migrating to the cities in search of food and water. The working class must call upon the Central Government to supply the States with adequate funds to meet the drought situation. Special attention must be paid to ensure immediate and sufficient supply of drinking water in the absence of which a large number of deaths are likely to follow in the next few weeks. The accumulated food stocks in the godowns of the Food Corporation must be put to immediate use to stave off rural hunger. Diversion of these released stocks to urban areas for black market purposes should be prevented by the people and the

working class. Public distribution centres must be established in the rural areas on a wide scale.

Similar steps and relief measures are required to fight the effects of floods in the eastern part of India.

The working class must ask the Government to economise on other issues, to make plenty of resources available to save the peasant. The Centre has enough resources, it should not hesitate to import food and edible oil from abroad by using its foreign exchange reserves. Everything for the peasant must be the slogan of the working class. But this will not be possible unless there is strong public pressure on the Government. The working class should take initiative in organising this pressure.

All unions, all sections of working class must do everything to save the peasantry. They must liberally contribute from their earnings as an earnest mark of their solidarity with the Indian peasants, the main representatives of India. The united efforts of the trade union movement should go a long way in helping the peasants in this critical situation.

20.8.1987

The Working Class, Vol. 17, No. 1, September 1987

Addressing a Public Meeting

15

Greetings to the Peasants, Agricultural Workers and Youths

THE massive demonstrations and court arrest programmes of the Kisan Sabha and All India Agricultural Workers' Union constitute an outstanding event of rural mass awakening and action, free from the influence of the rural vested interests, who of late are posing as the champions of the peasant demands. It is a fact of great importance that the demonstrations were jointly organised by the Kisan Sabha and the Agricultural Workers' Union. There cannot be a decisive turn in the agrarian developments without the alliance of the two sections, an alliance which in many parts of the country is obstructed by caste division. The joint actions of the two, if regularly nurtured and constantly developed, will create a new situation favourable to the democratic movement and the emerging of workers' and peasants' alliance.

The call was given in a joint meeting of the two organisations which raised four demands—those relating to land reforms, central legislation for agricultural labour, remunerative prices and against tax burden on the peasants. The meeting also raised the demand for effective drought management in the country. It also articulated the immediate grievances of the peasantry and agricultural workers—increasing tax burdens, unemployment, higher input cost, increase in irrigation and power charges and above all the crushing debt burden.

These demands raised after four decades of independence constitute an indictment of the Congress rule, landlord-bourgeois

rule. They also show the extent to which the trade union movement and the working class have generally neglected the peasants and agricultural workers.

The call to demonstrate for these demands received tremendous response from the masses. From Tripura to Kerala, from Kashmir to Kanyakumari, the peasant and agricultural workers came into action revealing the pent up discontent. More than four million of them participated in the demonstrations and at least half million courted arrest. There were mass Dharnas embracing lakhs of people in West Bengal and extending over days. There were huge demonstrations in all states. Such coordination of the activities of the peasants and agricultural workers, the unity between the two vital sections of the agrarian mass were rarely seen. Its earnest beginning shows that the real class forces in the rural areas are coming to the forefront. They will soon be able to mobilise the full strength of the rural masses to fight the Congress(I) policies and giving a rebuff to the vested interests who are exploiting the peasant discontent to serve their own ends. The CITU and the workers hail this advance of the peasant movement and express their determination to help its advance in every way.

The peasant and the agricultural workers represent the biggest democratic force in the country and its activity is bound to affect the country's politics. Today when it is being guided into proper radical channel its strength will immensely help the country's fighting forces to achieve the demand for the immediate resignation of Rajiv Gandhi. This action of the peasants and agricultural workers stands in sharp contrast with the vapid deliberations of politicians who seek to fight Rajiv Government in company with communal and secessionist forces, who disrupt national unity on religious and caste basis.

The working class and the CITU must offer their warm congratulations to the DYFI and SFI, organisations of Indian youth and students, for the mammoth demonstration in Delhi on 23rd September, against unemployment, for jobs for all and education for all and for the resignation of Rajiv Gandhi. It was a gigantic protest of India's youth against Rajiv Government's policies which impose unemployment on millions and attack on right to education. Under the capitalist path pursued by successive Congress Governments the future of Indian youth gets bleaker and bleaker. A young man fresh from the college or the training school, with full of energy and

desire to serve society by productive labour, is told that his energy, education and desire are of no use to society. The jobs, the future, the life of Indian youth is at the mercy of the capitalists and the Government. Simultaneously there is an attack on right to education also. The youths and students are revolting against this situation. It is a revolt against the capitalist path of development against which the workers are fighting.

The DYFI and SFI have put the workers in the shade by seizing the initiative in the fight against the unemployment. In spite of repeated directives from CITU, the CITU State Committees and unions and those at job declined to move in defence of those who where deprived of jobs. The initiative taken by the DYFI and SFI should create a sense of guilt amongst the trade unions and galvanise them to undertake the fight against unemployment. That is the only proper response to the action taken by India's vigilant youth.

The DYFI and SFI leadership is conscious of the major and vital problems facing the country. The resolution passed by the Delhi rally says among other things : "The bleak situation that the young in India today face, is driving them to point of despair. The desperate situation of the young is being used by the imperialists, particularly the US imperialists to divide the people along divisive line. The developments in Assam, the north eastern region and Punjab are a sad commentary on such a course of development. Communal polarisation in the recent past has reached really dangerous and tragic proportions. Not only is the Government, through its anti-people policies, creating a situation conducive to the growth of divisive movements, it is actually surrendering before the anti-national divisive forces. The signing of accords with fundamentalist and separatist forces is only emboldening them. The failure of the Government, to politically mobilise the people against the divisive forces and to expose their anti-national, pro-imperialist links leads to attacks on the democratic rights of the people. The Punjab situation, the continuing communal strife in Meerut confirms our belief."

The DYFI in Kerala, it will be remembered, organised a 693 KMs unity chain in Kerala focusing attention on national unity. Another vibrant force is taking stand against present order, against Rajiv Gandhi, protecting national unity, fighting communalism, a force which is aware of the danger of the imperialist intervention.

All the allies of the working class are coming forward, getting more active, organised and conscious. It is for the working class to lend full support to them, to put its organised strength in action and coordinate their activities for an assault on this regime of class oppression and national disintegration. The working class initiative, in coordination with the activities of all will show the difference between a determined oppressed mass and chartering class politicians in the fight against the present order.
25.9.87

The Working Class, Vol. 17, No. 2, October 1987

16

Greetings to the Working Class of Soviet Union

THE Centre of Indian Trade Unions sends its revolutionary greetings to the Working Class of the Soviet Union and the AUCCTU on the occasion of 70th Anniversary of the Great October socialist revolution. This historic victory of the working class of Russia opened a new page in world history leading to transformatory changes in the world political scene during the last seven decades. The Centre of Indian Trade Unions wishes further successes to the working class and the AUCCTU and the people of the Soviet Union in their fight for world peace and their endeavours to score new achievements in socialist production.

The October revolution founded the first successful proletarian State, the dictatorship of the proletariat, which was an indispensable condition for the building and flowering of socialism in the Soviet Union. The successful building of socialism in the Soviet Union, then a backward country was a great achievement of the working class and the proletarian state. These and successive achievements were made possible because the working class and the state were guided by the scientific doctrine of Marxism-Leninism and by a party wedded to it.

The foundation of the working class state, the defeat of capitalist landlord class in Russia sent waves of revolutionary upheavals all over the world. They inspired the revolutionary fighters in India and led to the formation of communist groups in the country. The successful building of socialism inspired millions in the fight

against national enslavement, in their fight for democracy and socialism. The foreign policy of the working class state based on Lenin's decree of peace, which called for peace among nations, abjuration of war annexations, and enslavement of countries by others became a powerful factor in linking the national struggles with the progress of the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union has unswervingly pursued this Lenin's policy over the last seven decades.

The great victory of the Soviet working class and the Soviet people in the anti-fascist war changed the face of the world, with the banner of socialism now waving over one third of the world, causing the collapse of the old colonial order and facilitating the achievements of independence by India and many other colonial dependent countries. The forty years since this great victory have witnessed further changes with the increased successes of the socialist achievements of the Soviet Union and the countries of socialist camp.

The forty years have seen the continuous advance of socialist economy of the Soviet Union while the world of capitalism was having its ups and downs imposing crisis, recession, unemployment and miseries on millions of people. Today the contrast between the two worlds stands sharper than ever before. The much advertised recovery of capitalist economy is on the decline; the advanced capitalist countries, citadels of capitalism like the USA and the UK are plagued by increased unemployment which runs into millions. The capitalist society is unable to use the advantage of industrial and technological revolution for common advance and good. A declining growth rate faces it multiplying the already existing miseries.

As against this the Soviet economy already free from crisis and unemployment foresees an accelerated rate of growth beating all previous records and fully capable of utilising the technological revolution for common good. The 12th Five Year Plan and the 15 year programme of economic development adopted by the 27th Congress of the CPSU foresee a period of accelerated economic development enhancing the living standard and socialist culture of the Soviet people.

The increased economic and material strength of the Soviet Union has helped in strengthening the economy of other socialist countries producing a new type of international co-operation

based on equality of the partners. This co-operation embodied on the COMECON emphasises the difference between the relationship arising among socialist countries and those existing among capitalist countries.

The increased economic and material strength of the USSR and the Socialist countries has been of great help to many newly liberated countries to avoid dependence on western economies, military alliance with imperialist countries and maintain the independence and freedom of their economy.

India in particular has been greatly benefited by large scale Soviet aid supplemented by aid from other socialist countries. India's public sector industries, strategic industries in public sector, have been mostly built with Soviet help and aid from other socialist countries. Without it India would have found it impossible to gear its economy and protect its freedom.

The Indo-Soviet treaty of friendship and co-operation embodies the growing friendship between the two countries, ensures, India's security and contributes to the maintenance of peace in the sub-continent which the USA threatens to disturb with its pouring in of sophisticated arms into Pakistan. The Indo-Soviet treaty reveals the will and capacity of the Soviet Union to protect peace and freedom of other states. The Delhi declaration of December 1986 expresses the identity of views of the two countries on the vital question of war and peace and contributes to the strengthening of world movement for peace and the struggle of the non-aligned countries to keep themselves away from all militarist and other entanglements.

While the US imperialists are interfering in many countries to bring them under their control, while they are planning their designs and conspiracies against newly liberated countries and often resorting to open aggression to secure their global objectives, the Soviet intervention in world affairs has been to protect freedom and independence of nations. Whether at the UNO or outside whether it is Arab nations, Afghanistan, Nicaragua, Kampuchea, Mozambique or Angola, the voice of the Soviet Union has always been raised in defence of freedom and against aggression.

The end of anti-fascist war saw the Soviet Union, the proletarian state resuming its battle for peace to save the world from the horror of a nuclear war. As early as 1945 the Soviet Union demanded the elimination of all nuclear weapons in the name of

peace for the peoples of the world, in the name of freedom of the smaller nations. But the US imperialists possessing the monopoly of atom bomb at that time were bent on using it to establish their global domination over the world. The break up of their atomic monopoly did not change their stand. It only spurred them on to greater and greater accumulation of nuclear weapons.

The USA knows that the economic, material and moral strength of the Soviet Union and the socialist countries constitute the biggest deterrent in the way of its global domination. It therefore continues its policy of amassing nuclear weapons to achieve military superiority over the Soviet Union. It is prepared to sacrifice millions of human lives for the sake its aggressive designs.

In contrast, the working class socialist state has been pursuing a policy of peaceful co-existence, peace for the whole world, freedom for all nations. Knowing that nuclear competition and war will affect the very existence of humanity, the USSR has been making proposals after proposals to avert this disaster. During the course of last four decades it has made innumerable suggestions and proposals to curb the race in nuclear armament, reduce conventional armaments, abolish chemical weapons and suggested a practical course for the final elimination of all nuclear weapons, to remove from the world the nightmare of a nuclear war. But the US imperialists refused to respond. Their only response was the star war project of aggression and war, a project to carry nuclear war in outer space.

The barbaric character of the imperialist system stands completely exposed and the humanist character of socialist system manifests before the eyes of all.

In recent times again the Soviet Union made important proposals and took unilateral actions to convince the other side. It declared unilateral moratorium on nuclear tests and hoped that the USA would follow making a beginning in the direction of the slowing down of the armament race. But the US bent on securing military superiority refused to respond. At Reykjavik Com. Gorbachev made comprehensive proposals whose acceptance would have immediately changed the international climate and started the delayed progress towards a world free from nuclear fear. The USA again refused to respond and sabotaged the great effort. The recent understanding on the removal of short and medium range missiles from Europe has again raised hopes. But taking into con-

sideration past experience it will be difficult to be certain about its execution. The SDR project will be a constant source of disruption of interim agreements.

While the imperialists sabotage all peace efforts, the people of the world, the working class of all countries realise that the battle for peace between the USSR and USA is not a battle between the countries it is a battle waged by the Socialist country, the working class Government on behalf of humanity to save peoples of all countries irrespective of national frontiers and social systems from nuclear destruction. The progressive forces all over the world hail and support the Soviet Union's struggle for peace; all realise that it is this struggle for peace and the deterrent strength of the Soviet Union that stands between the world and a nuclear war.

The great peace movement of our time, the peace loving peoples of the world all stand by the Soviet Union in this crucial struggle. The working class of India and the CITU hail this struggle of the Soviet working class for world peace and wish them further success in the great task of saving humanity. Only a working class guided by Marxism-Leninism, tested in several battles can carry this burden for the sake of humanity. The struggle for peace is permeated through and through with the spirit of Leninist proletarian internationalism.

The 27th Congress of the CPSU opened a new perspective for socialist development, for mastering all the achievements of modern science and radically raising the economic, material and cultural level of the working class and people of the Soviet Union. The 15 Year Plan adopted by the Congress provides for doubling national income and industrial output. "As a result, the economic potential that will be created in the course of 15 years, will be equal to what has been accumulated throughout all the previous years of Soviet power and a long stride forward will be taken in building the material and technical basis of communism."

Such progress is possible only under a proletarian state, embodying people's power. It is made possible by combining the advantages of Soviet economy, socialisation of means of production and the advantages of industrial and technological advance.

The 27th Congress by introducing new appropriate methods of managements for this gigantic task, by providing for deepening and expanding socialist democracy and involving the conscious day to day participation of the workers in production has put great

responsibility on the shoulders of Soviet trade unions, the AUCCTU and the working class. Promotion in democracy in production, introduction of self-government into the activities of work collective and establishing of work collective councils both at factories and amalgamations, introducing of a system of management of factories all these immensely increase the role of the working class initiative, innovation and vigilance in the growth of the economy. The CITU wishes success to the AUCCTU, the working class and the people of the Great Soviet Union in this great task of taking a stride forward to lay the technical foundation of communism.

The CITU hails the memory of the great Lenin, the architect of the Soviet State. It wishes success to the 15 years plan, to the Soviet struggle for peace & calls for strengthening the Indo-Soviet friendship.

The Working Class, Vol. 17, No. 3 November 1987

17

Inaugural Speech

All India Coal Workers Federation Third Conference, 18-20 November 1987

Comrades,

We are meeting two weeks after the 70th Anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution. In the 70 years of its existence the first working class state and the socialist Soviet Union have registered achievements which have changed the face of the world. The role played by the Soviet Union by its sacrifices and heroism in the anti-fascist war unleashed tremendous forces of liberation which resulted us, one third of the world going over to Socialism, smashing of the old colonial system and the achievement of independence by India and many other countries.

These 70 years also witnessed a persistance struggle for world peace waged by the socialist countries in contrast to the organisation of war and aggression by the imperialists especially the USA. The Socialist state has been consistently struggling for the reduction and final elimination of all nuclear weapons to save humanity from a nuclear holocaust. This struggle in the spirit of proletarian internationalism is premeated through and through with great concern for saving humanity from destruction. But the US imperialists and the imperialist camp as a whole have been rejecting one offer after another for reduction of nuclear armament firmly pursuing their aim of global domination and hostility to socialism. The difference on the question of war and peace reveals the difference between an aggressive imperialist system and a socialist system which considers the interest of common humanity as its special

concern.

SUPERIORITY OF SOCIALIST SYSTEM

The superiority of the socialist system in the course of its 70 years existence is again seen when we contrast the condition in the capitalist countries with the conditions in the Soviet Union. Capitalist recovery is already on the decline. The capitalist society has seen many ups and downs, crisis and recessions and increased unemployment in the last seven decades. In the same period the Soviet economy has continually advanced quickly overcoming the vast devastation of the war period. The leading capitalist countries today show lowering growth rate of economic advance and a rising rate of unemployment. They foresee a further decline in production growth rate and a further increase in the unemployment rate. Between 1973 and 1987 unemployment rate in France increased from 2.6 per cent to 10.9 per cent; in Italy it increased from 6.2 per cent to 10.7 per cent, in U.K. it increased from 3 per cent to 10.1 per cent; in the United States it increased from 4.8 per cent to 6 per cent; in West Germany it increased from 0.8 per cent to 7 per cent.

As against this the 27th Congress of the CPSU opened a new perspective for socialist development for deepening of socialist democracy and for mastering all the achievements of modern science and radically raising the economic, material and cultural level of the working class and the people of the Soviet Union. The 15 year plan adopted by the Congress provides for doubling national income and industrial output. "As a result, the economic potential that will be created in the course of 15 years will be equal to what has been accumulated throughout all the previous years of Soviet power and a long stride forward will be taken in building the material and technical basis of communism."

Praising the achievements of the socialist Soviet Union on the 70th Anniversary of the October Revolution the working class of India must pledge itself to fight the battle for socialism in our country.

SEVERE DROUGHT CONDITIONS

Comrades, the country is facing flood havoc and severe drought conditions and vast sections of peasants and agricultural workers are undergoing inhuman distress. The criminal policy of Rajiv Government to concentrate all relief measures in the hands of

administration and the ruling party accentuates the distress of the common people, opens offer units for corruption, misappropriations and may lead to innumerable avoidable deaths in the countryside. It is normal logic that those who are tarred with the charge of corruption in defence deals cannot be trusted with distribution of relief to the people in distress. There are already reports appearing in the press that corrupt officials are distributing only half the allotted quotas for fodder and intimidating the peasants to sign for receipt of the full quantities.

SPECTACULAR ACHIEVEMENT

Comrades,

Let me first congratulate you on the success achieved by your united movement in which our Federation has taken a prominent and leading part. Thanks to this unity. The wage level of the coalmine workers has risen and now can compare favourably with the wages in the other public sector concerns. The earlier low wage level totally disregarded the hard labour that the coal miner has to put in.

This result is in the first place due to the growing unity of all the trade union organisations in the industry. It is above all due to the militant fighting line of the CITU, our All India Coal Workers Federation and its line of trade union unity. The CITU while pursuing this line has often to over-come the vacillations of its partners while trying to keep them together. Our advance would have been quicker if all other organisations had shown the same fighting spirit and same tenacity to defend the workers as the CITU and the Federation have done. It should be remembered that neither unity nor favourable results in the economic struggles are possible without the CITU and the All India Coal Workers Federation pursuing vigorously its independent activities and popularising its militant line all along.

The Coal workers deserve congratulations on the unity with which they and other trade union organisations are carrying on negotiations with the authorities. They deserve congratulations on their united mass actions, like the all-India strike of April 1986. Such unity in action on all India scale was very rarely seen in the past.

The CITU condemns the Central Government for its attempt to go back on the agreement regarding interim relief. An agreement

entered into in the presence of the Energy Minister is being repudiated by the authorities. An effort is being made to defraud the workers a substantial part of the agreed sum by putting fallacious interpretation by openly repudiating the terms of the agreement. But this is not the first occasion on which the coal workers find the management going back on its word. Last year the workers had to protest on the refusal of the authorities to implement the terms of the previous agreement. There was failure to implement agreed welfare measures like provision of housing and drinking water, education facilities, medical benefits and safety measures. There was failure to implement a jointly agreed pension scheme; refusal to give jobs to dependents of workers dying in harness; refusal to abolish contracting of jobs of a permanent nature; arbitrary deduction of 8 days wages for strike and loss of lien and break in service, for alleged illegal strike, and failure to implement other demands connected with bonus, standing orders, gratuity, etc.

What sanctity will be then for collective bragaining if so many items of an agreement can be violated or can be held in abeyance on the arbitrary will of the management? This is an unfair labour practice which should be brought to the notice of the ILO and the international working class organisations. Cheating the workers of the gains of an agreement between the two parties is a mean and low-down trick and desperate anti-labour practice. It should show what regard the Government attaches to its word.

The performance and conditions in coal industry demand rapid improvement if people of our country are to get the maximum benefit. More than 5000 crores of rupees have been invested in the industry. It is people's money that is invested and the people have to pay heavy interest charges on the debt and loans from foreign countries and they have the right to expect that the industry will be run efficiently. It of course should be our endeavour to give the best of our efforts and best of our labour to our people so that the common social investment produces the desired results and benefit for the common good.

According to official committees, however, lot of inefficiency exists in managing the industry. "The level of capacity utilisation of mines has not shown any increase over the period of the last five years excepting in the case of WCL. The Drop in capacity utilisation in 1985-86 as compared to the same in 1981-82 in case of ECL, BCCL and CCL is significant. The utilisation of OCP equipment

needs a lot of improvement. The level of utilisation of dumpers for CIL as a whole during the period of 10 months up to January 1987 is only 29 per cent of the shift hours. The lowest being in CCL 25 per cent. The main constraints explained to the Committee are absence of adequate workshop facilities, non-availability of spares, operators, as well as maintenance of personnel."

The incapacity to handle modern equipment, the purchase of unsuitable equipment which must be perforce remain idle and the deliberate non-use of new equipment to enable contractors' men to be employed are scandals which are not new.

To illustrate the point clearly I would like to quote the following extract which has appeared in the newspapers recently.

"The CBI in a fresh countrywide drive against corrupt public servants, has uncovered assets worth several lakhs of rupees from an executive engineer of the municipal corporation of Delhi. According to a CBI spokesman on Wednesday, the assets unearthed includes Rs. 19,000 in cash, fixed deposits worth Rs. 33,000, National Savings Certificate worth Rs. 10,000 gold ornaments, bank balance worth Rs. 37,000 two houses, a Maruti car, two two-wheelers and a costly diamond set, besides a beauty parlour run by the official's wife.

In three other searches conducted on the premises of a general manager, presently posted in the Central Coal fields in Hazaribagh district, immovable and moveable assets worth several lakh rupees were unearthed. While the searches were on in his house in a posh colony in New Delhi, the official walked in with a briefcase containing Rs. 7.90 lakhs, the spokesman said."

The authorities often propagate that the main trouble of the coal industry is the rising wage bill. But they carefully conceal that other charges forming the cost of production of coal are increasing at a faster rate than the wage bill. "The charges of depreciation and interest which used to be of the order of Rs. 4 per ton in 1974-75 have increased around Rs. 36 per ton in 1985-86. While escalation of the prices of equipment and other inputs and increase in the rate of interest could account for a substantial part of the increase in the charges, effective utilisation of the investment by way of completing the project within the estimated time and cost and also improvement in the capacity utilisation including utilisation of the heavy earth moving equipment should make a significant contribution to reducing the charges.

THREAT TO EMPLOYMENT

Comrades,

Over the years the coal worker is producing much more than what he used to produce earlier. The productivity (OMS) has increased from 0.66 in 1975-76 to 0.91 in 1985-86. It is because of this that we find the increase in coal production from 88.98 million tons in 1975-76 to 134.11 million tons in 1985-86. It seems that there are plans to see that our productivity increases still further. The over all productivity in CIL mines is expected to be raised from 0.87 to 1.21 tons in 1989-90. The over all OMS target for 86-87 has been fixed at 0.94 tons for CIL.

That means there will be less employment in the coal industry if the plans of the management are fulfilled. According to the Baweja Committee estimates in 1978 there are 50,000 workers excess in Coal India. To get rid of this redundancy thousands of women workers were thrown out of job and it is a matter of great regret that the unions concerned did not put up a fight against the massacre of jobs. Now according to the Chari Committee it seems that in 1985, the ECL alone had 50000 surplus workers. At this rate the total number of surplus workers in the Coal Industry will be many times more. In accordance with these estimates measures are already afoot to kill jobs, to deny employment. Recruitment of unskilled workers has been stopped. Employment of dependents of workers dying in harness has also been stopped. Voluntary retirement scheme for women workers under which they have the option to retire by offering employment to their dependent nominees has also been scrapped. These are forerunners of big offensive against the jobs in the industry.

It is claimed by the authorities that accident rate has come down since nationalisation. The rate of fatalities per M.T. of production has come down to around 1 from 2.37 in 1978, the year of nationalisation. The rate of serious injuries has also come down from the high 19.43 per M.T. to around 4 at present. What is not told is that in comparison with other countries this rate is still very high and that serious injuries sometimes are not properly recorded. It is known that there is lack of safety measures and especially there is a world of difference between what is supposed to be provided and what is actually provided. There is no effective supervision over the safety provision and their functions. These matters have been repeatedly brought to the notice of the management and the

authorities but so far workers safety is concerned it does not seem to be any concern of the management.

One expected radical improvement in welfare measures and health measures after nationalisation of the coal industry. But these are totally inadequate and at best are moving at snail's speed. Regarding housing the authorities claim that 1,25,000 new houses have been added. But in reality it meets the needs of the 32 per cent of the workers.

Recently it has been announced with great fanfare that the Energy Minister has decided to have elected representatives of the workers on the board of directors of CIL. The representatives it seems will be elected by secret ballot. The introduction of elective principle is of course welcome and the CITU has been insisting on it for years. Till now the practice was to nominate a representative of a 'recognised union' as a representative of the workers. The elective principle will certainly help the workers in choosing a proper representative, who really will be able to represent their view point. But at the same time the CITU cannot expect the election of a few representatives on the Board of Directors constitutes in any sense workers participation in management. Being member of the Board of directors does not earn the working class its representative's full and equal powers in regard to the management of the industry in all its aspects and in all matters. The CITU has repeatedly called for equal power and equal status for workers representatives in the management of the industry so that the workers can contribute their best for developing industry efficiently in the interests of the people. It is obvious that the authorities do not want to give up the present method of bureaucratic management of the public sector. Our unions must insist that workers participation in management should consist of equal status for working class representatives and equal right to deal with every aspect of the industry, finance, raw material, marketing, etc. Short of that all schemes like workers representatives on the Board of Directors are schemes to avoid real participation of workers and just a show to international opinion which growingly calls for such participation.

UNITY OF ALL COAL MINERS

Comrades,

There are certain immediate problems before your Federation which are to be tackled in collaboration with other trade unions and

other public sector organisations. You have often shown your capacity to unite the entire working class in coal industry and launch an All India protest strike. This strength and unity must be preserved and strengthened. The coming months and years may impose very big trials on the coal workers and the rest of working class of India. You are already aware, the economies of capitalist countries are in deep crisis, the stock-exchange markets saw a big upheaval in all these countries. Economists and others are apprehending a big recession. The effect of what is happening in the advanced capitalist countries is already being seen in India where the Government of India is intent of liquidating the public sector and curtailing employment. But now if the crisis of the capitalist system gets accentuated all industries in India including the coal industry will be faced with very big attacks and the first to be attacked will be the job of the workers. We must all be prepared for any eventuality. I have already remarked the management thinks that there are thousands of workers who are surplus. If the economic situation gets accentuated there is likely to be a massive attack against their jobs. Also it will be very difficult unless the workers are very closely united to secure from the management further concessions in this period when the Government of India is intending of cutting the expenditure in every possible way. This means that not only the unity of the coal workers must be consolidated but the coal workers must move in close unity with rest of the workers in India and more and more strengthen the CITU and its unions. Because CITU and its unions have been the main force to build trade union unity, to keep them on a correct militant line and at each stage whether it is at negotiations or otherwise, to achieve the maximum unity as the trade union.

Comrades,

On behalf of the CITU I greet the growing unity of the workers of public sector and their organisations and their growing solidarity and co-ordinated action for their demands. The steel workers, the coal workers and many other public sector workers by their unity were successful in their struggle for interim relief. There is no doubt that given this unity the workers will succeed in getting the agreement fully implemented. You must also note that fighting battles have also been waged by state government employees of various states. Recently the Government employees of U.P. and

Haryana waged a determined struggle to secure their just demands and refused to be intimidated by mass arrests threat of dismissals, of break in service, etc. This solidarity and unity from top to bottom is a growing feature of the trade union struggles and it expresses an upsurge and new awakening among workers and employees. A notable feature of recent times is the awakening and activities among the officials of the public sector who in the absence of organisation were being denied their demands by the authorities. The workers and officers of public sector should fully cooperate with each other in their struggle for their respective demands.

T.U. AND DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS CURTAILED

Comrades,

Inspite of our growing unity among coal workers, our trade union rights and democratic liberties are not protected everywhere. We have full liberties and full freedom of activity in West Bengal where the Left Front Government guarantees, that police interference will not take place in workers struggles. But, in other states, especially in Bihar the ordinary coal worker is not only subjected to the repression of the police but also is a victim of the gangsterism of anti-social mafia elements which operate in cooperation with corrupt officials and with the police department. The coal worker notwithstanding some of his successes in relation to wage increase often lives life without liberty, a life of fear from gangsters, a life of uncertainty of jobs because of arbitrariness of the management. The right to direct action is sought to be penalised by the management of the nationalised CIL by invoking an old law passed by the British which authorises them to cut a week's wage for a so-called illegal strike. Besides, every effort is being made to deny the women workers the maternity benefit that is due to them or deny the minimum creche facilities. All these put together show that we have long way to go before we can say we are being treated as workers in a modern country and not as bonded labourers.

The management and the authorities often mislead the people by their propaganda that the workers and their organisation indulge in irresponsible strikes doing great harm to production. We have repeatedly stated that the strikes and their frequency are often due to the fact that the management do not enter into negotiations with unions where the workers have joined, and sign agreements

only with leaders and unions under their control. Obviously such agreements which prejudice the interests of the workers lead to disputes and strikes which cannot be settled. But if the real representatives of workers are brought to the table and negotiations are carried on with them, strikes become less frequent and industrial peace becomes more enduring. These facts are seen from recent happening in coal industry. Because authorities started dealing with several trade unions, the number of strikes and loss of mandays has been decreasing for the last 3-4 years. The annual average for the 4 years period from 1979-80—1982-83 was number of strikes 443, number of mandays lost 7000 thousands, production lost in tons 5,68,000. In 1983-84, the number of strikes were 263, number of mandays lost 1,61,000, production loss 2,16,000 tons. In 1984-85 number of strikes 78, number of mandays lost 3,72,000, production loss 2,78,000 tons. In 1985-86 up to January 1986 number of strikes 86, number of mandays lost 94,000, production loss 80,000 tonnes.

Comrades,

The CITU and its trade unions must take note of the fact that in the present critical situation facing the country the Central Government is forging new weapons to attack the trade unions and the working class. It is contemplating new legislation to ban strikes and militant trade union organisations and encourage pliant unions. It is intending on firing on the workers a new cost of living index series which will reduce the Dearness Allowance. In its unscrupulousness the governments of the ruling party often use any legislation to crush the trade union movement. Press reports show that the Congress(I) Government of Gujarat is using the Anti-terrorists Act to detain trade union leaders. Use of preventive detention acts, illegalisation of the strikes under the ESMA are now common features of the policies of the Congress(I) government in the various states. Only the three Left Front Government continue to guard the liberty and the freedom of the trade unions. It is extremely regrettable that even some non-Congress(I) governments do not shrink from using ESMA and other measures against workers and government employees.

FIGHT FOR RIGHT TO WORK

Comrades!

All trade unions must be deeply concerned over the challenge

of growing unemployment. Already there are more than three crores unemployed in the cities with nearly seven crores in the villages. The present capitalist system is unable to find work for this 10 crores of people whose labour can produce immense amount of wealth. There is also no provision for unemployment relief. Millions of these unemployed have hardly seen a job and they have no connection with the trade union movement. Unless they are organised and their interests are championed by the trade unions not only they will suffer they are likely to be used by the vested interests to fight the employed workers. The trade union movement must unitedly demand immediate unemployment allowance to the unemployed, opening of all the closed factories and raise the demand for right to work to be included as a fundamental right in the constitution.

Comrades,

In this connection we must all welcome the decision of mass organisations of the Left Parties to organise a march to Delhi proclaiming the demands of the peasantry, sponsoring the demand of right to work and other demands. The demonstrations will march from capitals of various states and pass through rural areas and later on converge in New Delhi in a mighty demonstration demanding settlement of the demands raised by them. It is an unprecedented effort to unite all mass organisations, as will bring together masses of students, youth, women, agricultural workers and workers all for settlement for immediate urgent demands and above all for securing the resignation of Rajiv Gandhi Government. The demand of Rajiv's resignation is now acquiring general mass support because of his reactionary economic policies, the corruption scandals and Rajiv's opportunity compromises with communal reactionary forces to advance the interests of his party. To win the Haryana election Rajiv Gandhi dislodged the Barnala Government which was taking a strong stand against religious bigotry and helping forward the process of political isolation of the Khalistani terrorists. The Punjab problem has been made more dangerous and complicated by Rajiv's opportunism.

The low level of some Congress(I) leaders was seen in Rajasthan when neither the Congress(I) Government nor the Congress(I) leaders took a firm stand against Sati burning. To hide their surrender before this inhuman practice they passed an ordinance

prescribing execution for Sati burning. This was all a device to cover their importance in the implementation of the ordinary law. In passing it, should be noted that the leaders of the almost all bourgeois parties the Lok Dal, Janata, BJP bowed down before this murderous practice justifying it a part of religion and warning against governments intervention. After forty years of independence India preserves all old evils except that of cannibalism. The working class must see how all bourgeois parties have failed at this occasion notwithstanding their protestations that they fight for liberties of people and freedom of women.

IMPERIALIST CONSPIRACY

The opportunist compromising policy of Rajiv Gandhi does not end here. Of late there have been repeated negotiations with the US imperialists on matters of defence equipment, light combat aircraft, when that country is pouring sophisticated arms into Pakistan. Rajiv Gandhi's recent visit to the USA has strengthened this trend of relying on US help in defence matters. This is a very dangerous trend because it will make India vulnerable to American pressure and also enable the CIA agencies to penetrate our defence secrets. Besides there is now a project for sending Indian officials to get themselves trained in American expertise in administration and transfer this expertise to our officers. We know what American expertise consists of. The CIA shows consistant of cheating the elected authorities and treating people with suspicion and as enemies of the government of the existing order. These developments naturally follow from the pressures exercised by the World Bank under of the new economic policy and threaten to undermine our well-tested policies of non-alignment. The USA in particular directs its pressure against this policy of non-alignment especially India's policy of friendly relations with the USSR and other socialist countries. It knows that India's friendship with the socialist countries and the Indo Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation strengthen Indian security and Indian independence and enables India to meet the threat and blackmail practices by Pakistan with the help of USA.

The demands for Rajiv's resignation follows from all these opportunistic and anti-national maneouvrs which threaten to disintegrate the country. The resolution passed by the Central Committee of the CPI(M) correctly describes Rajiv Gandhi government as

the government of national disintegration.

But the forces of national disintegration are also active to take advantage of the discontent of the people against the Rajiv Gandhi Government. The communal forces BJP and the other Hindu revivalist organisations and Muslim communalists, Muslim League and other organisation, all are trying to divert the common democratic movement into fratricidal channels. The reactionary agents of imperialism are doing their best to disrupt national unity by exploiting discontent against the Rajiv Gandhi and diverting it into communal and caste channels. The struggle of the democratic forces against Rajiv Gandhi must growingly isolate these communal reactionary forces who play the role of destabilising the country facilitating the imperialist game of disruption and enslavement. Some bourgeois opposition parties who think in terms only of electoral gains are quite willing to associate with the BJP. Thereby they play the game of communal parties to allienate the minorities and divide the people. The Janata Party, the Lok Dal and certain elements in TDP also think in terms of joint political activity with BJP which will definitely harm the democratic and common movement. The working class must therefore demand an understanding between the Left forces, the oppositional secular parties and mass organisations to carry on this fight against Rajiv Gandhi. Only on the basis of this understanding and isolation of all communal forces will the result be in favour of people and the nation. The working class and its trade unions also have to play a role in their own sphere in fighting the communal forces and forging unity irrespective of religion and caste. The trade unions must make special endeavour to see that the workers from minority communities and workers from oppressed castes are specially enrolled in the trade unions and their specific problems are taken by these organisations so that they feel the trade union to be common organisation not only fighting for the economic demands against the management but also fighting against feudal and communal evils. Communalism is splitting the class unity of the working class and unless the working class is able to protect its unity it will not be able to protect national unity.

Today's strength of the trade union movement has grown in a big measure and aided by other mass organisations above all supported by the three Left Front Governments and the Left Democratic forces it will be in a position to lead the agitation against Rajiv

Gandhi and foil the destabilising game of imperialism and defeat the communal reactionaries game to divide the people. With the three Left Front Governments as the advanced outposts of the democratic struggle the united strength of the working class will be able to discharge its responsibilities of saving the country's democracy and defeating all anti-democratic forces. The trade unions must realise that in the three Left Front Governments they have got an advance guard which helps them to build their unity to build their strength and to fight all enemies of the nation. The achievements of these three Governments must be fully popularised among the workers and all sections of the people so that their policies and activities rally the democratic forces isolating other reactionary agencies.

18

Presidential Address

Working Committee Meeting
Chandigarh, December 1-3, 1987

Comrades,

AT the outset all of us should pay homage to the memory of all those who fell fighting in Punjab carrying out the sacred task of defending the unity of our mother land. For the last three years or more Punjab has been the battle ground between the disruptors of national unity and the defenders of Indian freedom and unity.

A large number of our heroic comrades from the CITU, CPI(M), DYFI, and SFI from the AITUC and CPI have fallen victims to the anti-national assassins' bullets. Among them there are people whom I knew personally. I honour the memory of Com. Chanan Singh Dhoot, Member of the State Committee of CPI(M), a long standing leader of the people of Punjab. I honour the memory of Com. Darshan Singh of CPI whom I also knew personally. I pay homage to the memory of Deepak Dhawan, an young DYFI leader and all others who courageously carried on the work of protecting Hindu Sikh unity. I also honour the memory of all those who irrespective of their political affiliation were gunned down by the secessionists. And we should also not forget the police jawans and officers who laid down their lives fighting the terrorist menace to eliminate this source of disruption.

Comrades you all are aware that our CITU suffered a grievious loss in the sad and untimely demise of our well-loved comrade Nrishingha Chakraborty who for years fulfilled with great credits his responsibilities as a Secretary of our organisation. Having

worked with him for the last few years I could personally see what mettle this ex-Railway worker was made of. A man of gifted intelligence, of versatile grasp of deep devotion and strict discipline Com. Nrishingha could despatch ten men's work in a day. Very rarely one comes across such combination of knowledge of our movement, discipline and devotion. The CITU has suffered a big loss. The loss of the country's railway movement is equally big.

Comrades, we are meeting a month after the 70th anniversary celebration of the Great Socialist October Revolution. That great transformatory event has put its impact on world history by the successive changes inspired by it. On the 70th anniversary the Soviet working class and people have decided to open new period of still more rapid advance, diffusion of well being among the people and fuller participation of all in socialist building activities. The 15 year plan of quicker development, when the capitalist world is crashing, is a fresh reassertion of the superiority of socialist system. The CITU wishes the Soviet working class and people further successes in economic achievements and spread of socialist democracy.

The 70 years of October revolution have further demonstrated that the socialist system is a ceaseless defender of world peace, a ceaseless opponent of war. The pursuit of a foreign policy based on equality and freedom of all nations, opposition to war, and annexation and domination, and settlements of international disputes through the negotiations is the outcome of proletarian internationalism taught by Marx and carried forward by Lenin through his decree on peace. The CITU and India's working class pay tribute to this persistent endeavour of the Soviet Union for safeguarding world peace. The CITU hopes that sense will dawn on the American imperialists and all obstacles in the way of successful conclusion of negotiations on intermediate missiles will be removed. The CITU unions must pledge to fight for the cause of world peace and strengthen Soviet efforts to avert a nuclear war and save humanity from destruction.

Comrades, the CITU must send its warm greetings to the working class and the fighting people of Bangladesh who are carrying on a just struggle against the military dictatorial rule of General Ershad. The military regime has launched unheard of repression, illegalised the Communist Party and arrested two women leaders of the movement Sheikh Hasina and Begum Khal-

ida.

The CITU is confident that the working class of Bangladesh will discharge its historic responsibility in this struggle and enable the democratic forces to get rid of military rule and clear the way for a popular government. The CITU strongly condemns the killings of democratic fighters and expresses its deep sympathy for the victims of this military terror.

Comrades, the developments in Sri Lanka have naturally caused lot of concern among the people. The Indian Peace Keeping Force which was despatched to protect the Tamils from repression and to secure their just demands is now pitted against the LTTE, a militant organisation of Tamils. In some sections there is a demand that IPKF should be immediately withdrawn. These people are totally blind to the game that imperialism is playing in Sri Lanka. The attempt to settle the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka by means of an accord between the two countries was not liked by imperialist forces though they pretended to support it. With the signing of the accord, the initiative for settling the dispute passed into the hands of the two government removing the possibility of outside intervention. If the accord had been fully implemented it would have been a great victory of the friendship between two non-aligned countries and a defeat for the interventionalists, destabilising forces of imperialism. Those who are fighting the accord and denouncing it, the LTTE,the Sinhalese chauvinists, all are objectively helping imperialist intervention in Sri Lanka. This ugly situation would not have developed had the LTTE not gone back on its word, and repudiated the accord which they solemnly accepted. There is no doubt that its leadership has fallen victim to suspicious and external forces and it is voicing the same charges against India as are voiced by the openly pro-American wing in Sri Lanka led by the Prime Minister of the country. The withdrawal of the IPKF will only mean a open license for the massacre of Tamil civilians by interventionalist mercenary forces whom the reactionaries will call on to handle the situation. As matters stand the IPKF has been handling the situation with great concern for the life and safety of civilians.

Nonetheless it has to be realised that this is an extremely ugly situation in which the peace keeping force has to use its weapons against the LTTE. But if during the course of its peace keeping operations the IPKF is not able to rely growingly on the sympathy

of civilian Tamil population, if it is not able to growingly rally popular opinion in its support, then its mission must be deemed to have failed and then it will have to be withdrawn. And that will mean a terrific political and diplomatic defeat for the people of the two countries and a terrific gain for the interventionists and their allies.

Comrades, the economic situation in our country which was already critical and full of distress for our people may take a further sudden plunge in view of uncertainty in the capitalist world. The people of our country are faced with great uncertainty and the working class which is already suffering from retrenchment, lockouts and unemployment is likely to face more severe challenges in the near future.

It seems that the capitalist world is repeating the story of 1929 when in the midst of an outlook for increased prosperity it was faced with the biggest depression in history. Just on the eve of 1929 crisis the American President promised to that world that the USA was looking forward to a boundless era of prosperity. Again after so many years the same story is repeated. The American economy had shattered all previous records by entering upon in October 59th month of continuous expansion and no body thought that the end was in sight. Unemployment rate was reduced to 5.9 per cent, lowest since 1979 and indications of economic growth were there. And then suddenly came the stock exchange crash affecting the entire capitalist world, leading to huge losses and uncovering the soft belly of the economy. There is already panic in the market and there is serious debate whether this stock exchange crisis is a precursor of another great depression. Hasty measures are being taken but they do not seem to affect the downward trend. Economists are pinning down American budget deficits, higher interest rates, fall in dollar's value, and the systematic policy pursued by the USA Government as the source of the present uncertainties. But this leaves the basic causes out of sight. They are the domination of monopolies over the Governments of the advanced capitalist countries, the emergence of state monopoly capitalism under which the state intervenes in the economy to protect the monopolists, the emergence of a military industrial complex mainly in the USA which for its own selfish interests demands huge expenditure on military and destructive weapons, the increased strength of multinationals which introduce a further element of anarchy in the

international situation, the accentuation of the market crisis because of one third of the world going socialist out of the orbit of imperialist exploitation, the impediments in the way of inhibited looting of the backward countries following the collapse of old colonial system inspite of the fact that many of these countries have been caught in the debt trap.

The crisis is further sharpened by the uneven development of productive forces in the capitalist countries with the vanquished powers—Japan and Germany dominating the scene more than the victor powers—the USA and UK. It is difficult to imagine that the capitalist world will find an easy way to get out of the present predicament. And any upheaval affecting the western capitalist world is bound to affect India.

Drought and flood affecting a greater part of the country have complicated the situation still further. The huge loss of agricultural production is bound to affect industrial production, the loss of purchasing power in rural areas is bound to affect the demand for industrial goods and add to the crisis of the economy. Already the World Bank estimates that this year the growth rate in GNP will be zero, and the deficit in the balance of payment will be higher by one million dollars than earlier. India has once more to depend on rescue operation from this world agency. An additional loan of 300 million dollars is proposed to be given to ensure that "normal development" as envisaged by the World Bank is not prejudiced. What onerous terms will be laid down for this charitable operation, no one knows. In any case the Bank has already laid down the main frame-work of do's and don'ts for the operation of Indian economy. And the Rajiv Government's policy closely follows it.

The direction in which the World Bank is pressuring the Government is clear from the World Development Report, 1987: "The capacity licensing system has constrained competition between domestic industry and led to high rejection rate long delays and changing sub-section priorities making it a significant barrier to entry and growth." This is nothing but a call for complete deregulation of the economy and giving a free hand to monopolists and multinationals, to compete with others and ruin them.

It is recently reported in the Press that the Rajiv govt. had already made a blue print to meet these exorbitant demands of the World Bank. The new concessions it seems called for dismantling of the licensing system, relaxation of controls on monopoly houses,

more encouragement to foreign investment and import of technology. As a result of the proposed relaxation only 2 to 3 hundred of the larger companies would for the time being be subject to some control.

But the political atmosphere following the Bofors scandal forced the Government to defer the announcement of the new concession it was reported.

The pursuit of this policy for the last two years the policy of liberalisation, lower taxation for industry, pandering of self confessed black marketeers and smugglers of foreign exchange abroad have brought no relief to the crisis ridden economy. Even the planned targets have proved difficult to achieve. The Annual Report of the RBI says that during April 1986-87 that rate of growth decelerated in the manufacturing sector to 7.2 per cent from 10.6 per cent achieved during the corresponding period of the previous year. In the manufacturing section the engineering group of industries for which data are available till October reveals that the growth rate was halved to 6.7 per cent compared with that of 13.2 per cent during the corresponding period of the previous year. The other two sectors, mining and quarrying, the electricity generation reached higher growth rate. The composite growth of six infrastructure industries reached a lower growth rate of 7.4 per cent of the full financial year 1986-87 as compared with 7.9 per cent in the previous year. In addition the target and growth for all infrastructure industries which was fixed at 9.5 per cent for the year could not be achieved.

All the measures of liberalisation failed to bring relief to sick industries or the retrenched workers. The RBI report 1986-87 says "industrial sickness among the small, medium and large scale units continues to rise. This is causing concern due to its repercussions on the entire economy. According to available datas as on the end of June 1986 the total number of units identified by Banks as sick rose to 1,30,606 with an outstanding bank credit of Rs 4,665 crores, accounting for 8.54 per cent of total bank credit or 17 per cent of bank credit to Industry (small, medium and large)".

Since June 1986 how many more have gone sick no body know. It is obvious that the malady of the economy cannot be cured by providing incentives to the capitalists while leaving the basic masses denuded.

The effect of this policy is seen in the growing distress of the

people, large scale unemployment and rapidly growing assets of the monopolists. Unemployment has increased to 3 crores and more; crores in the rural areas do not get regular jobs. Lakhs of educated men and women are unemployed. But all this does not stop the process of more concentration of wealth and capital in the hands of the monopolists. The Minister of State for Industrial development told the Lok Sabha recently that the assets of top 20 large industrial houses in the country increased by 18.7 per cent and 29.5 per cent during 1984-85 respectively over the preceding years. The assets of the top monopoly houses have increased from Rs. 13,103 crores in 1983 to Rs 15,448 crores in 1984 and to Rs 20,136 crores in 1985. Between two years the assets have increased by more than 50 per cent. No wonder the World Bank and foreign banks are praising the Indian govt. for the prudent management of the economy.

The assets of the first five top houses are as follows: BIRLA Rs 4,111 crores; TATA Rs 3,698 crores; THAPAR (a name which recently earned distinction): 1,067 crores; JK SINGHANIA : 1.057 crores; RELIANCE : 954 crores.

It is known that some of these gentry indulge in smuggling foreign exchange abroad. Hundreds of crores worth Indian foreign exchange is sent abroad using various devices. Rajiv Gandhi was rattled when one of these scoundrels was caught and asked to pay the penalty. What follows from this is the worsening condition of the economy prolonged closures, lock outs, forcible retirements and loss of jobs.

The figures recently released from West Bengal shows that 15 out of 56 jute mills remained closed in 1987. 19 jute mills were under lock outs, 12 were locked out in 1987 and 7 were under lock out from earlier year. Out of 39 cotton mills as many as 8 were under lock outs.

The demand for nationalisation of jute industry supported by all political parties of W. Bengal including the Congress-I has been rejected by the Central Govt. The central govt besides is unable to stop the competition from artificial fibres notwithstanding some measures which it recently announced. Both the jute peasants and jute workers are placed in an adverse position by the policies of the Central Govt. Equally bad is the lot of the cotton growers from Maharashtra and other states and the textile workers under the Central Govt. policy. The competition from artificial fibres has

affected the interests of the India's cotton growers, and the peasants are demanding that their interests should be protected. The reduction of prices for cotton when prices of other commodities are rising, the reduction of guaranteed prices to the level of support prices in Maharashtra has led to sharp discontent among the cotton growers.

So far the workers are concern the new textile policy of the govt. has brought them no relief. The government is preparing to close some of the sick mills which have been taken over. It tried to fool the workers by asking them to run some of these mills by organising labour cooperatives. The trade unions have rightly rejected the proposals knowing its futility in the present conditions. The CITU must warn the workers against similar measures in other industries. Workers in some of the closed factories were persuaded by management to convert the arrears of their wages into the equity capital as a condition for reopening the factory. The workers accepted the proposal but the result was that they lost their claims over arrears and the factory also was not opened.

The NTC Mill authorities are trying to play same tricks on the workers in pursuance of World Bank pressure to return the taken off mills or close them. The official committee has formally recommended that 8 mills should be closed. The new strategy recently announced consists of attractive "voluntary" retirement scheme which will force hundreds of workers into unemployment. Secondly, there will be a drive for modernisation, import of more sophisticated looms. "There is excess capacity with the NTC which will have to be prunned if long term economic viability and profitability are to be achieved," the Deputy Minister for Textile is reported to have said. It is sheer madness to talk of excess capacity when half of India goes semi-naked and cloth consumption per head is actually less than what it was some years back.

To add to the woes of the workers, the unemployed and rural masses, prices of all commodities are continuously on the rise making nonsense of wage increases, increased incomes and family budgets. And what else can one expect if the purchasing power of the rupee is reduced to 9.7 paise. There is no seasonal fall in prices this year. Besides the effect of drought conditions is just starting. But the price spiral is progressing towards a double digit inflation. The prices of daily necessities are on the constant rise. The whole sale commodities prices for the week ended on 25 Oct. increased by

8.2 per cent over the 1987 March end figure. The present high prices follow on the increase of the earlier years and heap immense distress on the people. In this period edible oils rose by 30.6 per cent, foodgrains by 7.5 per cent and milk product by 12.3 per cent.

Naturally the consumer price index for industrial workers rose in September by 10.2 per cent over the corresponding month of last year. The CPI index rose by 8.5 per cent in the first half of 1986 it increased by 8.8 per cent in the first half of 1987-88. The worst sufferers are the agri-workers and the workers in unorganised industries who have no protection against the rising cost of living. The mass of factory workers and employees are also defrauded because the compensation provided is inadequate. To deprive them further the Central Govt now seeks to impose a new cost of living index series on the workers which will reduce the DA through statistical falsification. The CITU and other trade union organisations have rejected this new series.

Increased prices, cut in DA and increased unemployment-these are the weapons which are being increasingly used to "steady" the economy in the interest of big capitalists and multinationals.

Comrades, it is against this tortuous situation that the working class of our country has been fighting. And it must be admitted that it has been heroically waging the battle in the most difficult circumstances. A total of 819 industrial disputes resulting in work stoppages were reported during January to July 1987. In these disputes 10,33,000 workers involved and 1,30,29,000 man days were lost. During the camparative period of 1986 that is from January to July 1986 there were 1130 industrial disputes, with 9,57,000 workers were involved and 1,55,75,000 man days were lost. This shows the tenacity of the trade union struggle and speaks highly of the militancy and organised discipline of the workers even when faced by the most adverse circumstances.

Comrades, while referring to strikes I cannot but mention certain special features connected with the strikes of the employees of the Indian Express in Delhi. The strike arising from bonus was mispresented deliberately as a conspiracy to hit at the Indian Express because of its exposure of Govt corruption. Several leaders of political parties joined in condemning the strike falling victim to the mendacious propaganda of the Editor of the paper. Those who proclaimed that they were defending the freedom of press had no hesitation in stifling the voice of the workers indulging in misinfor-

mation and taking a hand in breaking the strike with police help. It is a matter of shame that the Editor of the paper himself tried to organise strike breaking while chanting about freedom of press. Leaders of a political party in the name of defending the freedom of Indian Express also lent their hand in breaking the strike. When their actions were exposed they hastily retreated and saw that they were mere spectators but not participants who condemned these strike breaking operations and also the attitude of certain political parties' leaders deserve congratulation. But this episode should show that some of those who speak in the name of freedom of press do not accept the workers' right to organise and fight for their causes. The CITU while it stands in support of freedom of press cannot ignore that the owners of many papers as a profit making concern. It also warns the workers that while they should oppose Government action against press freedom they should also know that concentration of papers and press in the hands of monopoly often leads to misinformation and use of press agency to subserve the purpose of the monopolists.

Comrades,

Resistance to Rajiv's policies is now coming from all sections of employees and workers. In recent days public sector workers and their organisations have been fighting unitedly for their demands. They recently succeeded in securing the desired interim relief, the same that has been given to the officers. This was a big victory though the Government is now trying to deprive them of a part of the relief. Besides, the government has refused to pay interim relief to the engineering, cement, jute and cotton textile workers in West Bengal on the plea that they are covered by tripartite settlement or Wage Board recommendations. It is totally discriminatory and violative of the agreement arrived at with the Central Trade Unions. All the central trade unions including the INTUC called for indefinite strike from November 23. The CITU has called for solidarity actions all over India in support of the strike. In recent times the officers of the public sector have also shown greater awareness and activities in defence of their rights and demands, this augurs well for the trade union movement. There must be close cooperation between the organisations of workers and of the officers. Both must fight Govt's attempt to import American expertise and training for management.

Besides the public sector workers other sections including the state government employees have been in the field defending their rights. The heroic strike of the Haryana State Government employees, of the U. P. employees, which withstood the terror and intimidation of the State Governments showed great sense of unity and solidarity and determination on the part of the employees.

Equally outstanding was the strike of university and college teachers. It brought together in an unprecedented wave of unity teachers from several universities and colleges. Such all India unity of teachers was never witnessed before. The strike was heading for a thumping victory. But because of bad and opportunist leadership it was virtually betrayed. The game of the Government to divide the college teachers from the university teachers succeeded. The leadership without consulting the broader executive entered into a deal with the Government and thereby created disruption in the ranks of the teachers. This should be a lesson to all. During the strike it is essential that all decisions are taken democratically and especially negotiations and power to take decisions is not concentrated in the hands of few a people.

Comrades, the economic policy of the Rajiv Government encourages the multinationals to penetrate Indian economy. At our Bombay Session we noted how this is affecting Indian industry and leading to loss of jobs for the workers. The process continues. What must be noted is that the multinationals are getting bolder and bolder in their arrogances and designs. The Drug multinationals are ignoring all legal controls inspite of several concessions given to them by a willing Government. The Indian Drug producers are complaining that they have no protection against the powerful multinationals. These powerful multinationals sell harmful drugs to the Indian people—preparations of which are prohibited in their countries as dangerous to the health of people. And now the Govt. of India has succumbed to the power of Union Carbide company and it is reported that it is accepting a shameful deal betraying the interests of thousands of Bhopal sufferers. The Government had submitted a claim of total 3 billion dollars for damages due to the Bhopal Gas disaster. Hundreds of people have died, thousands have been crippled, nearly two lakhs have suffered. It was expected that the claim for compensation will be properly pursued, besides those whose criminal negligence led to disaster will be punished. But now for reasons best known to it the Government

has come down and is prepared to accept compensation in the range of 500 to 600 million dollars payable in 20 years. And of course no one is going to be punished. This is a shameful climb down before a powerful multinational company and it should be denounced by all people. It however shows how the machinations of a multinational company can prevail against a sovereign Government.

Comrades, the challenge of the secessionist forces is very acute in Punjab and the democratic forces in the state are putting a courageous fight to defend our country's unity. The problem is complicated by the criminal opportunism of Rajiv Gandhi Government which dismissed the Barnala Ministry when it was taking a firmer stand against Khalistani terrorists and religious bigotry. With this Barnala and his ministry could have played a political role and isolating the secessionists from the Sikh masses. But due to opportunist consideration of winning Haryana elections the Government was dismissed and the problem was further complicated. The CITU must congratulate our CITU cadres here and our trade unions in maintaining the unity of working class and fighting the onslaught of the secessionists. I have already referred the sacrifices made by the CITU and other organisations. There is no doubt that because of the activities of the CITU, the working class of Punjab is more and more emerging as a unifying force. In fact without such a role of the working class no newly liberated country can save its unity. The working class of the CITU is learning to discharge its responsibility in this connection. In West Bengal it not only acts as a deterrent against communal poison but also defends the country's unity against the secessionists Gorkha Land agitation. In Assam it has played a heroic role in fighting the secessionist movement and has sacrificed many lives. In Tamilnadu in fights the anti-national Tamil chauvinists who seek to rouse Tamil chauvinism in connection with Sri Lankan developments and safeguarded the unity of the country and its class. In Kerala it is known that last election was fought on the basis of fighting communalism and exposing congress opportunist compromises with the communal forces. This is a good beginning for the working class because the growing challenge of communal secessionists, and regional forces can be met only by the growing unity of the working class and its fight for uniting the democratic forces against the forces of disruption.

Comrades, in this struggle for unity against imperialist machinations, against the anti-democratic and anti-people policies of the Cong(I) Govt the three left front govts of West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura stand as advanced outposts and the entire working class must recognise their role and lend full support to them. The Congress(I) Party and the Prime Minister himself indulges in all kinds of slanders against these govts and seek to create a difficult situation for them utilising their hold over resources. The Cong(I) party and the Central govt are looking upon drought and flood relief measures as their election propaganda and therefore refuse to give substantial help to these states. In Tripura they are organising loan mela which is nothing but an attempt to purchase electoral votes and not to give help to the needy. In Tripura besides they are trying to influence election by creating a law and order situation and joining hands with the notorious TNV which indulges in murder and arson and perpetually create a law and order problem. And the Congress(I) Party knows that it cannot win the Tripura elections by fair means. Therefore it is resorting to these illegal means.

Comrades, our country is passing through a severe period of drought and flood. Millions of our people are in distress and they are helplessly dependent for relief on administration and Central Govt which is notorious for corruption. It is obvious that those who are tard with corruption in defence deals cannot be trusted with the administration of relief to the drought striken. Political parties and mass organisations must demand that the relief agencies should be handled by representatives of political parties and mass organisation, so that its distribution is free from partisanship, mismanagement and corruption. This alone will ensure that the intended relief actually reaches the people.

Comrades,

In this connection we must all welcome the decision of mass organisations of the Left Parties to organise a march to Delhi proclaiming the demands of the peasantry, sponsoring the demands of right to work and other demands. It is an unprecedented effort to unite all mass organisations. It will bring together masses of students, youth, women, agricultural workers and workers—all for settlement of immediate urgent demands and above all for securing the resignation of Rajiv Gandhi Government. The de-

mand of Rajiv's resignation is now acquiring general mass support because of the reactionary economic policies, the corruption scandals and Rajiv's opportunist compromises with communal reactionary forces to advance the interests of his party.

The low level of some Congress (I) leaders was seen in Rajasthan where neither the Congress(I) Government nor the Congress(I) leaders took a firm stand against Sati burning. To hide their surrender before orthodox pressure they passed an ordinance prescribing execution for Sati burning. This was a device to cover their impotence in the implementation of the ordinary law. In passing it, it should be noted that the leaders of the almost all bourgeois parties—the Lok Dal, Janata, BJP, bowed down before this murderous practice justifying it as a part of religion and warning against government's intervention. After forty years of independence India preserves all old evils except that of cannibalism. The working class must see how all bourgeois parties have failed on this occasion notwithstanding their protestations that they fight for liberties of people and freedom of women.

The opportunist compromising policy of Rajiv Gandhi does not end here. Of late there have been repeated negotiations with the US imperialists on matters of defence equipment, light combat aircraft, when that country is pouring sophisticated arms into Pakistan. Rajiv Gandhi's recent visit to USA has strengthened this policy of securing US help in defence matters. This is a very dangerous trend because it will make India vulnerable to American pressure and also enable the CIA agencies to penetrate our defence secrets. Besides there is now another project of sending Indian officials to get themselves trained in American expertise in administration and transfer this expertise to our officers. We know what American expertise consists of. The CIA shows that expertise consists of cheating the elected authorities and treating of people with suspicion and as enemies of the Government of the existing order. These developments naturally follow from the pressures exercised by the World Bank because of the new economic policy. They threaten to undermine the well-tested policies of non-alignment. The USA in particular directs its pressure against this policy of non-alignment especially India's policy of friendly relations with the USSR and other socialist countries. It knows that India's friendship with socialist countries and the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation strengthen Indian security and Indian

independence and enables India to meet the threat and blackmail practice by Pakistan with the help of USA.

The demands for Rajiv's resignation follows from all these opportunistic and anti-national manoeuvers which threaten to disintegrate the country.

But the forces of national disintegration are also active to take advantage of the discontent of the people against the Rajiv Gandhi government. The communal forces BJP and the other Hindu revivalist organisations and Muslim communalists, Muslim League and other organisations, all are trying to divert the common democratic movement into fratricidal channels. The reactionary agents of imperialism are doing their best to disrupt national unity by exploiting discontent against the Rajiv Gandhi and diverting into communal and caste channels. The fight of the democratic forces against Rajiv Gandhi must isolate these communal reactionary forces who plays the role of destabilising the country facilitating the imperialist game of disruption and enslavement. Some bourgeois opposition parties who think simply in terms of electoral games are quite willing to associate with communal parties. They play the game of communal parties to alienate the minorities and divide the people. The Janata party, the Lok Dal and certain elements in TDP also think in terms of joint political activity with such parties which will definitely harm the democratic and common movement.

The working class must therefore demand an understanding between the Left forces, the opposition secular parties and mass organisation to carry on this fight against Rajiv Gandhi. Only on the basis of this understanding and isolation of all communal forces will the result be in favour of people and the nation. The working class and its trade unions also have to play a role in their own sphere in fighting the communal forces and forging unity irrespective of religion and caste. The trade unions must make special endeavour to see that the workers from minority communities and workers from oppressed castes are specially enrolled in the trade unions and their specific problems are taken by these organisations so that they feel the trade union to be common organisation not only fighting for the economic demands against the management but also fighting against feudal and communal evils. Communalism is splitting the class unity of the working class and unless the working class is able to protect its unity it will not be able to protect

national unity.

The trade union movement has grown in a big measure and aided by other mass organisations, above all supported by the three Left Front Governments and the Left Democratic forces it will be in a position to lead the agitation against Rajiv Gandhi and foil the destabilising game of imperialism and defeat the communal reactionaries game to divide the people. With the three Left Front Governments as the advanced outposts of the democratic struggle the united strength of the working class will be able to discharge its responsibilities of saving the country's democracy and defeating all anti-democratic forces. The working class must realise that in the three Left Front Governments they have got an advance guard which helps them to build their unity, to build their strength of the trade union movement and to fight all enemies of the nation. The achievements of these three Governments must be fully popularised among the workers and all sections of the people so that their policies and activities begin to rally democratic forces more and more isolating other reactionary agencies.

17.11.1987

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19

The Indomitable PR

The passing away of Com. PR brings to end the life of a great pioneer of the Communist movement, a life of incessant struggle, full of sacrifices, incarceration and imprisonment, a life of confrontation not only with the ruling authorities but also with the past of the people enchained to anti-democratic feudal traditions. His death has inflicted a grievous loss on the Party and the Communist movement. PR in his life virtually embodied all the characteristics and facets of the epoch through which the Indian people and the working class were passing in the last few decades. As he progressed with his participation in the social and political struggle of his time, he began to represent the most forward looking consistent anti-imperialist forces which brought him into the ranks of the communist movement. Once in the movement Com. PR through sheer brilliance, his devotion and mastery over Marxism-Leninism rose to the highest position in the Communist Party—in the united party he was for years in the Central Committee and the Sectt of the Party, in the CPI(M) he was for years member of the Central Committee and of the Polit Bureau of the Party. The youth who started as a Congress volunteer, once put in charge to escort Mahatma Gandhi on his Tamil Nadu tour, growingly rose to the highest position in the communist movement confronting his former colleagues and sometimes jailed by them.

The path trodden by Com. PR was taken by other radical youth. They came to communism, acceptance of Marxism-Leninism in the course of their participation in the national struggle. Their radical aspirations not being fully satisfied by the Congress

programme and action, they were in search of new effective methods to wage the country's battle for freedom.

It was after the withdrawal of the 1920 Non-Cooperation Movement that a small number of dissatisfied youth veered to Marxism, inspired by the success of the October Revolution.

The story of its success inspired in them confidence in the mass and its fighting revolutionary capacity. Between 1920 and 1930 things therefore changed quickly. In Bombay, Bengal, the Marxist youth had started organising the working class. The British Government launched a number of communist conspiracy cases starting with the Peshawar Conspiracy case to curb the active Marxists. The Kanpur Bolshevik conspiracy case (1924), the Meerut Communist Conspiracy Case of 1929 were already announcing the growing power of the working class and the Communist movement. By 1927 the working class in Bombay, Calcutta had started participating in big political demonstrations. The strike of the working class to protest against Simon Commission in 1927—the protest was called by the Congress—was an important political event causing concern to the British authorities.

But the South remained unaffected by the wave of new working class awakening and the appeal of Marxism. Ramamurti participated in the Simon Commission boycott as a Congress activist. The Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930-32 and its sequel led to a new discontent among Congress radical youth. Earlier from 1926 onwards the youth were voicing the demand for complete independence as the immediate objective of the Congress. The dominant leadership of the Congress was still committed to the 'Dominion Status'. The Independence resolution of the Lahore Congress temporarily met the aspirations of the younger sections who participated enthusiastically in the movement. But the result of the movement, acceptance of the Ministry under the condemned 1935 Constitution, totally disappointed them. Once again there was a search for a new ideology, a new approach, a new programme for national liberation. The atmosphere was surcharged with news about success of the 1st Soviet Plan and socialism began to attract number of radical youth. This led to the emergence of the Congress Socialist Party led by Shri Jayaprakash Narain. PR made his turn to socialism in this period and was the founder of the Congress Socialist Party in Tamil Nadu.

But for a person like him there could be no half way house. The

triumph of socialist planning in the Soviet Union, the spread of Marxist ideology in India, the formation of All India Communist Party with the merger of several communist groups—all led him to break the shackles of Congress Socialist ideology and take the path to Marxism. At this stage he came into contact with Com. Amir Hyder Khan, the proletarian revolutionary now in Pakistan, but as ever busy with the Marxist Movement. Amir was an accused in the Meerut Conspiracy Case but escaped arrest and was working underground in Madras. Another Comrade with whom PR came into contact was Comrade S.V. Ghate, also an accused in the Meerut Conspiracy Case, a man with almost a vanishing physical frame, but of determined will and devotion. He was deported to Madras after the successful all India Textile Strike of 1934. PR now turned directly to Marxism and devoted all his energies to build and spread the working class movement.

It almost appeared as if his brilliant intellect and unbounded energy were held in check by previous ideologies and were waiting for explosion in the service of the people, their liberty and revolution. New PR turned with all his energy to the working class, recognised its importance in the revolutionary struggle. He organised the trade unions in several industries and cities, textile, tramways, railways, transport—one after another. The employers in these industries began to feel the presence of his organising ability with the awakening of the workers and the rise of their organisations. As a pioneer he had to work at grass root level, address gate meetings, deal with anti-socials hired by the employers and encouraged by the British police, fight the illegalities of the managements, wage battles in law courts, frame demands, conduct strikes and negotiations. PR soon flowered as the biggest trade union leader in Tamil Nadu and was directly or indirectly associated with all the important strikes of the period.

But PR could not be satisfied with organisation of the trade union movement alone. As a Communist leader and pioneer he had to organise all mass fronts and mass organisations, all sections of the people. The students, kisan, agricultural workers' organisations—all were nursed and nourished by PR's initiatives and guidance. PR built the Communist Party in Tamil Nadu. From the remnants of the Congress Socialist Party and from the rising working class movement he created new cadres, educated them in the spirit of Marxism-Leninism, inspired them to follow his example

and accept the hard life of a Party wholetimer. A large number of the present day leaders of the Party in Tamil Nadu are indebted to Com. PR for arming them with the devotion and zeal to serve the Party at all costs in all conditions. The number of Comrades directly inspired by PR will run into hundreds.

Comrade PR was a man of exceptional quality and ability, unique even among the top leaders of the Party. Very rarely a person is able to master all forms of party activity and is able to discharge all responsibilities. Perhaps none is equal to PR in this respect and it will take a long time to produce one of equal capacity. He was a mass leader, builder of the trade union movement, powerful mass speaker and a brilliant parliamentarian, effective journalist, writer of agitational pamphlets and polemical ideological documents, builder of the party and educator of Party cadres.

There was not one front-of Party activity which he did not touch with credit to the Party and to himself. He had an amazing memory and quick grasp over the most complicated problems. With ease he could tackle the technical problems of industries. With equal ease he could produce a document full of facts and figures on matters like the water dispute between Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.

When the CITU was formed in 1970, PR was the obvious choice for the strategic and leading post of the General Secretary. His ripe experience, his all India prestige as a trade union leader and leader of the CPI(M) were bound to be helpful to the organisation. And they did help in rapidly spreading the appeal of CITU and enabling it to emerge as a leading centre of the trade union movement. He was quick to understand the trend of discussions at the foundation conference of the CITU. The delegates were bursting with anger at the reformist leadership of Dange and others. There was danger that the new organisation would lose its bearings and embroil itself only in disputes and wordy battles with the AITUC. PR proposed that within a month of the inaugural session, the unions and State Committees should undertake a week's campaign for trade union unity. This was done and the organisation was set on correct rails.

Within a few years of his work in Tamil Nadu, PR came to occupy a position of leadership in the all India trade union movement and inside the Communist Party. He was elected to the Central Committee and the Secretariat of the Communist Party,

which position he held for years till the Party split in 1964. He fulfilled his all India responsibility with equal zest and resourcefulness. His prestige among the masses, his popularity helped the State Committees to carry the message of the Party to the people and his experience in Party building was of great help in setting up new units and Committees. His unerring trade union guidance helped trade union units in weaker States to consolidate their movement.

Comrade PR played a prominent role in fighting revisionism in the united Party. He took a firm stand in defence of basic principles of Marxism-Leninism and was one of the founders of the CPI(M). Since the foundation of the Party he occupied the position of Member of the Central Committee and the Polit Bureau of the Party and was one of the top leaders of the Party, when it was engaged in a serious struggle against international revisionism and left dogmatism. In Tamil Nadu he played a decisive role in fighting Naxalite disruption inside the Party.

PR was moulded by these struggles waged in incessant defence of the people, Party and the basic Marxist principles. He was moulded by the immense sacrifices he had to make for carrying on these struggles. His sacrifices, his principled fight for the purity of Marxism-Leninism and his brilliant intellect, all combined to produce a unique personality and an exceptional leader. Very few persons are able to render such long standing service to the Party in their life.

I felt a tremendous sense of deprivation and desolation on hearing the news of his passing away. For the last so many years we had discussed together in the PB the problems of the Party and the movement and we had become a part of each other. I knew the end was near when I went to Madras to see him on 26th November. The doctors held out no hope. It was only medical skill that was prolonging his existence and yet the shock was no less severe when the news came. It was difficult to believe that we would never see him again, nor listen to his voice. It was with great difficulty that I could control my emotions when paying tribute to him at the Madras burning ground. I saw his body being consumed and burnt by the fire. But then I consoled myself by saying after all was not his life a burning candle dripping its vital substance in the cause of the people. I saluted his remains and said rest well our esteemed Comrade. You have earned your rest.

The great crusader was left. He has left us the memory of his revolutionary work and that is a rich heritage.

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20

On To 15th March

THE 9 December Rally of mass organisations gave a call for organising a Bharat Bandh to demand resignation of Rajiv Gandhi, protect and strengthen national unity and enforce urgent demands of the workers, peasants, agri-workers and women, foremost among which was the right to work, remunerative prices for the peasants and end to oppression of untouchables, Adivasis and women.

Now the call for Bandh is endorsed by all left parties and all secular bourgeois opposition parties making it an all people's national call to defend national unity and protest against the Rajiv regime's oppressive and anti-national policies, a call to demand Rajiv's resignation and fresh elections. The 15th of March has been fixed as the Bandh day for all peoples' rally against the Rajiv Government.

The CITU, all its State Committees and all affiliated trade unions have a crucial role to play in making the Bandh a grand success. The CITU and its unions have been foremost in fighting the economic policies of the Rajiv Government, its policy of liquidating the public sector, of yielding to the pressure of World Bank, a policy which weakens the self-reliance of our economy. The Rajiv Government's policy has spelt unemployment for lakhs of people, rendered idle by continuous closure of more than a lakh of big and small industrial concerns. The government promises to further worsen situation with its declared policy of promoting computerisation and automation, its policy of import liberalisation and its encouragement to the multinationals to enter and exploit the Indian market. The inevitable result of this policy is the ever

increasing rise in prices inflicting distress and bankruptcy on wage earners, a direct assault on wages and salaries of workers and employees. In consonance with this it is proposed to introduce a new series of cost of index to cheat the workers of adequate dearness allowance. Besides a new bill is on the anvil to invade trade union rights, attack the right to strike and freedom of organisation and forcibly integrate the trade unions as a component part of the administration.

The CITU and the trade unions in fighting these policies, in protesting against them by organising the Bandh, will be not only protecting the immediate economic interests of the working class, but will be defending the democratic rights of the people, freedom of organisation and above all national unity. They will be defending the economic independence of the country, growingly weakened under Rajiv's policy of yielding to the World Bank pressure. It is a great national responsibility which the CITU and its unions will be discharging by joining this mighty process.

The CITU unions and workers in Punjab, Assam and Darjeeling have already showed the way how to defend national unity and fight the forces of anti-national disruption. Their inspiring examples should guide all CITU unions to throw their full weight in the struggle to make the all India Bandh a grand and unparalleled success.

The trade unions guided by the left parties have initiated this process of all India fight against the Rajiv Government. The successful Delhi rally has forced the attention of the entire nation including the vast mass of the peasantry on the initiative and activity of the trade union movement. It is now the duty of all trade unions, federations, all central organisations, all trade unions of public sectors, of state governments and Central Government employees, of Mercantile, Bank and Insurance employees to play their part in the grand united effort to save the nation and the people from the disastrous consequences of the Congress(I) Government policies and demand a fresh election.

Whatever may be the differences existing between Central Trade Union organisations, federations and unions there can be no two opinions on the question of defending national unity and opposing Congress(I) party's opportunist compromises with communal forces, on the question of protecting economic self-reliance and defending the common man against high prices,

unemployment and destitution, on the question of saving the drought affected peasants from the callousness and corruption of the Congress(I) administration and on the question of corruption in the highest places in the administration.

The entire trade union movement must marshal its full force to launch the widest possible working class protest in unity with the peasants, youth, students and women. Those hesitating, lagging behind, or refusing to join will be guilty of letting down the nation and helping the forces of national disruption. Let it not be said that any section of the working class failed to stand by the suffering people and protect them against the effects of Rajiv's policies. The INTUC, the BMS and all other organisations must join this protest which is no longer a protest on behalf of a few parties but it is national people's protest against the anti-national and anti-democratic policies pursued by the Central Government.

15th March with its success must seal the growing understanding and unity among the organisations of the working class, of the peasantry, of agri-workers, organisations of women, students and youth. It should succeed in rousing the Muslim minority masses suffering under the Congress(I) regime and left protectionless during riots; it must rouse the Harijans and Adivasis rendered destitutes under 40 years of Congress (I) rule.

The entire period from now on must be used by all trade unions to organise the workers and other sections in preparation for the Bandh. The trade unions should reiterate all the demands that were raised during the 9 December rally preparations. They should also mobilise people to see that a successful Bharat Bachao day is organised on the opening day of the Budget Session of the Parliament by organising rallies all over the country.

Let all trade unions be active from now on to ensure that all activities in cities are brought to a standstill on 15th of March. Trade Unions with their organised strength should help the nearby rural areas to organise the Bandh effectively. The 15th March should open a new page in the united efforts of left and secular parties and the united efforts of mass organisations of workers and peasants for Rajiv's resignation, fresh elections and a new deal for the suffering people. Let it also see a new effort for all in trade union unity making it possible to bring all trade unions in a single Confederation capable of asserting the mighty power of labour and its capacity to fight for the people, the country and the nation.

Demands of the December 9 Rally

1. Give relief to those affected by drought and floods. 2. Check price-rise. 3. Guarantee Minimum Wage and implement land reforms. 4. Guarantee Remunerative Prices to the peasants. 5. Jobs and Education for all. 6. Reopening of all closed mills and factories 7. End atrocities on the weaker sections and women. 8. Ensure equal rights for women. 9. Guarantee democratic and trade union rights. 10. Firmly put down separatist and communal forces. 11. Introduce electoral reforms. 12. Restructure Centre-State relations. 13. Curb corruption in high places, and 14. **Rajiv Gandhi should resign and hold fresh elections.**

24.1.1988

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21

World Capitalist Crisis

THE recession is today's most discussed topic in the capitals of all advanced countries. The spurt after the 1969-70 slowdown proved to be brief and by 1973, signs of deterioration became unmistakably clear. On the top of sporadic bank failures have come reports of an international airline like Pan Am, USA's largest, seeking a 10.2 million dollar subsidy every month if it was to continue operating its schedules. The stock markets of the bigger imperialist countries are in panic. During the last 20 months, the market value of common stocks listed on the New York Stock Exchange went down by nearly 300 billion dollars. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 110 points in the last week of August while the Financial Times Industrial Index for the United Kingdom declined to levels below 200—for the first time in 16 years. British stock prices have gone down by more points in the last two years than during the Great Depression years of 1929-32.

With an increasing number of finance houses and banks facing insolvency, the situation is reminiscent of the Great Depression of 1929-34. No wonder bourgeois economists, politicians and financiers have begun to find analogy to those days of anguish and nightmare. Using the world 'recession' for the first time, a White House statement in November forecast worse to come.

Partents of Banking Breakdown

The shadow of a bank crisis hangs over the western world. Though no major bank has been affected as yet, the collapse of smaller banks and financial houses has been averaging one a

month. The failures of the Herstatt Private Bank in Germany, of the Swiss subsidiary of the Lloyds Bank (with a loss of £30 million) and of several other financial institutions sent shock waves through the stock markets. It is feared that should a major bank go broke under pressure of liquidity demand, it may set in motion a run on the banks, upsetting the monetary system as it happened in 1931 when the Kredit Austatt of Austria collapsed.

A number of countries are running up heavy payment deficits temporarily offset by massive loans from abroad. Britain's current account deficit is of the order of £4000 million. Although Italy recently secured a loan of 2 billion dollars from West Germany, she has turned for further assistance to the EEC which is likely to grant a short-term extension for the 1.8 billion dollar loan repayable in September. France is reportedly acting as the mediator to negotiate oil dollars for Italy.

There has naturally been a flurry of consultations among international bankers to save the situation. In mid-September at a meeting in Basle of the Bank for International Settlements, the representatives of USA, Western Europe and Japan announced that they would seek international co-operation to prevent banking disasters. Earlier, a meeting in Paris of the monetary authorities of six West European countries decided to formulate joint policy to overcome common economic problems. The US Federal Reserve Board has promised to come to the rescue of other central banks as a lender of last resort. Thus the crisis involving international payments and finance, the monetary system and industrial production are all getting interwoven, threatening the entire fabric of capitalist society.

Marx on Capitalist Crisis

Crisis are part and parcel of the capitalist economy and their basic cause was diagnosed by Karl Marx: "from time to time the conflict of antagonistic agencies finds vent in crisis. The crisis are always but momentary and forcible solutions of the existing contradictions. They are violent eruptions which for a time restore the disturbed equilibrium."[1]

> Marx goes on to pinpoint where the contradiction originates: The limits within which the preservation and self-expansion of the value of capital resting on the expropriation and pauperization of the great mass of producers can alone move—these limits come continually into conflict with the methods of

> production employed by capital for its purposes, which drive towards unlimited extension of production, towards production as an end in itself, towards unconditional development of social productivity of labour. The means—unconditional development of the productive forces of society—comes continually into conflict with the limited purpose, the self-expansion of the existing capital.

Marx traces the development of the internal contradiction to the breaking point. Under the law for capitalist production its inevitable expansion comes up against the limited conditions of consumption. The gap between leaping productive power and restricted consumer power widens and widens with every effort to bridge it :

> The conditions of direct exploitation, and those of realizing it, are not identical. They diverge not only in place and time, but also logically. The first are only limited by the productive power of society, the latter by the proportional relation of the various branches of production and by the consumer power of society. But this last-named power is not determined either by the absolute productive power, or by the absolute consumer power, but by the consuming power based on antagonistic conditions of distribution, which reduce the consumption of the bulk of society to a minimum varying within more or less narrow limits. It is furthermore restricted by the tendency to accumulate, the drive to expand capital and produce surplus-value on an extended scale. This is law for capitalist production, imposed by incessant revolutions in the method of production themselves, by the depreciation of existing capital always bound up with them, by the general competitive struggle and the need to improve production and expand its scale merely as a means of self-preservation and under penalty of ruin. The market must, therefore, be continually extended... This internal contradiction seeks to resolve itself through expansion of the outlying field of production. But the more productiveness develops, the more it finds itself at variance with the narrow basis on which the conditions of consumption rest."[3]

It is this contradiction that forcibly asserts itself in the present crisis, menacing thousands with bankruptcy and ruination, millions with unemployment and destitution, and the vast productive

resources with waste and disorganisation.

Shape of the Present Crisis

The present crisis breaking out within the framework of the third stage of the general crisis of capitalism has aroused apprehensions of an impending collapse. The report of the International Monetary Fund describes it with a note of warning :

At mid 1974, the world economy was in the throes of a virulent and widespread inflation, a deceleration of economic growth in reaction to the preceding high rate of expansion and massive disequilibrium in international payments. This situation constitutes the most complex and serious set of economic problems to confront national governments and international community since World War II.

Three specific features have distinguished the present crisis from others in the postwar period. This is the first time when the desynchronization of the world cycle caused by the Second World War is ending and the crisis is engulfing the entire capitalist world simultaneously. The fractionalization of the crisis had softened the impact on the system as a whole.

Secondly, with the exception of the 1958 crisis, the capitalist world is witnessing, since the war ended, an absolute decline—however small—in the total production of industrial countries which threatens to affect the pirmary-producing countries as well. In all previous postwar crisis, though individual countries experienced sharp falls in production, the total of all countries put together did not show an absolute decline, but only a slowing down of the growth rate.

Thirdly, this crisis is breaking out in the background of an uncontrollable inflationary situation. Maintenance of rising prices, huge military expenditure, manipulation of money supply and "moderate" inflation have been the main instruments for sustaining economic growth and curbing unemployment since 1945. Today rising inflation is leading to rising unemployment (and decline in production) blunting a traditional bourgeois weapon to manoeuvre against the crisis.

Hence the universal panic as the trouble spreads. "Under the impact of cyclical influences and of developments relating to oil, the volume of total output in the industrial countries suffered an outright (though small) decline in the first half of 1974 and the effects of this unusual development were in process of spreading

to the primary producing countries."· The crisis is getting synchronized and the entire capitalist world is being drawn into the maelstrom.

GNP Rates Go Down

The background of this decline has to be understood. The industrial countries of the capitalist world, notwithstanding the periodical ups and downs, registered substantial progress during the 1960s. US economic growth doubled in comparison with 1950 figures, while Japan, France, Italy and West Germany also showed high growth rates. From the end of 1969 to the middle of 1972, however, production in industrial countries levelled off to stagnation. USA and Italy went through an overproduction crisis while Japan and West Germany witnessed a lowering of their economic activity.

For industrial countries the percentage growth in real GNP dropped to 2.6 in 1970 from 4.8 in 1969. The average annual change for the 1969-70 decade was 4.8; for 1960-65 it was 5.1; and for 1965-70, 4.6. The growth rate picked up in 1971 but failed to exceed 3.7 per cent.

The growth rate for the USA was 2.7 per cent in 1969; it dropped to 0.4 in 1970 to catch up a 3.3 level in 1971. Japan dropped its growth rate from 12.1 in 1969 to 10.3 in 1970 and 6.8 in 1971; West Germany went down from 8.2 in 1969 to 5.8 in 1970 and 2.7 in 1971; Britain was down to rock bottom, 1.6 per cent in 1969, and did not do much better with 2.3 in 1971, while Italy's growth rate dropped to 1.6 in 1971 from 4.9 in 1970. Primary-producing countries dropped from 7 per cent in 1969 to 6.4 per cent in 1970 and 5.6 per cent in 1971. The world output rate dropped from 5.2 per cent in 1969 to 3.4 per cent in 1970 and 4.1 per cent in 1971. 5

After two years and a half down the slippery slope, things seemed to look up for a while. The real GNP for industrial countries showed a rise of 5.6 per cent over 1971 and the USA registered a 6.2 rise over 1971. The year 1973, according to the IMF report, was a year of higher economic growth for the world. There was an "unusually large" growth of real GNP —6.5 per cent over 1972. Japan showed a rate of 10.5 per cent; United Kingdom, 6.0 per cent ; France, 6.1 per cent; Italy, 5.9 per cent; and USA, 5.9 per cent.

All the same this upswing could not be sustained for long. By the middle of 1973 itself, the demand curve started going down. The first half of 1973 showed eight per cent growth rate of real

GNP; in the second half it dropped to only three per cent and in the industrial first half of 1974 there was an absolute decline of industrial output in countries with near stagnation of GNP as against a growth rate of 4.5 to 5 per cent, considered 'normal'.

The production boost noticed between 1971 and 1973 was based on a price inflation. And the measures taken to control the inflationary situation in effect deflated the boom itself. The high rates of price inflation that accompanied the expansion of economic activity during the latter part of 1972 and early 1973 led the authorities of many industrial countries to introduce or tighten policies of financial restraint, and the impact of such policy actions on real activity had already begun to take effect in some of the larger countries.

Unbridled Inflation

By far the most striking feature of the present crisis is the continued hyper inflationary spiral. By the second half of 1973, as measured by the comprehensive GNP deflators, the rate of price increase over the first half of 1973 averaged 10 per cent for the industrial countries. At present, the rate of inflation in West Germany is 7.2 per cent, USA 11.8, France 13.5, Britain 16.0 and in Japan 24.0 per cent. India tops them all with 28 per cent.

For 1973 as a whole price rises in developed countries presented the following picture :

United States	5.6	Per cent
Japan	12.1	"
France	7.2	"
West Germany	6.0	"
Italy	10.5	"
Britain	7.5	"
Industrial countries	7.2	"

Less developed countries present the following picture. The percentage changes in consumer prices given below are based on the preceding years' figures :

	1972	1973	First quarter 1973 to First quarter 1974
All less developed countries	13	24	37
In Asia	7	19	31
In western hemisphere	21	36	48

The less developed countries have been drawn into the vortex of inflation because of their economic and trading links with the advanced capitalist countries.

The capitalist economy has been continuously working under the stimulus of rising prices and 'moderate' inflation. The manipulators contrived for a constant price increase. In the early sixties it was assumed that it would not go beyond an annual 2.5 per cent. But this rate was not good enough for a sluggish economy. Like a drug-addict it required more and more dosages to get the kick. The accumulated forces of inflation demanded more stimulus and in 1972 the recovery was still taking place and when inflationary conditions already existed, the GNP deflators in industrial countries rose by 5 per cent. By mid-1973, they rose to 10 per cent and in 1974 to 24 per cent.

Vicious circle

Now the real calamity is that the drug is not working. Moderate inflation and price rises were remedies associated with pushing up level of production and keeping down the rate of unemployment. Here is something different : while inflation gets out of bounds, production goes down and unemployment increases; if any attempt is made to curb inflation, the economy is threatened with a sudden upset, even breakdown.

US President Ford's special economic consultant Mac Cracken put forward the bourgeois discomfiture in the following words :

> The conventional wisdom was that unemployment was usually worse than a little inflation and that inflation can be curbed with mildly restrictive policies where necessary. We studied the ways and arts of economic stimulation. We forgot we were stimulating a lazy relaxed animal... But most important we had no idea how sensitive the economy had become to stimulus.

The result has been decline in production, lay-offs, growing mass unemployment combined with uncontrolled and ever-rising prices. The fear of inflation producing disastrous results like those in 1929-33 haunts the bourgeois governments: capitalist production had collapsed and millions were thrown out of jobs; then, in the United States, production went down by 50 per cent and 25 per cent of the labour force was jobless.

Today though the situation has not reached this extreme, the policy of, stimulus, has unleashed all-round misery in the capitalist world. The people of the backward countries are bearing the brunt of it all, and millions are joining the ranks of the destitutes. In the US the rate of unemployment does not go below 5.2 per cent which means at least 4.6 million in actual numbers. This is two million above the 1968 figure and economists expect it to rise continuously to seven per cent in the near future. Contingency plans are being drawn up to meet the situation. At the same time, economists are secretly discussing the advisability of keeping down unemployment to 6 per cent.

With the continuous rise in prices the real wage of the American workers has gone down. Between October 1972 and 1973, the decline was 3.2 per cent. Even the boom did not help, because wage increases were limited to 5.5 per cent annually under the so-called 'incomes policy' while cost of living rose by 9 to 10 per cent.

The distress in the USA can be imagined from the fact that fifteen million people are dependent upon some kind of public assistance. It was ten million 5 years back. While unemployment is increasing, thousands of workers in basic industries have to put up with more hours of work, the working week lengthening from 48 to 60 hours in many cases in a bid to step up productivity. After food and other necessaries of life, housing has been the next victim of inflation. Some 495,000 construction workers are now jobless because of cut-back in construction by nearly 50 per cent—from 2.3 million units in 1972 to 1.3 million in 1973.

Profiting from Adversity

It has been further noted that the boom does not lower the level of unemployment but often adds to it. During the recession of 1970-71 the unemployment level was lower than during the subsequent years. The capitalist economy is proving to be less and less employment-oriented. The surge of unemployment, lower incomes, public doles and heavier work loads have become the workers' lot in all capitalist countries. France and West Germany under the stress of the crisis are sending back thousands of 'guest' (immigrant) workers to where they came from, namely, Greece, Turkey and Spain.

Five countries—USA, Canada, Britain, France and Italy—had nearly 7.5 million jobless in 1972 compared to 4.7 million in 1969.

Unemployed (in Thousands)

Year	US	Canada	Britain	France	Italy
1969	2831	382	597	223	663
1972	4840	562	980	380	701

This however, does not mean that monopoly profits are going down. Corporate profits after taxes rose from an annual rate of 53,400 million dollors in the second quarter of 1972 to 71,600 million dollars in the second quarter of 1973. From the low levels of the recession year, profits have doubled and from the previous peak of 1969, they rose 60 per cent. Profits of 30 large petroleum companies soared over 50 per cent to a level of 10,000 million dollars (after taxes) in 1973. Capitalist economy has showed itself true to its character even when passing through a crisis.

Having deprived the working class of employment and purchasing power, inflation has created yet another danger to the economy, in driving many non-monopolist producers to the wall. In every crisis, the smaller operators are the first to go bankrupt. The process is on and any day the non-monopolist concerns face the prospect of ruin for want of liquid resources. The blows of anti-inflationary measures fall on them most heavily with disastrous consequences.

With interest rates running high, small concerns are not in a position to incur long-term loans. They have to rely on short-term credit hoping for a future cut in interest rates. This also increases indebtedness all round and puts tremendous pressure on the banks. The greater the indebtedness the more acute the problem of liquidity. The liabilities of manufacturing industry has increased in volume. In 1955, US manufacturing companies were in debt to the tune of 21 cents for each dollar; in 1973, debt reached 44 cents to each dollar. There is also a colossal rise in consumers' credit which now totals 183.4 billion dollars; in 1959, it was only 49 billion dollars. Credit squeeze and other controls under these circumstances make for the ruin and bankruptcy of one non-monopolist concern after another.

International Dimensions

The present crisis, as has been pointed out, is the first post war crisis simultaneously engulfing the entire capitalist system. The capitalist world in the postwar era was hitherto accustomed to

fractional, crisis; it was taken for granted that each crisis would pass without too much trouble. In fact, economics and politicians alike had begun to believe that in the stimulation of the economy they had found a new recipe for solving any crisis.

New conditions were created by the consequences of the war and the destruction and defeat of imperialist rivals. The desynchronisation and the progress of capitalist production in the postwar years were not clearly understood. Immediately after the war, the colossal damage and destruction together with the pent up demand for consumption and reproduction provided a big momentum to capitalist production. Victor and vanquished countries alike with their industrial capacities crippled in the war, offered ready-made opportunities, especially for those like the USA which had escaped with the least damage. The main basis of expanding production is renewal and new investment in the means of production; and for this the immediate postwar situation provided ample scope. But as the defeated countries began to overcome their crippled condition, their economies showed a higher and more rapid growth rate than those of the victor countries. West Germany and Japan are instances in point. The divergent conditions created by the war and the subsequent uneven development expressed themselves in the desynchronization of the crisis, leaving its main burden on the USA and Britain. The USA, Britain and Canada have seen lower growth rates and series of crisis since war. Initially, it was the USA which took advantage of the postwar situation to advance its own interests, export capital and expand production on a world scale. But it had to slow down in the face of resurgent rival imperialist economies competing for markets not only in their home countries, but in the out side world and the United States as well.

The USA tried to counter this process by an intensified drive against its rivals and resorted to heavy military expenditure to expand production. The Korean War gave the first shot in the arm to its 'defence' production; and investments for the armaments industry multiplied to astronomical proportions in the later years.

It was due to the special postwar situation that the cyclical movement of capitalist production did not make itself felt too strongly. It could not affect all countries at the same time and with the same intensity and created an illusion of elimination or, at least, moderation of the crisis. The recession of 1958 was the only one

before the present crisis in which industrial output of the capitalist world suffered a decline. It dropped 3 per cent below the 1951 level. The recovery, however, was immediate. By 1959, production exceeded the preceding peak. Moreover, the crisis of overproduction did not reach advanced countries like France, West Germany, Italy and Japan.

Intimations of Instability

However, recessions continued to occur though, for capitalist production as a whole, they only brought down the growth rates and not production in absolute terms. Capitalists with their memories of the late 1920's. when industrial output collapsed from 100 in 1929 (pre-crisis peak) to 63.8 in 1932 with no recovery for seven long years, thought this was a unique achievement.

However, evidence was not lacking that the bubble would soon burst. USA, the leading capitalist country, notwithstanding its global operations, stimuli of war and military expenditure, was showing symptoms of a crisis of overproduction as output steadily dropped. Figures in the next table indicate the deepening tendency. 6

The 1969 crisis which originated in the United States gave a clue to the shape of things to come. It was a virtual dress rehearsal of the present crisis. Although true desynchronization did not end, almost all advanced countries were affected, in different degrees and at different times. Total industrial output of the capitalist world did not decline but definitely slowed down.

Year	Percentage drop of production
1948-49	8
1953-54	10
1957-58	14
1960	10

In the United States, output of manufacturing industry in 1970 and 1971 slipped to the 1968 level, about 5 percent below that of 1969. The volume of construction was also 5 per cent less than in 1969.

In Britain, manufacturing remained stagnant in 1970 and 1971, but extractive industry and construction dropped by 9 and 5

per cent respectively in 1970, as compared with 1968. In Italy, manufacturing output decreased by more than 3 per cent in 1971 and extractive industry by nearly 7 per cent. West Germany showed a slower growth rate. Because of desynchronization the fall in production for most of the countries proved to be small, softening the impact of the crisis.

But the warning was loud and clear. Desynchronization was coming to an end. The earlier immunity enjoyed by some countries could not last as the special conditions of the postwar world no longer obtained. Overproduction now threatens the entire capitalist world which has too little room for all the rival imperialisms to manoeuvre around.

State-Monopoly Capitalism

The current cyclical crisis, happening in the framework of the general crisis of capitalism, is a product of all the contradictions of the present period. Its specific form is also determined by the specific changes that have taken place within capitalist society.

The outstanding feature of present-day capitalism—capitalist societies in developed and imperialist countries—is the domination exercised by monopolies over the economic system together with the fusion of monopolies and the state, leading to state-monopoly capitalism. This monopoly domination with its consequences of imperialism was already noted by Lenin in his classic work, **Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism**. Since then this characteristic has developed with every year and it has become the most distinguishing trait of modern capitalism.

For example, Britain's industry, trade and shipping are dominated by 50 huge monopolies of which 10 play a decisive role and control the aggregate capital. In many of these, American capital predominates. What passes for 'socialism' in Britain constitutes in reality the advancing state-monopoly capitalism. Public ownership of enterprises' in production and services often expresses the process of the state's fusion with the monopolies. In the United States, recent tabulations showed that ten bank headed by six in New York hold effective control over most of the leading corporations with 18 per cent of IBM stock, 16 per cent of Eastman Kodak, 11 per cent of General Electric, and so on.[7]

The power of the monopoly concern has grown enormously with further concentration of capital and the formation of multinational corporations or super monopolies. Such powerful organisa-

tions not only dominate various national economies but are beyond the control of any country. Their strength can be gauged from the following figures.

United Nations data reveal that the top 300 corporations account for about 22 per cent of the Gross National Product of the developed capitalist countries. In 1972, the output by foreign subsidiaries of international monopolies amounted to 370 billion dollars or more than twice the total exports of the capitalist world. Foreign subsidiaries of US monopolies produced four times the total US exports.

Again, 500 corporations account for nearly half of the industrial output of developed capitalist countries. The largest 50 private companies and their branches now produce approximately 15 per cent of the world's output, with the US concerns contributing about a half. The liquid assets of multinational companies add up to 268,000 million dollars which is twice the amount of the foreign exchange reserves of all the western countries. According to US Senate Report of 1973, in 1971 they accounted for 24 per cent of the total cost of exports in the capitalist world and controlled 69 per cent of US exports.

This is the face of modern capitalism. When monopolies control the state, the official policies inevitably defend their immense profits at all costs. The economy is managed and the growth maintained with a view to perpetuating the loot.

Industrial Military Complex

Confronted with slowdown of the economy brought on by their own excess profiteering and mass exploitation, the monopolists resort to Keynesian wisdom, stimulate the economy artificially through unproductive expenditure, impose further misery on the masses and make an accentuated crisis inevitable. The state is put in command of this offensive campaign. Keynes said, "pyramid-building, earthquakes, even wars may serve to increase wealth, if the education of our statement on the principles of classical economics stands in the way of anything better.... It would be more sensible to build houses and the like...."

But wars and preparations for war have been found to be more sensible and profit-yielding by the monopolies. Wars like those in Korea and Vietnam and the monstrous military postwar expenditures are not accidental. The military spending of the United States totalled nearly 400 billion dollars in the last five years. For the fiscal

1974-75, the amount allotted for defence is 85.2 billion dollars, the biggest military budget in 198 years of US history. It will swallow up almost 30 cents out of every US taxpayer's dollar.[8]

Britain's military budget for 1973-74 was 4338.3 million pounds. It exceeds the previous year's by 523 million. France escalated its military expenditure in 1973 to 34,800 million francs, by 11.8 per cent compared with the previous year. The Federal Republic of Germany's military budget for 1973 of 26,500 million marks was six per cent higher than the preceeding year.

The total annual expenditure of the United States, France and Britain, three permanent members of the UN Security Council, reaches a staggering figure of 100,000 million dollars. These huge military outlays act as stimulants of the capitalist economy and keep it going for a time on terms dictated by the monopolies. Lyndon Johnson's Vietnam war with the cry of guns and butter—with the latter disappearing—was part of this exercise. Space shots, sophisticated nuclear armaments and the like bolster the industrial military complex which determines the shape and dimensions of the economy.

Keynes on Wage Policy

Constant stimulation of the economy and inflationary tendencies go together. High prices of consumer goods and necessaries of life, heavy taxation and slash in real incomes are facets of state-monopoly regulation. The state now directly intervenes to channelize increasing profits into the coffers of the monopolists. The contradictions sharpen between the growing requirements of the forces of production and the outmoded relations of capitalist production, and between the falling living standards of the people and the enormous profits of the monopolies on the manufacture of more weapons of nuclear-bacteriological warfare for the genocide of the people of Asia and Africa.

Inflation therefore is a built-in component of the state-monopoly regulation of capitalist society. It is inherent in the present-day relations of production—a specific way of extracting additional surplus-value from the working class. It is a deliberate and systematic robbery and a forced redistribution of national income in favour of the monopolies. At a certain stage it becomes counter-productive, as it accumulates fictitious capital and hinders the accrual of real capital. In practice it also turns out to be the easiest methods of appropriating additional surplus-value without a di-

rect wage-cut. The organized working class would not easily put up with a direct attack, the reformist trade union leadership notwithstanding. Once again, Keynes has laid down the guiding line : "In fact, a movement by employers to revise money-wage bargains downward will be much more strongly resisted than a gradual and automatic levelling of real wages as a result of rising prices." [9] He continues :

> Except in a socialized community, where wage policy is settled by decree, there is no means of securing uniform wage reduction for every class of labour. The result can only be brought about by a series of gradual changes, justifiable on no criterion of social justice or economic expediency and probably completed only after wasteful and disastrous struggles, where those in the weakest bargaining position will suffer relatively to the rest. A change in the quantity of money, on the other hand, is already within the power of most governments by open market policy or analogous measures. Having regard to human nature and our institutions, it can only be a foolish person who would prefer a flexible wage policy to a flexible money policy....[10]

The monopolists have a very good understanding of "human nature" and have not been slow in following Keynes's excellent practical advice. It is therefore not surprising that a crisis of overproduction makes its appearance in the midst of rising prices. The usual stimulation has been employed but does not produce the expected reaction.

Out of Control

The havoc played through such an indirect attack is summed up thus :

> Only a few months back a loaf of bread cost 50 cents and that was considered fantastic. Now it gone upto 60 cents, and by the end of the year is expected to reach 1 dollar. The price of sugar has jumped up 43 per cent, cheese by 41 per cent, flour by 43 per cent and rice by 50 per cent.... And next week subway fares will be nearly doubled to 60 cents.... Newspapers cost more and postage and telephone rates are up. Runaway inflation with no end in sight is America's enemy number.[11]

Now inflation has gone out of control. The monopolists fear that they will be hoisted with their own petard, and the economy

driven to a breakdown. They are equally afraid of taking anti-inflationary steps for fear of sudden deflation and collapse of production.

State-monopoly regulation also includes high taxation. In advanced capitalist countries, about 40 per cent of the national income is redistributed through taxes as against 15 to 20 per cent before the Second World War. In the United States indirect taxes brought the exchequer 10,500 million dollars in 1960 and 27,300 million dollars in 1970. The indirect tax is imposed on the most essential commodities. Excise duty on the retail price of sugar, for instance, comes to 17 per cent in the Federal Republic of Germany, 26 per cent in Britain, 35 per cent in Italy, and 39 per cent in Japan. 12 The taxation system is also a means of redistributing surplus-value and intensifies the contradiction between the relations of production and the productive forces.

The built-in character of inflation shows that the crisis is not only cyclic but that the basic causes are operating far more strongly than ever since the end of the war. All the contradictions of the present period have come to a head, finding acute expression in the crisis. The inflationary and other stresses and strains in the capitalist world are the direct capitalist market marked by the shift in the economic strength of the USA relative to other imperialist rivals. The gradual end of absolute US domination of the trade and economy of the capitalist world, the desperate efforts to retain this position and the counter attacks of the rivals, culminated in the monetary convulsions of recent times, characterized by trade wars, currency devaluations, enforced revaluations and floating rates.

Dollar Domination and Monetary Malaise

American domination in the world monetary affairs was underpinned by the Bretton Woods Agreement of 1944. Its two postulates were the supremacy of the dollar as the reserved currency of the world and the fixed party of exchange of other currencies with the dollar. The American monopolists used this advantage with such lack of scruples that they brought about a division of the world capitalist market into currency zones, forcing rival capitalists of other countries to curtail import of American goods. They also entered into cut-throat competition on the world market. The dominant position of the USA on the world market could not last for ever. By the end of 1960 the gold drain from the

USA became a flood and carried the dollar to its worst disaster. The Bretton Woods Agreement had ensured a fixed parity of exchange rates and the overvalued dollars had to be accepted by other countries leading to inflation of their own currencies. Lyndon Johnson's aggressive war in Vietnam, continued by Nixon in pursuance of American's aim of global domination and the immediate objective of bolstering the American economy, gave the most powerful impetus to the world inflationary process. Excess dollars generated by heavy US spending flooded the markets of western Europe. The efforts at continued American domination gave an additional impetus to the inflationary spiral under state-monopoly capitalism. The successive devaluations of the dollar, the monetary convulsions and the attempts to make new international arrangements on the basis of the Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) heralded the end of dollar domination as a result of intensive imperialist rivalries and change in the relative strength of the contestants.

The series of monetary crisis show that the rival imperialist and capitalist states are unable to cope with the problems created by growing internationalization of economic life. Whatever temporary arrangements they make will repeatedly break down under the pressure of their own rivalries. The monetary strategy of the monopolists consists in co-ordinating policy on foreign trade and currency so as to unite rival imperialisms in their drive for exploiting the rest of the world. It has already led to a conflict between the developed and underdeveloped countries on the question of SDRs. Recently Y B Chavan, India's former Finance Minister, gave strong expression to the dissatisfaction at a meeting of the Commonwealth countries where he criticized the rigid arrangements under the SDRs. The crisis of the capitalist system is bound to sharpen the imperialist rivalries and uproot monetary arrangements between rivals, leading to more intense monetary crisis.

The oil crisis has further fuelled the inflationary process. Bourgeois writers and imperialist apologists present the oil crisis as an extraneous occurrence unconnected with the system of imperialist exploitation and state-monopoly capitalism. The oil problem which has added to the difficulties of the capitalist system is the direct result of the collapse of the old colonial system and the imperialist failure in replacing it by neocolonialism. The disappearance of the old system has gradually emboldened the rulers of newly liberated countries to exercise their sovereign right in rela-

tion to natural resources by curbing the monstrous foreign exploitation. It is thus the result of one of the contradictions of capitalist imperialist society and cannot be isolated from it.

Oil Bills

This contradiction coming to a head at this moment is bound to widen the balance of payment gaps of a number of advanced capitalist countries and further exacerbate the crisis. Accustomed to exploit the oil resources of the underdeveloped world, the monopolists of these countries find their profits drastically affected by the prices demanded by the oil producers. Hence the hullabaloo. The extent of the danger can be imagined from the fact that the overall deficit of industrial capitalist countries may total, according to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 30,000 million dollars. According to one calculation, the western consuming countries are paying 60 billion dollars a year with the mark-up in the price of oil from 2.29 dollars per barrel to 11.65 dollars during the past two years. And unless the western monopolies come to terms with the oil producing countries the balance of the payments will continue to be upset and the crisis worsen. In typical gunboat diplomacy style, American imperialist spokesmen are posing threats of military occupation of the oil fields. In any case, they are forging an alliance of western imperialist customers against the oil countries.

It should be remembered that all these years the oil companies were piling up enormous profits after making nominal royalty payments. *Le Monde*, the Paris bourgeois paper has calculated that out of sales worth 117,000 million dollars, the oil-producing countries got only 13,000 million. The rest was pocketed by the refining companies and distributing agencies.

Long before oil prices were increased, prices of a number of commodities including those required by the oil-producing countries were rapidly rising on the world market. According to the IMF Report,

> ...focus on the oil price rise should not be permitted to overshadow the fact that exceptionally large price increases occurred throughout a wide range of commodity categories during 1973 and early 1974. While no single one of these involved a trade magnitude approaching that of oil, many are nevertheless highly important in themselves and some (e.g. zinc, sisal, rice, wheat and free market sugar) have been

subject to price increases of an order resembling or exceeding that of oil price.

The spokesmen of the imperialists often attribute the recession to the rising cost structure following the hike in oil prices. This is not correct. To quote the IMF Report, "Even before the abrupt change in the oil situation late in 1973, a market slowing of output expansion in the industrial countries was clearly under way and was expected to extend into the first half of 1974."

Making the Most of Economic Confusion

The western oil monopolists have unscrupulously raised the price of petro-chemicals by 300 per cent, synthetic rubber by 100 per cent and petrol by 40 to 80 per cent though the cost of crude is only a small part of the ultimate product. The bulk of the price of those products consists of refinery profits and state taxes. For instance, state taxes constitute 50 to 60 per cent of petrol price. If the big oil corporations would only reduce their super profit margins, there price mark-ups could easily have been avoided.

The Interior Minister of Iran, Jamshed Amarasafar stated the position of oil-producing countries in the following terms :

> We believe in a moderate increase in the rate of royalties, to be taken away from the profits of the oil companies and not to be transferred to the consumer.... Balance sheets that you see every quarter from the oil companies speak for themselves perhaps going up to 80, 85, 90 per cent. Therefore our intent is to take away some of the profits from the oil companies without a penny to be transferred to the (cost of the)consumers.[13]

At the same time, it is a fact that the oil prices are violently disturbing the economies of a large number of underdeveloped countries. India will have to foot an additional bill of Rs. 800 crores which is bound to bring its economy to breaking point. Except in the case of a few "Islamic countries", perhaps no distinction is made between underdeveloped and developed countries in relation to oil price. Deferred payments, loans on easy terms, and joint concerns are being talked about. But these will not do away with the fuelling effect of the oil price hike. The crisis in these countries will also be intensified.

Petro-dollar Threat

The accumulation of petro-dollars by oil-producing countries

has created a situation of extreme uncertainty for the capitalist monetary system and its working. It is an irony of fate that a number of backward countries, hitherto among the most exploited, should raid the inner sanctums of imperialists high finance and threaten the stability of its banking and monetary structure. Yet this is what is happening. The assets of the oil-producing countries in 1972 totalled 15,000 to 17,000 million dollars. Any movement of these deposits and short-term liabilities in pursuit of hot money gains threatens the stability of the monetary system. Now it is estimated that these countries may add to their liquid resources 40,000 to 50,000 million dollars every year, giving them a whip-hand in international monetary affairs. Never before has the world of imperialists high finance faced such a contingency. No wonder some American spokesmen are raising the bogey of a 'red' take-over under the impact of the oil crisis.

How do the imperialists prepare to meet the situation? They know that these billions of dollars are for the most part not owned by the exploited masses of the oil countries, but by the kings, shahs and sheikhs—the feudal or capitalist vested interests. The imperialists are trying to draw them into the process of exploitation of other countries by 'aid' through the International Bank and other agencies. They are also selling the oil-rich principalities billions of dollars worth of military equipment to arms them against their own people or friendly peaceful countries.

The most critical problem facing Japan, Britain, France, West Germany and Italy is how to recycle the avalanche of petro-dollars. They hope to achieve it by offering to build factories and above all, by selling arms. France, for instance, has signed a four-billion-dollar contract with Iran to sell a nuclear reactor, steel plant and Mirage jets. Through threats of reprisals, pressure to lower oil prices coupled with offers of profitable utilization of petro-dollars in the exploitation of other countries, the imperialists intend to meet this problem. In spite of these strategems and the opportunism of the rulers of the oil-producing countries, the contradiction will certainly create further imbalances in the capitalist economy.

Science and Technology Make It Worse

There is another factor which has accentuated the crisis and led to a sharp conflict between the development of productive forces and the relations of production. The progress of the scientific

and technological revolution in the developed capitalist countries, with US in the lead, had created an extraordinary situation, opening up immense possibilities for developing production and rescuing humanity from the curse of poverty. But in the monopoly-dominated capitalist societies, the advance of this revolution results only in huge profits for the monopolies and unemployment for the workers : today, the threat of unemployment is second only to that of a nuclear war in the minds of young Americans. The uneven progress of this revolution in different branches of industry and agriculture leds to further chaos and heightens the contradiction. The huge investment required for research and development in present day conditions only helps the monopolists and the state which finances them. Society, as such is unable to benefit from the gigantic scientific development unless it gets control of the state itself. In the socialist countries, the scientific and technological revolution has resulted in rapid innovations without creating unemployment, disproportions or conflicts between the productive forces and relations of production. The uneven spread of this revolution in the different imperialist countries also intensifies their competition : they vie with each other to hasten it exclusively within their own frontiers, leading to further exacerbation of the crisis.

The scientific and technological revolution further sharpens the contradictions between the developed and the backward countries which are now being asked to produce semi-processed goods and to employ the outmoded techniques rejected by the former. It further creates chaos in the disproportionate development of certain industries because it can be applied only to the most monopolized sectors and not as a part of overall social planning.

Curiously enough, recent advances in technological progress enhancing efficiency in production and construction are leading to shorter reproduction circles, more frequent disturbances in production and quicker succession of downward and upward movements. As equipment becomes obsolete in a short time, rapid replacement become necessary and provision is made for it under state-monopoly capitalism. The renewal of fixed capital at shorter intervals provides the impetus for the upward push. But inability to utilize the full productive forces brings about a downward movement again. The cycle of stagnation and advance becomes shorter, inflicting innumerable hardships on the people.

Socialist System Forges Ahead

The economic crisis is gathering momentum in the midst of an intensification of the basic contradiction of the present period, namely, that between the socialist and the imperialist camps. The military defeat of the US in Vietnam, the forceful emergence of China on the world arena through admission to international bodies, its growing economic strength and the tremendous advance of the socialist countries as a whole have combined to make a powerful impact on capitalism. In 1963, the socialist countries accounted for about two-fifths of world's total industrial output. The Soviet Union, on its own, exceeds the combined production of three major developed capitalist countries, Japan, Federal Republic of Germany and Britain. Between 1950 and 1973, industrial output in the socialist countries increased more than 8.5 times and in developed capitalist countries only about 3.2 times.

The advance of scientific and technological revolution in the Soviet Union and its capacity to use it full in the interests of the people have further weakened the capitalist system. Thanks to this amazing progress, the Soviet Union and other socialist countries are in a position to make their influence felt in international affairs, help the underdeveloped countries build their economies and stand up to the imperialists. The growing strength of the rival social system has weakened world capitalism and hampers the capacity of the imperialist powers to pass on early the burdens of their crisis to the peoples of the Third World.

Third World Resistance

The virtual collapse of the old colonial order under which the satellite countries could be made to shoulder the crisis burden of the metropolitan countries creates. yet another obstacle in the way of imperialism, Political freedom and capacity to manoeuvre between the two worlds, together with the desire of many sections of the indigenous bourgeoisie to develop their independent economies impel them to resist imperialist attempts to palm off the burden of the crisis.

This is already seen in the tug of war between the oil-producing countries and the oil corporations. This kind of resistance would not have been possible but for the strength of the socialist world and the virtual collapse of the colonial order. The result is a prolonged and intensified crisis. However, it does not mean that the imperialists do not succeed at all in victimizing the underdevel-

oped countries in the course of the crisis. The opportunist governments of most of these countries have kept their economies linked with the western capitalist world with the result that the crisis has brought untold misery on their population.

Addressing the joint annual meeting of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, Mc Namara, World Bank President said, "Any single economic event in the past year such a worldwide inflation, the increase in oil prices, or a slowdown in the growth rates of developed countries would have had a serious impact on the developing world. In combination, the economic effect on some nations had been a near disaster." This is the situation despite the shortage of raw materials and rise in their prices which are supposed to benefit these countries. Devaluation, high prices and inflation combined to rob them of their opportunities and resources. Already groaning under the burden of foreign debts some of these countries have suffered intensely from the crisis.

Class Confrontation

Recession and inflation are igniting resistance from the working class of the advanced capitalist countries. Between 1946 and 1960, 150 million workers participated in strikes; between 1961 and 1962, however, the figure was 550 million. In 1972, 43 million workers joined strikes and other mass labour actions; in the first nine months of 1973, the participants numbered 43 million.

The working class bars the way to direct attacks on wages to solve the crisis at its expense. It has become one of the biggest headaches of the capitalist class, which has been resorting to inflation to achieve the same ends.

Gone are the days when supply and demand determined the wage. Gone too are the days when, during recession, mounting unemployment enabled the capitalists to impose massive wage cuts. The so called Phillips Curve no longer operates. Even during recession, the workers refuse to accept a direct wage cut. Besides, the capitalist states are compelled to accept responsibility for the unemployed.

Imperialist Rivalry

What are the remedies suggested? First, every economist or politician cries for some kind of international mechanism to keep the economies going by the control of prices and of inflation. By international regulation they of course mean regulation by impe-

rialist powers, the advanced capitalist countries.

Hence we come face to face with another contradiction of capitalist society which manifests two opposing tendencies: the growth in internationalisation of economic life, and intense national rivalries among imperialist powers. The first demands that there should be a common efforts to save the system; the second that it be made at the expense of other states. Hence, inspite of international conferences, finance ministers' meetings and the like, nothing tangible emerges to check the rake's progress.

The Basle meeting of the Governors of the Central Banks of the advanced countries in September and the Paris meeting of the monetary authorities of The Six reveal the same incapacity to strike a common path. In a month of threatened crisis and banking failures, the Basle meeting only gave some general assurances but no global guarantee by Central Banks as a group to avoid the experience of recent bank crashes.

The keenness to profit at each other's expense was further noticeable at the Paris meeting. Convened to establish a joint policy to overcome common economic problems, the monetary Czars failed even to patch up their differences. Some countries wanted to adopt restrictive practices for controlling effective demand; others wanted to push domestic demand to avert recession. The better-off were bent on maintaining economic growth rates and employment levels while combating inflation : they wanted to manipulate currencies, now that the Bretton Woods restrictions were inoperative. In addition to this polarity, a spirit of competition was evident for attracting huge oil funds to the capital markets to strengthen the exchange rate of their national currencies. This is the real face of imperialist competition as absolute US domination came to an end. The capitalist countries are utterly incapable of developing a common international solution for the crisis of the economy.

Stop-Go Dilemma

At the same time, the ruling classes are also hammpered internally. The various austerity programmes, budget cuts and anti-inflationary devices have one objective in common : deprive more and more workers of their jobs and incomes without any responsibility for the state to feed them. But it is precisely here that the ruling class is afraid of making further moves. Under the welfare state and national insurance schemes any increase in unemployment in the advance countries will have to be compensated

by the state which would mean massive public expenditure feeding inflation. At the same time, there is no escape from inflation if unemployment is to be held down. This is the dilemma. Paul Samuelson of the Massachussetts Institute of Technology poses the same question when he writes.

> What is not academic is the more relevant debate going on behind the scenes of official line : would it not be desirable, in the interests of keeping inflation from accelerating, to countenance and even contrive slow US growth for two or three years, so that unemployment will remain above the 5.1/2 per cent level? Even if desirable, is such austerity feasible in the present American political environment? [14]

The bankruptcy of the capitalist society cannot be spelt out more clearly. Less than 6 per cent unemployment is looked upon as a curse which they must contrive to increase. Full employment is no longer mentioned: in its place have come suggestions for deliberately-manipulated unemployment on a larger scale.

Possibilities and Dangers

It is obvious that for a permanent end to the crisis, the only way is for the working class to take over state, socialize the means of production and abolish the capitalist system. However, the working class struggle in these countries, in its consciousness and organization, has not yet reached a sufficiently advanced stage. The influence of the reformists and revisionists and a pathetic faith in peaceful parliamentary path continues to be the bane of the labour movement. The struggle in many countries does not go beyond demands for immediate democratic reforms and for restraints on the power of the monopolies.

Within these limitations, there are only two alternatives left. Either the working class and its democratic allies succeed in solving the crisis at the expense of the monopolists or the latter use force to solve it at the expense of the working class and the people. The former is the reasonable choice for the working class, but the reformist and revisionist leaders of the trade unions and political parties create illusions and mislead it down the path of compromise.

The working class will have therefore to direct its fire against the fusion of the state and monopolies, take steps to disband monopoly concerns, liquidate the multinationals, reform the taxation system and lower prices of necessities by reducing profit

margins. This would mean complete democratic control over the banks and financial institutions and monetary policy in general. On the basis of such a reform it will be feasible to chalk out an international approach to the problem.

If the working class fails to achieve this, the monopolists will try to gain their objective by deflation, so-called anti-inflationary measures, or tax provisions aimed at reducing employment, imposing more work on the workers and cutting down production. If the working class puts up a fight, the ruling monopoly group will not hesitate to use force.

It is not accidental that extreme right-wing forces are already emerging in Italy, Britain and elsewhere. In hoary old England, ex-army officers have become bold enough to intrude into politics and appear as saviours of the country against the working class. Professors and intellectuals are openly voicing concern for parliamentary democracy in their countries. If the workers are defeated, or betrayed by their leaders—a strong possibility in Britain, for example—the crisis would be solved by imposing extreme misery and destitution on the working class. Where this does not happen, large class battles and decisive shifts in policies are more likely.

Effects on India: Familiar Trends

The consequences of the world crisis are already visible in India which is being thrown into a recession, overproduction inspite of alleged 'shortages' and inflationary spirals. The economic trends follow the same path traversed by advanced capitalist countries where boom and rising prices are giving place to recession and collapse of production.

The situation in India was already grave, inflation having bought about a forcible transfer of value from the poorer to the richer class. The rural areas had the worst of it, with millions of poor peasants and agricultural workers reduced to destitution, thus drastically cutting the market for industrial goods of mass consumption like cloth and other necessities. The crisis manifested itself in shortages and higher prices of all kinds of goods and simultaneous under-utilization of the productive capacities of factories in the public and private sectors. On the one hand high prices reduced the purchasing power of the people making it generally difficult for the country to exploit the full potential of plants recently built. On the other hand speculative activities and high prices created an inmate of shortage making it appear as if

overproduction in relation to the people's capacity to purchase has not taken place.

Halt to Boom in Exports

The inflationary boom in western countries gave an impetus to Indian exports for which the Government of India claims credit. The export figure of Rs 2450 cores for 1973-74 showed a growth of over 20 per cent the previous year. In 1972-73 exports had risen by more than 23 per cent over the previous year. In the April-June quarter of 1974 there was a 40 per cent rise compared to the same period in 1973. This remarkable increase in export returns was due to the sharp rise in international prices and therefore in unit value, not in the volume of exports.

It is clear that the boost in Indian export earnings is to be attributed to the boom in western economies. The recession, therefore, is bound to tell on India's exports and balance of payments. In the first place, the balance of payments position has been adversely affected by the rise in international oil prices and India is being forced to seek loans for oil imports. With the rise in the oil bills and the prospective fall in export earnings India will be forced to resort to more and more transactions on deferred payment basis and loans at exorbitant interest rates.

The alliance with the landed interests, the pampering of the landlords and the refusal to take possession of their hoarded grain stocks have compelled the Government of India to purchase foodgrains abroad at the inflated prices. It will surely worsen the balance of payments and pile up foreign debts.

Now we are witnessing the beginning of a recession in India partly due to the slump in the world market and partly due to the loss of purchasing power by the people. One of the first commodities to be affected is raw silk. In the third week of October, newspapers reported that the fall in the market price of raw silk in the last few days had been of the order of Rs 65 per kg. for the highest grade as against the average pre-slump price of about Rs. 345! The slump in prices is officially attributed to symphathetic reaction of the local market following the fall in the prices in the international silk markets. The other main reason was the credit squeeze by banks in respect of silk dealers resulting in a glut in the cocoon market as there was no off take from the dealers.

Recession Syndrome in Industry

The textile industry has also been hit by the recession. The

Ahmedabad mills closed their night shift throwing out four to five thousand workers because of accumulation of stocks. The Buckingham and Carnatic Mills announced their intention to reduce production by 25 per cent because of the failure on the part of the retailers to lift stocks. While Ahmedabad mills had piled up different varieties of cloth, factories in south India reported accumulation of about 90 days' stock of yarn. Apart from the incapacity of the people to purchase cloth at these high prices, the credit squeeze—one of the so-called anti-inflationary measures of the government—has adversely operated in this sector and made it difficult for stocks to move.

According to the India Cotton Mills Federation, the delegation of the textile industry which met the Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank of India in October expressed the fear that a situation is fast developing in which fully solvent mills with large reserves would be forced to curtail or stop their operations merely for lack of accommodation from banks to pay wages and to buy the minimum requirements of raw materials and stores.

While the mills have reluctantly agreed to reduce cloth prices from 25 to 40 per cent and resumed the third shift in Ahmedabad and the south Indian mills have also proposed to offer the accumulated yarn at 25 per cent lower prices to the handloom sector, the delegation stated, "the fact is that due to dramatic changes that have occurred in the credit situation and the market psychology, there is lack of confidence as also of finances with trade both of which are necessary for the buying to start."

Recession is also threatening the steel industry the products of which have been in short supply. Iron and Steel Controller, T Ghosh, stated in Bangalore on October 21, that the Centre might have to think of decontrol or partial decontrol within two or three months. He stated, "from all indications, people do not come to us for steel. When we make allocations, they are not lifted. In the light of these indications, the position of the steel sector is alarming." Ghosh stated that the credit squeeze has made it impossible for many consumers to lift their allotment. The steel plants had accumulated stocks amounting to 3.5 lakh tonnes. Hindustan Steel alone had piled up one lakh tonnes against allocations.

Left and Democratic Unity

There are indications of a full-fledged crisis maturing in the work of inflation and official attempts to crub it. The so-called anti-

inflationary measures of the government in the shape of credit squeeze and other steps are only exacerbating the crisis and throwing its burden on the common man through increased closures and loss of employment. These are just the beginnings before a full-fledged crisis has broken out in the West. With the shortage of food and enforced grain imports, India will be more closely lined with the western economies, importing more inflation in the bargain. The indications are quite clear that the indigenous crisis is going to be ten times compounded by this economic dependence. A desperate effort is therefore under way to solve it at the expense of the masses and working people. The instrument of this solution is a direct attacks on the living standards of the people, enforced starvation, barbaric terror as against the railway workers and erosion of every norm of democracy. The dangers to the democratic rights of the people under the stress of the crisis are real and cannot be ignored. Broadbased democratic unity—of the left and democratic parties—is essential to meet the menancing political and economic effects of the world crisis.

1. Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol III, Progress Publishers, Moscow 1966, p 249.
2. *Ibid.*, p 250
3. *Ibid.*, p 244-245.
4. Annual Report of the International Monetary Fund, Washington, D C.
5. *Ibid.*
6. National City Bank, *Monthly Latter*, March 1960, quoted by E Varga in *Politico-Economic Problems of Capitalism*, Publishers, Moscow 1968, p 236.
7. Victor Perlo, "Economic Problems of the United State", *International Affairs* 4 April 1974 p 17.
8. "An Indictment of Imperialism", *Problems of Peace and Socialism* 5, May 1974, p 162.
9. J M Keynes, *General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money*, Macmillan, London 1967 p 264.
10. *Ibid.*, pp 267-268.
11. laon Andronov, "Wall Street, Inflation and the White House" *New Times 36*, September 1974, p 8.
12. K Vetrova, "Capitalist Countries : Exploitation by Taxation", *International Affairs 8*, August 1974, p 154.
13. *Newsweek*, September 23, 1974.
14. *Commerce*, August 24,1974.

22

Concluding Speech

General Council Meeting, Calcutta, March 31-April, 1986

I close the session. I want to say, on behalf of all of you, we convey our thanks to the West Bengal CITU, our comrades here and our volunteers who have provided you with a place of our own to hold the meeting and also made excellent arrangements about the rest. Of course you need not expect anything else in West Bengal. So they will perhaps think that the thanks are also superfluous. But thanks are also an investment. So we thank them again. That is the first part.

Now, our discussions have been fruitful in this sense that comrades are not loosing the habit of making extempore speeches. When you have nothing to say you, say with greater force. But when you have something to say you say with proper balance and prepared argumentation. So to a certain extent discussion produced some results because people have thought about the subject that they are speaking and secondly because some earlier work has been put in. Now to start with you all must understand that our movement, CITU, has not yet adjusted itself to the new situation that has been developing in our country in the last few years. You were not taking it seriously, that our main CITU activities are confined to defending the wage emoluments of permanent workers. One of the reasons perhaps, and I am only guessing, perhaps why your membership does not reflect the influence you are weilding is precisely because that your main activity is confined to meeting the needs of a certain important section, that during the

last few years from your own report you find that more and more, larger and larger number of workers are in the category of non-permanent workers, either contract labourers or hired labourers or workers treated as casual workers who have been denied of a lot of concessions and legitimate dues, and these are the workers who do not have the close relationship with the trade unions which the permanent workers have. When we have repeatedly said that the composition of the working class is changing in the sense that the permanent workers are becoming a smaller force compared with the earlier days and the non permanent or casual workers are becoming a bigger and bigger force. This is part of the crisis. The crisis, one part of passing the burden on the working class is to deprive it of its legitimate rights without violation of any legal status. So if you put them in the casual category, non-permanent category, contract labour category, so many concessions which have been won ever since independence are lost. This is the same thing that is happening in Western countries. In Western countries now as we have seen here in the USA itself, there are now un-licenced industries operating, underground industries, secret industries, industries which therefore have nothing to pay except the minimum wages that they are paying, and neither the worker complains nor the owner wants to complain. The worker does not complain because he has job. That is the thing, This exactly is the particular method of passing on the burden to the workers by removing his status as a permanent worker by denying many of his legal rights. This has been going on for so many years. But our old method of trade unionism confines itself mainly in the permanent workers and their emoluments. It is because this was the earlier tradition of the British days. During the British days there was virtually no law protecting the workers, no ESI, no leave with pay, no provident fund, not even the statutory regulation of wage. The only wage regulation they made was the cutting of wage for 8 days for one day's strike, under the Payments of Wages Act. Therefore every trade union struggle was essentially centered on the wage question. That was in the colonial condition. Later on things have changed, legislation has come, permanent workers developed, industries developed, a new section of working class also developed. But as the crisis came, just you find in the case of women workers, in order to avoid maternity benefits thousands of women were retrenched. In the coal mines, women were finished. In the

Bombay textile industry I do not know whether there are any women now. Very few are there. For the simple thing to avoid maternity benefits, a massacre of women's jobs has been made. Then the question of on permanent youth worker. In Bombay, I was repeatedly pointing out, Dutta Samant's success depended on this, exactly this non-permanent youth worker. Now this particular thing we are not addressing ourselves. Therefore, we are finding that the trade union movement is repeatedly coming to halt. Second point, most of you have never seen such an economic crisis. We have seen it in 1930, when at one time 40 per cent of the textile workers in Bombay were unemployed. Out of 1,20,000 workers nearly 50 thousands or 60 thousands were unemployed. There was a general feeling of despondency, at the same time the feeling of despondency again and again combined with militancy, so much so that the Govt, British Govt. of India was completely misled. In 1934 when this was the position , of 40 per cent workers unemployed, we had to give a call for All India Textile strike. The Government of India asked the Govt. of Bombay not to arrest the communist leaders. They said no strike will come and they will be discredited. The Govt. of Bombay reported to the Govt. of India, we do not think so. We want to arrest them. They said don't touch them, let them be discredited and in two days there was a big strike. Still it has come to this thing that the workers knew that we cannot resist. But after all we have to resist. So today we will go on strike and in another 24 hours go back to work.

It is going to be a still more difficult period. Still more difficult because if they succeed, and most probably they will succeed in introducing lot of modernisation and computerisation even if the economic situation takes a better turn from the present, major part of the unemployed will not be absorbed as it is happening in the United States of America and other countries. Therefore the situation we are facing is a very difficult situation and if you go along with it I think that was happening earlier—some face saving device, some success here, tomorrow you can boast of a little victory—that is not coming, a very grim struggle is coming. One very dangerous situation which I have been repeatedly drawing your attention to but you are not at all responding to this is that the dangerous situation is this that there is not a huge block of unemployed workers who have nothing to do with the trade union movement. In 1934 when we said 40 per cent of the workers are on

the street unemployed, but they were our members at one time, they had that loyalty to the trade unions. So even though they were starving for days and months when the textile strike was on, not one of them would go back because they were unemployed. But this is the mass of workers who stands alienated from the trade union movement, a large part of which never had any job. A large part of which even if it had some job had never had any relationship with the trade union and it does not look upon the trade union as its protector. On the other hand it looks upon with jealousy for those who have got jobs. Four years back in the city of Ahmedabad the unemployed workers were used to give a thorough beating to the bank employees. When these fellows demand overtime and kill our jobs, finish them, they said. This is likely to happen if the trade union movement does not develop close ties with the unemployed workers. If the unemployed workers do not feel that even today if anybody who is talking in his name, if anybody who is prepared to help him or get some temporary relief for him, it is this organised movement of the trade union, if that confidence is not created, and that link is not created, then the future of the trade union movement is very dark. Unfortunately you do not seem to realise. The way in which problem of unemployment is talked about here, the way in which resolution are passed in our conferences, at Kanpur and even before that, repeatedly drawing attention to the danger of the unemployment situation, no State Committees, nobody does anything serious about it. It is the sign of worst type of reformism. This type of reformism demarcated the Social Democratic Labour Party reformists in 'Europe from the Communists. In my speech I have already tried to tell you what it means, that the trade union movement and the capitalist class joined together in passing on the burdens of the crisis on the unemployed. That the trade union movement and the capitalist class joined together in passing on the burdens of the crisis on the unemployed. That the trade union movement and the employed workers joined together in making the unemployed the scapegoat of the economic crisis. If this situation continue, day by day you will find that the permanent workers are going out, his place is not being taken up by anybody and then you will come to realise that your circle is narrowing everyday, and a hostile unemployed class becoming an instrument of the worst kind of divisive forces. If it is not tied with the working class and its class struggle, if its consciousness is not elevated by the

ideology of class struggle, if you are not able to foster the spirit of class unity among it, it goes eventually to anything. One simple instance is what happened in Ahmedabad for months together with 14 factories closed, the untouchable and touchable workers fighting each other for reservation. This question of reservation came, why? Lack of jobs. The unemployed can be mobilised against the jobs being taken by the untouchables and the untouchables can be mobilised when the jobs are taken by others. The CITU has been blaming the government for everything about unemployment. We quote the figures from First Five Year Plan to 7th Plan. You may be able to quote the same figures up to the Tenth Plan. But by the Tenth Plan nothing would remain of the trade union movement.

These have to be taken very seriously. In no country the revolutionary trade union or militant trade union movement neglects the problem of the unemployed. That is, the reformist idea of not treating the unemployed as part of our class continues and therefore this danger. This is one point. Now during this May Day Celebration when you talk about the right to work, it is not simply a question of addressing some factory gate meetings and talking to the employed workers about the right to work. The message of right to work must reach the unemployed workers, that the trade unions are fighting that the right should be there and they have a right to work and that right should be embodied in the constitution. You must take steps to see that a beginning should be made to call conferences of the unemployed, to prepare their charter of demands, to see that some immediate relief is given, so that atleast a section of the unemployed got attracted towards the trade union movement, towards the organised trade union movement. They are a very important section of our class. We cannot neglect them. The trade union movement must turn towards them. Then we can neglect them only at our own peril.

Second question comrades, which is of equal importance is the question of working women. I had just met the comrades—the Working women. We called a meeting of the members of the coordination committees at Trivandrum. One young comrade said she could not attend that meeting because there was a dispute in Tamil Nadu as to who should pay her fare. The total neglect is there. Though some improvement is there, much more has to be done. Really no serious attempt is made by any state committee to take it as a real problem of the CITU of uniting the working class.

What does it mean. It means a reformist or feudal attitude in which you see only one third of the aspect of the whole. When you look at a women she has three aspects. One, she is a woman, second she is a citizen, third she is a part of the working class. You want to neglect the citizen part and the working class part and reduce her to a woman. And once you reduce her to a woman, you say, she is to be in the house, why does she comes out. There were people in Kerala. I do not know now if they are there, when our union or the women suggested that they should not be employed in night shift, they objected to it. Kerala is a state of contradictions. On the one hand advance some thing, tremendous anti-caste movement etc., but all castes, all religions agree on one thing, that women should have inferior status. Whether it is Hindu, Muslim, Christians, Ezhavas, Nairs, Namboodiris everybody. On, I forget, our communists, what is happening you understand. We heard it in Madras that the splitters of the working class movement are not keeping quiet. they have already started their activities among women and also among working women. There is every chance that in the coming few months or years you will see attempts being made of separate organisations women's unions, because the trade unions do not take up their questions at all. Recently in a deputations. I think in Delhi when some women's organisations saw one officials.and pointed about some immediate problems of working women, the officer laughed. He said, Yes yes this is a question but no trade unions approached him for this. In this building of trade union unity and unity of the working class we have not said it should be minus the working women. This weakness has to be overcome. Repeatedly we are pointing out but not much headway has been made.

Thirdly, comrades, some kind of understanding and estimation of our united front activities has been made by the comrades. But it is not enough. The question remains that inspite of our united front activities and inspite of our following a correct line, taking initiative, the following of other organisations does not change much, and the co-relation of forces does not change. Their followers go there and our followers remain with us. this perhaps is the position in a large number of cases. Why? It has also been told, earlier, that this will remain the position because the days are gone when trade unions belonging or controlled by other parties or other organisations were foolish enough to openly oppose strikes. It is quite clear

when some union openly oppose a strike, it becomes a Strike Breaker. The days are over when by-passing the left trade unions these other fellows could do something. No they must move with them. If the ordinary workers see that the other trade unions are moving with you on a number of issues, sometimes lasting through strikes, not exposing themselves, then why should they change the allegiance. What is the snag here. The snag is that in the present day conditions of the tactics of trade union reformists, trade union reformism cannot be exposed in terms of trade union tactics or trade union criticism, unless there is political explanation and political exposure, of the ideology etc. which takes some time. This was pointed out 10 years earlier that in earlier days the reformism meant opposition to militant trade unionism, meant you only oppose strike. Now they are clever. So the idea of unity and struggle, when only unity remains and the ideological struggle, the ideological demarcation on various issues lag behind. We have not declared truce with all the ideological luggage which these people carry. But nonetheless the struggle must go on. In our resolution there was a phrase which you have passed. The phrase now the INTUC is forced to join hands with us. When the INTUC is joining hands why do you use the word forced. The main point is that when you are examining the results of your united front activities in terms of our trade union struggle for trade union unity, you must put before us, put before yourselves all the aspects of our struggles for trade union unity, that the struggle for trade union unity does not mean freezing the existing relations between various organisations as they are but that struggle for unity means day by day changing the co-relation of forces with the revolutionary line getting better preponderence over workers and the other line gradually receding. This thing cannot be achieved only on the basis of correct trade union tactics. Correct trade union tactics are required, they must be supplemented and aided and re-inforced by a running demarcation on several issues so that in the course of the struggle by the partners of the trade union front, the limitations of others are seen by the workers. The earlier process of awakening was on the question of strike itself. When some preparations came the others deserted. then we say, yes, one told you they are Dalals and everybody accepts. Situation is not so simple today. The situation requires a demarcation and explanation of the politics in the course of the struggle, The CITU had to do it in connection with

the DMK on the question of Sri Lanka. I am still to come across a proper review of our trade union activity, of big struggles, which estimate our activity, which estimate our success in uniting the workers. We have at the same time to estimate our success in advancing our ideology and making the other ideology recede. You have to take into consideration that all the aspects of the struggle for trade union unity is not simply a gathering of members, is not simply a gathering of various organisations for general effect, but it is a question of changing the class consciousness of the workers themselves so that those who are under reformism gradually come under our revolutionary line. This have to be remembered.

It is a hard battle but unless it is done you will not be in a position to change the co-relation of forces. In this connection another thing is to be observed. It is in the resolution. It seems if the govt's statistics are correct, very big number of strike actions of working class are conducted by unions and organisation which are not affiliated to any central organisation. The other day I saw the figures. The strikes conducted by the INTUC are perhaps 2.1%, the strike conducted by AITUC 1.5%, those conducted by HMS 0.5%, our number is not given . perhaps bigger than theirs, then something like 29% or 30 % strikes, they did not ascribe to any particular organisation, but a number of organisations jointly conducting it, perhaps AITUC, INTUC, perhaps ours whatever it is. But the largest number of strikes according to them is conducted by organisations with no affiliation to any organisations. It shows you see, the class is active and we are unable to reach it. We are unable to intervene and we are not conscious also. Now we understand that if all our partners in the National Campaign Committee are taken, together, all together conducted even less than 40% or 50% of the strikes and the rest are conducted by unions affiliated to nobody. Then even our united activity through the National Campaign Committee, etc. has limited scope, though important they are. Unless you think in terms of the entire class and its unity, this lacunae, this weakness can never be overcome. But we do not examine whatever is not in our hand, nothing in our hand, So it will be a really illusory thing if we really think that the National Campaign Committee really represents the entire working class. We have to reach to working class yet.

We have repeatedly said that the National Campaign Com-

mittee has lost its earlier momentum, That is true. Why? If the mass is on the move they reflect the mood of the mass, if the mass is little depressed they reflect the depressed mood of the mass. With so much massacre of jobs with so much attack on the working class, so much unemployment, the constituents of the National Campaign Committee feel, including the AITUC, that direct action by the working class is no answer to the present situation. Therefore, there is hesitation in sanctioning direct actions. What is happening now is that the hesitation is now seen in two different ways. On recent occasions whenever a meeting of the political parties was there, generally the hesitation is now seen in two different ways. On recent occasions whenever a meeting of the political parties was there, generally the hesitation among the opposition parties was to sanction any action, and when they don't decide what action to sanction then they say we are for it, but ask the National Campaign Committee. Again in the National Campaign Committee the constituents generally take a stand of avoiding action. It is natural. there is nothing surprising about it when you are working in cooperation with a number of unions which have not the same outlook in times of economic attacks. in times of economic depression, they should not be very enthusiastic about actions, Therefore, they are suggesting ineffective ways, expressing some kind of actions like some dharna. All these have got their use if in the end you are working for some mass action, otherwise they become a substitute for mass action.

At present they are moving more or less like that. It all amounts to this that unless you are in a position to give a better push, create some condition, create some atmosphere that things are moving, they won't get the confidence that things will really be moved, That with the tremendous attack of the economic crisis and the existing condition of the workers, some trade union organisations feel lack of confidence in saying that the working class will move forward. Now inspite of all these things if we take the statistics, the same working class is going in for direct action. Some up and down is there. But for the last 10 years, only perhaps last year's figures shows that more than one million workers have gone on strike. Inspite of all the difficulties, more than a million workers striking work is what the working class is supposed to do as an advanced class. It cannot rest like that, If every year more than a million workers have struck work, how much of them we have led

all over India? Because jobs are difficult to get, so even among the workers there is certain amount of hesitation which is bound to be. But they cannot escape it also and therefore the strikes come out. The proper mood of the workers we must know. We should give them the slogans in advance. The pot is boiling. It just boiled once, again it gets a little low, again it will boil over. The situation is going to be worsen. It will appear as if nothing can be done in the situation. But nonetheless the working class will be putting up a fight but because it has no alternative. The trade union movement, our movement has to estimate these things, take these into consideration. In many cases it happened that in factories where we have got a union, the union itself does not know what is happening and suddenly the workers want strike. Spontaneous developments. So this particular thing has to be taken into consideration when we talk about our independent activity, initiative etc., we have to take both these into consideration. On one hand a section of the workers is circumspect about going into any direct action, at the same time the attacks also are multifarious and the workers are pushed forward. These things we have to lead with consistent independent initiative. Independent initiative is not meant to expose the other partners. The independent initiative is meant to see that the vascilating partner gets some additional confidence so that they also join and broaden the movement, and see that all the more larger sections are coming forward with the alliance. The crisis is affecting all trade unions. It has affected the INTUC also. Perhaps there are groups in it now on question of policy also. One section of leadership even want to join hands with us. Once it joined hand with us in coal also. A very important thing. INTUC was founded to fight us. Sardar Patel's soul will get disturbed if he finds that the same INTUC joining hand with us. But this is what is happening. But this also we said that unity of trade unions is not our trick, is not our tactics. It is the urgent class demand which is already there and day by day the working class is going ahead with this is what is wanted. Since the CITU was founded the situation has changed. When the CITU was founded there was every danger that our CITU comrades and leaders would consider the AITUC and Dange being their only class enemies. So immediately we gave a call for unity week. We wanted to tell comrades that this will not be reformism, but we will have to have unity with them to fight the class enemy. After that they did not want to have anything to do with us, we

were shunt back but for after all since we have separated from them we will not respond. Since Dange issued the call for all trade union meeting Dange though we will not go. We went. P. Ramamurthi, Mahanand Desai and Satish Lamba were appointed as convenors of the committee to further the call. And then they sabotaged the whole thing. Then we continued. Then again when we gave the call for unity and from very unexpected sources our hands were strengthened. United Council of Trade Unions, in which George Fernandes was also there, P & T struggles were there. Actually it enabled us to take part in that Railway struggle. So AITUC was also on the border. They could not join us. We persisted. It is through persistence like this, because it was the need of the working class we have come to the present stage in which the basic change is this that, our strength has increased and therefore unless we take the initiative nothing moves. And if anybody wants any action they cannot by-pass us. We have become a very vital and effective element in any kind of effective trade union unity and effective trade union activity. This is the position won by us through continuous struggle for trade union unity responding to the situation inside the working class. Having come to this stage we cannot forget that our partners have got tremendous limitations and unless we act as the motive power to take them forward, if we simply say now everything is over and we will wait on others to set the pace, you lost the game. Therefore, if the momentum has gone, we can see that the momentum can come back. But more and more depends on our activity, our understanding of the situation and our being comprehensive of what is the mood existing among the workers. Now the other problems which are there, comrades, the National Campaign Committees problems which are there. Comrades, on the National Campaign Committee problems, we have move very carefully. There was a time in the course of the National Campaign Committee when if we had fallen victims to the AITUC's offer—that time they said let the two move together—AITUC, CITU. We had to tell them you will simply bring into existence an anti-communist camp. Everyone in the National Campaign Committee, except the AITUC for its own reason betrayed us on the question of verification. They all passed the resolution, we will not accept verification except without secret ballot and one day they gave their signature. Betrayal. What can be done. But these are the limitations etc. which we have to take into consideration, at the

same time we have to move forward.

Now, the other aspect which is very serious is that, partly our fault, that inside the working class and inside the trade union movement and inside our CITU we have not created a challenging attitude towards the divisive forces. We have been on the defensive. The rise of the divisive forces is a political challenge to the country a political challenge to us. We have to take it seriously into consideration. The INTUC has made some offer. We have to make use of every offer to isolate the divisive forces. Com. Sansgiri moved a resolution on divisive forces and he explained to you that the opinion of our people, is that the divisive force is not the main enemy, but the Cong(I) is the main enemy. This is what happens, imperialism is forgotten, the divisive forces themselves are forgotten. We point to congress But the main thing that is the divisive force is backed by imperialism. The third point is, now we talk of peace struggle, struggle for peace. Now of course everybody realises though very few self critically, that we have not yet done much. Many lacunae will be there but we are getting conscious that we have to do and we must do it. But one part of the peace struggle, the essential part, if we see, then we find that we are drawing a zero. What did Marx say "The maturity of a working class is estimated by the interest it takes in the foreign policy of the Govt. of its country. The working class which is indifferent to the foreign policy of the Govt. of its country is not a mature working class at all because it is not interfering in a vital sphere of class policy which determines the very shape and existence of the policies of the particular government".

Here is a govt which now stands for non-alignment. It takes a stand, sometimes criticises US imperialism. Of late it has started talking about two super powers. If the working class is not conscious that the present policy of non-alignment must be maintained, it is the part of our anti-imperialist fight, then it is not easy for us to fight the anti-imperialist battle. The battle for peace is a part of this policy.

Why I am talking about this, today when we are talking about our international duty, May Day Centenary, the struggle for peace, the root of the weekness lies in the fact that we have not taught the working class to take any interest in the foreign policy of the govt. The word non-alignment, that non-alignment is a good policy, is rarely uttered in the gathering of the CITU trade unions. The most

that is uttered in these things especially is when the govt. commit some mistake or departs from this, then you say they are betraying. Only when there is betrayal it is mentioned otherwise it is not mentioned. It is a serious thing, you see in the present situation when things are moving like this, the working class, serious working class movement, without which we in our country will be in a soup. But that is an integral part of our fight for international peace and discharging our responsibilities. These are some of the things on which we have to change our tactics and outlook.

The other thing that remains is this that the CITU actually is not functioning as an united all India organisation of the workers. Some things have already been explained to you, that what is the meaning that some State Committees do not reply to the circulars of the CITU. Total lack of All India outlook, parochialism, federalism, lack of class consciousness. Now you see what happens. When the CITU unions are developing this attitude, the working class out of its own instinct, where it is not bothered by top leaders, where it is free from the grip of top leaders, is developing its own industrial federation and developing an all India outlook regarding its industry. A number of federations, leave aside ours, these federations which we have, a number of federations, have been organised with the various unions of the workers, many of them are not affiliated to the CITU, they meet regularly, they discharge this jobs regularly, much more regularly than what the CITU unions do with regard to the same. The class instinct plays true and they are doing, but they are doing it at an economic plain. These fertiliser federation, food corporation federation, so many federations are there, not at our initiative. They perhaps act more coherently, more unitedly, in a more centralised manner than the CITU central office is able to act and the CITU State Committees are acting. These are so as a part of the earlier heritage which still continues. The working class does not care what foreign policy is followed by the Govt. Our mass of workers do not care to what central organisation the union gets affiliated. This is the case in many places. Long ago, many years back, in the days of the Communist International when to overcome this stage they suggested that whenever conferences take place, whether district conference, state conference all India conference, delegates should be elected by calling the general body meeting of unions or factory gate meetings and the whole.....purpose, the agenda of the confer-

ence should be explained.

It has constantly been reiterated so that the rank and file of the workers feel that they are determining the policies of the trade union movement. This is not happening. That is why as many weaknesses coming, without that the revolutionary surg is not possible. Both politically regarding the understanding of the trade union situation, regarding the understanding of the unemployment problem and finally regarding our present organisational practice,unless on all these issues, there is a radical change in our outlook, we will not be able to meet the problems which are going to face in the near future. All I wish to convey to you is that we have decided to hold our 6th conference most probably in Kerala. We have decided that before holding the conference we should work on the lines for some months so that we would report to the conference that some progress has been made. Unless that is done we will be in a difficult position.

And lastly what I want to tell you is that a number of comrades made speeches which could have been made without reading Samar Mukherjee's report. Some points are there. Serious discussions is wanted.

23

"History of Railway TU Movement"

Com. Nrisingha Chakrabarty, Secretary CITU, who was a railway worker and a leader of railway trade unions for several years gives us the present publication "History of Trade Union Movement."

The book contains facts little known to railway workers and present day leaders, facts which enable us to understand the pecularity and the short comings of the present day Railway Trade Union Movement, Com. Chakrabarty besides, since he was a participant in the movement for several years, is able to analyse concretely the various trends affecting the movement, the role of leadership at each stage and its relationship with the wide mass of railway workers it was supposed to organise, lead and represent.

The author besides exposing the repression of railway workers during strikes, repression during the British period and after independence pays special attention to the moves of the authorities before and after freedom to divide the trade union, to patronise 'Moderate' leaders to install and support leaders who were pliable to pressure and were opposed to direct action of the workers. No where were these tactics so successful as among the Central Government and Railway Organisations. This demarcated the railway trade union movement, from the rest of the trade unions, cut it off from the mainstream of the all India movement and isolated it from the section of the workers and the people. The reformist leaders of the railway trade unions turned the railway movement into an island cut off from the rest of the people. Organisationally it today expresses in the refusal of organisations like the AIRF to be a part

of any All India Trade Union Centre, to participate effectively in organisations like the National Campaign Committee or All India Confederation of Central Govt. Employees.

The Railway workers were the first born among the industrial workers of India. they were, therefore, the first to use the weapon of modern class struggle—strike. The author notes that the first action started as early as middle of the 19th Century, a couple of years after the 1857 war of Independence. Since then locally the workers have waged innumerable struggles, heroic struggles facing untold hardships at the hands of the British rulers. Some of these were actions of construction workers employed for building railway. A little later we see actions and strikes of regular workers which were suppressed by the British as if they were a rebellion against their rule. In fact the British looked upon every action of the people including the railway workers as a conspiracy against the 'Raj'. The author very pertinently quotes Viceroy Lord Curzon from what he wrote on a file on May 5, 1899 : " I have nearly read all these papers and I am not much wiser than at the beginning. One thing is, however, clear to me, viz., Whether the strike was or was not, the result of political conspiracy, it has been folly to appoint as ignallers so large a proportion of Brahmins and that in the future, the railway must mix up the races and, region and recruit from some other source than the discontented classes of the 'Deccan'". This was an open directive to use caste and religion to divide the railway workers. The attack against the Brahmins was due to the fact that they represented the rising educated class and intelligentsia well in the forefront of political agitation. They were all the more suspect because Tilak who then represented the left wing of the Congress came from the Brahmin community. The fact that the Viceroy suspected a political conspiracy in a strike and sought to prevent it speaks volumes.

It was no wonder that with this out look the British tried to suppress every manifestation of the workers' discontent. There were no laws to protect the workers, no limitation of hours of work. It was nothing but bonded labour. That is why local struggles continued to erupt despite dismissals and police repression.

The author points out that towards end years of the 19th Century and early years of the 20th century, some of the struggles attracted the sympathy of political figures and Congress leaders. He mentions the East Indian railway strike of the 1906 in this

connection.

The railway workers movement in Bengal could hot be immune from the impact of the national struggle of which Bengal was the centre. The growing national consciousness of the Indian people was reflected in the fight of railway workers against racial discrimination, against inferior treatment to Indians in railway services. This coupled with low wages lit the fire. The author observes "The great political struggle of 1905-1908 had a great bearing in the emergence of the railway trade union movement. The extremely low wages paid to Indian workers, racial discrimination and excessive duty hours coupled with the misbehaviour by the Anglo Indian or European supervisors were the primary causes which infuriated workers. The spurt in the movement came from the national freedom movement which swept the country from 1905 to 1908. It was through these struggles that the trade unions of railway workers were formed."

The railway workers continued their struggle, though there were no industry wise union or a nationwise organisation. These were mostly sectional or local struggles of categories or spread over a section of the railway, often unable to wrest any major concessions from the British authorities in 1902 alone there were as many as 22 strikes in the railways. In the post first World War period two strikes were of special importance because they showed a certain consciousness of national awareness. The first was the strike on the E.I. Railway against misbehaviour of European Supervisory staff against humiliating treatment to Indians. the second was the strike in the Assam-Bengal railway, which was a protest action against the inhuman torture of Assam Tea Garden Workers, who sought an escape from slavery to British planters.

Both these strikes took place in the midst of the first non-co-operation movement and obviously represented the boldness and resistance of national spirit.

Unfortunately, this spontaneous link between freedom struggle and the railway workers' struggle was not maintained in subsequent years thanks to the emergence of a non-political, non-national, non-fighting reformist leadership of the movement sedulously nurtured by the British authorities. Cay by day the link with the peoples movement for freedom got broken. The link was not strong or conscious militant leadership which properly understood the connection of the railway workers trade union struggle

with the freedom struggle.

The fault did not lie entirely with the reformist leaders either. The leaders of the national movement were by and large indifferent to the use of the militant weapon of strike for national advance. Besides till very late they had no economic programme embracing the demands of the workers and other toilers. they did not accept strike and working class action as a legitimate from of national protest and hardly gave a call for strike. In fact it was only the new communist leadership in the trade union movement that understood the ,in between the daily struggle and anti-imperialist struggle for freedom and called on trade unions to unite with the people. The Govt. as well as the national leaders decried this as political exploitation of workers had been in the forefront of the struggle against the British, because their direct exploiter and national exploiter was the same British India Government. But by a quirk of face, thanks to the reformist leadership the railway workers became politically a backward section and therefore were also unable to defend their interests, their wages, their D.A., their bonus etc., always remined behind the emoluments of many other sections who combined their trade union militancy with anti-imperialist consciousness and participated in anti-British protests. Only where the communists were in leadership attempts were made to combine the two struggles and they succeeded to same extent. The railway workers in Bombay, Calcutta etc., participated in the national protest against the Simon Commission in 1927.

It should be noted that by attacking communists the reformist and national leaders deprived the freedom struggle of the most powerful weapon of a general strike of railways. There is no doubt that if the leaders of the National Congress had ever given a call the mass of railway workers would have responded to it. The mass was seething with discontent. Only the reformist leaders were holding it in check. The irony is that even during the Quit India movement the call never came.

Notwithstanding this delinking the sectional struggle of the railway workers went on. they were heroically fighting battles but three hardly led to any rise in consciousness. The separate local struggles sometimes embracing an entire railway were often imposed on the leadership by rank and file. the author brings out this point very clearly. An unwilling leadership, over ready to compromise, generally brought disintegration and demoralisation by

its conduct. And yet by their heroism the workers won many a battle, forced the Govt. to withdraw reactionary legislation, make minimum wage concessions etc.

The formation of All India Railwaymens Federation in 1924 was a very important event in the movement of the railway workers. For the first time it gave an all-India rallying point of the movement a centre which could co-ordinate and unite the workers's activities. The need for such a centre was being realised by various sections and arising our of local struggles. the railway worker's movement was passing beyond the stage of local struggle. That is why the formation of the Federation was genuinely felt by many as meting an urgent need of the movement. That is why during all these years unions and workers continued to put their faith in the all-India organisation. But unfortunately the federation and its leaders failed to meet the growing need of the movement. They failed to respond to the fighting needs of the struggles, to organise mass actions and give a permanent militant basis to worker's unity.

In effect, therefore, the formation of the All India Railwaymen's Federation in 1924 signalised a formal establishment of reformist leadership to control the growing isolated struggles breaking out in the wake of postwar discontentment. the federation was to be an instrument of collaboration to curb the strike madness of workers. The establishment of federation, its recognition by the Railway Board, the opportunity for negotiations all appeared to be progressive land marks in a country which was enslaved where labour had no rights. This appearance deceived many but the reality was soon seen. The Govt. was in need of such leaders. By 1926 the general strike of British workers shook the British Government. It was necessary to take steps against strikes in India. By 1927 the Postwar capitalist stabilization came to an end and the shadow of a deep economic crisis lenthened over the world. The authorities required asober loyal leadership, to manouver against the situation. The reformist leadership of the federation with its out look of economism, its non-political out look and its lack of militancy offered an ideal support to the authorities. The period between 1926 and 1833 was a period of wide spread railway strikes virtually deserted by the federation leadership. It was a period which saw wide spread retrenchment of railway workers, the federation showing its total inability to mobilize all-India action to fight the general offensive or support individual railway unions in action.

This was a period also of wide spread strike through out India and repression of the trade union movement. The communists were coming to the forefront among the Textile workers, Railway workers and others. The Govt. struck at them and arrested a large number and charged them with conspiracy to wage war against the Raj. The author should have given more space to the ability and the service rendered by the Communists to the trade union movement. Not once of the Federation leaders was arrested. They however, understood the Government's mind and de-associated themselves from the All India Trade Union Congress where the leftist were in a majority and there were prospects of linking the trade unions with the national struggle. The author undertaking the trade unions with the national struggle. the author understands the development and makes correct comments on it.

By now the Railway Trade Union Movement was driven into isolation, its ranks deprived of all democratic education. More and more the struggles became extremely self centre and later on it became sectional But the workers militancy and sacrifice did not abate. they fought on occasions with the same devotion and courage shown by earlier generations. But the effect of their sacrifices was minimal and they were unable to put their full strength against the authorities. At the sametime, there being no other viable all India Organisation, workers continued to rally behind the Federation wen a call was given. Membership of the Unions continued to increase also grew. By independence two or three generations of railway workers were reared in pure economism, abjuration of policies, total lack of sense of responsibility towards the problems of the tactics of the British Govt. and encouraged docile non-political leadership, a reformist leadership. The author cites a number of instances of the compromises made by the leadership its refusal to struggle, its calls for action which did not materialise. the Congress Govt. discouraged militant leaders and as an insurance for loyalty encouraged another federation manned by its party members and affiliated to the INTUC. All this ended in abominable compromises which dissatisfied large section of workers. Dissidence began to grow and attempts started to organise workers on categories basis. This was really an expression of revolt against federation leadership which should have taken note and made attempts to instil confidence in the fighting ranks. Here was a new awakening which was asserting itself against the undemocratic

practices of the federation leaders and its clothfulness. But the federation leaders treated this as a revolt and tried to suppress it with the help of the authorities. The authorities refused to deal with the new spreading organisations, refused to recognise them, refused so give them trade union rights.

Both the authorities and the federation leaders failed to understand that though the form of protest appeared to be a return to draft organisation, it was in reality a class protest against the non-militant compromising leadership. Therefore, the protest continued to grow. New organisations continued to be formed.

They also united in one common organisation though some of them do not have a clear idea of the future steps of the movement.

But the formation of these unions out side the federation and the subsequent activities had broken a stalement in the movement, which had lasted for more than fifty years. Thanks to the growing chasm between the discontent of the ranks and the wool-eyed policy of the federation leadership, the mass could not find a proper vehicle of their militancy, their action. There was no agency hitherto which could gave a jolt from outside to the self-complacement leadership and galvanise the whole movement.

This fact is now being created and opening new prospects in uniting all sections of railway workers. This is already seen from what has happened in 1973 and 1974. The Loco Running Staff Association a militant organisation with an enlightened and courageous leadership which is aware of the danger of craft spirit, waged a heroic struggle for reduction of hours of work. they had to work for 14 hours. they demanded 8 hours work. Their strike was an all-India strike which virtually paralysed the railways. the Govt. which refused to recognise their association had to negotiate with them and accept to reduce hours of work to eight. Needless to say the 'Satyameva' Govt. went back on its agreement and the workers had to wage another heroic struggle.

The historic importance of the Loco struggle of 1973 was that it was an all India struggle, and not a local struggle as in the earlier years, organised out side the pale of the recognised federation. A militant independent leadership is developing and it is swaying wide and vital sections over the head of the federation leadership. The new militant section of the workers is no respector of the hoary past. If the other sections who are combined with it in a common organisation follow the same line and winning the confidence of

the mass, it will open a new chapter in the history of the railway workers movement.

The loco workers' strike of 1673 paved the way for the glorious all-India strike of railway workers in 1974. The strike showed the great strength of the railway workers, if only all sections combine together. It showed what the workers could do only if the AIRF leaders fell in the line with the mood the demands of the workers and did not pull in contrary direction. It is of course true that the personal role of Shri George Fernandes, the then President of the AIRF was crucial in securing the support of the leadership for that grand action. The workers stood heroically against Congress repression. The author narrates several instances of such repression. This time the responsibility for deserting from the strike, rested on the AITUC President S.A. Dange.

This is the Foreward of the book
History of Railway Trade Union Movement
written by Com. Nrisinha Chakrabarty,
Secretary of CITU.

24

The Successful 15th March Bandh

THE 15th March Bharat Bandh shook the entire country. Reports coming from all States show that the success of the Bandh went far beyond what appeared in the press. They give a complete lie to the meretricious Congress(I) Government propaganda about the Bandh being a flop. The wave of unrest and protest went from state to state, from town to town, engulfing all the States from Assam to Kerala, from Punjab and Himachal Pradesh to Tamilnadu. The entire country in various ways voiced its demand for the resignation of Rajiv Gandhi Government and for fresh elections so that people can have the Government of their choice.

People from all walks of life joined the great protest paralysing the capitals of all states. Traders and shop keepers, workers, bank and insurance employees, transport workers teachers students and women all expressed their protest against the misery imposing policies of the Rajiv Government which condemn the people to unemployment, closures and which fleece the people through mounting high prices manipulated through deficit budget.

These were protests against police lawlessness, atrocities against harijans, against women, against intimidation of Muslim minority during the riots. They were demanding a fair deal to the peasants and agricultural workers, and end to the defrauding of the peasant through non-remunerative prices. They were denouncing the corruption of the Rajiv Government and finally indicting it as a Government of national disintegration, a government whose

policies erode and undermine the unity of the country.

Never before in recent years was there such an all pervading and all inclusive charge-sheet against the Government. Never before was there such a wide-spread response to the call for protest. The Bandh measured the rapidly growing isolation of the Rajiv Government from the people.

The Bandh and the response to it has great political importance. The call was given by the CPI(M) and other Left Parties—the CPI, RSP, FB and a number of opposition parties—the Janata, the Jan Morcha, Congress(S), the Lok Dal(A), the DMK, the TDP and was supported by Janaki AIADMK and the mass organisations of these parties. This combination represented the widest possible force coming from several sections, several parties uniting against the policies of Rajiv Gandhi and calling for his immediate resignation. The consolidation of the Left and secular unity, its strengthening will bring in new strength to the democratic movement for Rajiv's ouster and at the same time isolate the Hindu and Muslim communal forces. The demands put forward for the Bandh protest are capable of drawing in the widest section of toiling masses in the struggle for Rajiv's resignation. The Bandh with its powerful mass backing constituted a warning to opportunists who are only thinking of electoral flashpots and are prepared to join hands with the communal parties like the BJP in search of few votes. Opportunist bourgeois politicians should realise that the masses are on the move, there is a growing concern among them for maintenance of national unity and they would disown those who would break secular unity of democratic forces for joining hands with communal organisations. Only further joint mass actions isolating the ruling party and the communal forces will ensure the achievement of our immediate objective. The 15th March action must be followed by further mass initiative against Rajiv Gandhi's measures like the 59th Constitutional amendment which arms the Government to impose emergency at its will under the excuse of internal disturbance.

Left parties realise the importance of this unity and mass action and it is their responsibility to maintain and strengthen this unity of the democratic forces and secular political parties.

In the forefront of this great protest stood West Bengal and Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka and Tamilnadu. Tripura facing constant terror, imprisonment and intimidation made its contribution defying the disturbed area aparatus. Punjab, afflicted

by secessionists' terrorism saw unusual response, with shops, concerns and factories closing and huge meetings demonstrating the urge for Hindu-Sikh unity. Haryana notwithstanding the opposition of the BJP and Devi Lal gave a big response in the majority of the districts. Assam in spite of skulking of the AGP saw unusual scene of solidarity and unity. Bihar, Orissa, MP, Maharashtra and Gujarat all were in the field demonstrating the protest and unity of the people.

To hide its discomfiture the Rajiv Government and its media agencies, the AIR and Doordarashan resorted to lying propaganda announcing that the Bandh was a total failure except in West Bengal and Kerala.

The BJP, the outfit of the communal RSS joined in this lying campaign and claimed that its anti-strike and anti-Bandh efforts had caused the failure of Bandh in the capital. Buta Singh, Rajiv's Home Minister has learnt the art of lying and announced in the Parliament that the Bandh was a complete failure. He of course did not tell the Parliament how many people were killed, how many head were broken and how many women were assaulted by the guardians of law.

But the reality could not be concealed. The press published photographs showing closed shops and markets, empty streets and buses in Delhi and many places exposing the official lies of the Rajiv Government.

But the Rajiv Government had no intention of confining itself to non-violent lies. It backed its factory of lies by monstrous repression against the organisers of the Bandh. Never in recent times was the machinery of repression let loose in such an uninhibited manner all over India against a legitimate protest as on the 15th March and the days preceding it. The official figure of arrests is 7000 which is at total variance with the real figure. In Tamilnadu alone 40,000 were arrested by 15th of March. In the Bhavnagar and Bansda districts of Gujarat, where the Bandh was total, more than 2000 were arrested according to a Gujarat Daily with a circulation of 2 lakhs. Of these 500 were women. In Tripura the total arrests exceeded 2,500 including 100 women. In Delhi, Bihar, Assam, Orissa several thousands were arrested and the all India total may easily exceed one lakh.

Prominent leaders of several parties were put behind the bars. Comrade Nripen Chakraborty, Polit Bureau Member of the CPI(M)

and ex-Chief Minister of Tripura was arrested along with his former Ministers in Agartala. Central Committee Members and Secretaries of the State Committees of the CPI(M) from Assam, Orissa and Bihar were among those arrested along with leaders of other parties including the DMK in Tamilnadu. There were firing in Bihar and Assam killing several people. In Haryana the Government of Devi Lal launched several lathi-charges injuring more than 600 people. In the capital city of Delhi there were lathi charges and police beating of picketeers culminating in a cowardly police assault on women of the Janwadi Mahila Samiti and the CPI(M) in a police lock-up ending in injuries to several women, in a fracutred hand for Mrs. Karat. But the Government knew lathi charges and cowardly attacks on women will not deter the people from making the Bandh a successful protest. The ruling party therefore decided to call on its "volunteers" to physically intervene and fight the Bandh. This was an open call for physical assault and intimidation. And the "volunteers" were no volunteers inspired by higher ideals, but questionable elements having links with anti-socials. They were the same "volunteers" that were organised recently in Delhi to attack the lawyers on strike and ransack their offices. Their violent assaults were conducted in the presence of the police.

The extra-constitutional police force was let loose on the people in Delhi. They were given the badges of the Home Guards and they went in tempos and jeeps to intimidate the people and the picketeers. They saw to it that the picketeers were forcibly dispersed.

In Tripura these "volunteers" forced the shop keepers to open the shops which they had closed in response to the Bandh call. Some Ministers were also active threatening the shop keepers with dire consequences if their shops were closed. Pickets including women picketeers were beaten by these hired Congress volunteers in the presence of police. But nothing was of avail. The Bandh succeeded everywhere to the frustration of the Rajiv Government and despite the flood of lies spouting forth from the All India Radio and Doordarshan.

The trade unions and the workers played a very prominent role in the Bandh and they deserve congratulations. Rarely before was there such a massive participation of almost all trade unions and wide sections of workers for common democratic demands supported by several parties. The CITU, AITUC, UTUC, TUCC,

HMS, HMKP, trade unions led by DMK, organisations of Bank employees—AIBEA and BEFI, organisations of Insurance employees, organisations of public sector workers, guided by their coordination committees, the workers of Indian Airlines and Coal and Steel workers, all were in the forefront to make the Bandh a big success. The three day strike of public sector workers rallied lakhs of workers and contributed immensely to the success of the Bandh. In the main all constituents of the NCC with one or two exceptions worked enthusiastically for the Bandh. The unity of the trade union movement was maintained and strengthened in the cause and in the service of the democratic masses of our country.

The wide unity of all sections of trade union movement must be maintained, preserved and strengthened so that the entire working class is able to act in defence of national unity, of the democratic rights of the people, in defence of the peasantry, and finally to get rid of Rajiv Government. There were certain differences inside the trade union movement, but understanding the importance of the event they were circumvented and all joined together as a single army to support the demand for Rajiv's resignation and protect national unity. In the coming months this unity should be strengthened to launch greater and greater united action of the working class as well as action of the working class along with democratic masses of the country. Only through such widespread action the real unity can be developed, a unity which will be in a position to shape and influence the politics of the country in the interest of the working class and the common man.

19.3.88

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25

May Day And Immediate Task

May Day this year comes in the midst of rapid developments inside the working class, in the mass activity of the Indian people and a growing and powerful urge for trade union unity. It also comes in the midst of rapidly deteriorating policies of the Rajiv Government which, daily undermining the unity of the country, open it to the machinations of foreign imperialist conspirators. All these set the tasks for the immediate coming period for the CITU and the trade union movement as a whole.

The Jathas of November and December and the 9th December Rally, demanding resignation of Rajiv Gandhi and calling for redressal of several urgent demands were a visual demonstration of the strength of the mass organisations of the left parties, the CPI (M), CPI, CITU, Kisan Sabha, AITUC, agricultural workers' organisations, youth and students' organisations, the AIDWA and other women's organisations. It was a culmination of the Kisan actions of earlier months and the success was marked by spontaneous participation of the masses moved by oppression and anger. It is this strength of left unity that set the pace for subsequent development, the united call for the Bharat Bachao and Bharat Bandh of March 15.

The tremendous response to the March 15 call from all over the country was the product of broader unity, the association of secular opposition parties the Janata, the TDP, Congress (S), Jan Morcha, Lok Dal(A), DMK with the left parties. The magnificient

participation of the working class, of the contingents of public sector workers, of banks and insurance employees, of mercantile and electricity workers was a tribute to the growing unity of the trade union movement.

To preserve and consolidate this unity of the trade unions, to make it more and more impregnable and with its aid to consolidate the cooperation of the trade unions for a broader unity of secular parties is an important task following from recent developments. The CITU must be conscious of the urgency of this task. In the measure that this unity of the trade unions is consolidated and it learns to shape and influence the wider unity, to the same extent Rajiv Government and the Congress(I) can be isolated from the people.

At the same time the CITU and the advanced working class should not be blind to the inner weaknesses revealed in the process of 15th March. By and large the overwhelming mass of railway workers kept away from the March protest, an evidence of the low consciousness and the grip of the reformist leadership of the AIRF over the workers.

At a time when even the most recently organised and backward sections of the working class were enthusiastically responding to the call and facing victimisation and repression, an advanced section which has a tradition of decades of well organised unions, a history of battles in an earlier period, let down the people and the working class. Such is the disruptive and treacherous consequence of reformist outlook and policies. The same can be said of other Central Government employees whose leaders again succeeded in keeping them away from common action of the mass of people. The State Government employees except in the two states of West Bengal and Kerala played the same role. In Tripura of course, it was not possible to have mass action in face of terror unleashed by the Congress(I) Ministry.

May Day calls for greater unification of all sections of workers and employees so that all march together as a single contingent. It certainly is a matter of great concern if any section of the working class declines to respond to the call for protecting national unity, of helping the drought affected peasants, or for protection of women, against attacks on Harijans and for removal of a government which is daily disrupting the unity of the country.

The intervention of trade unions and left parties gave a new

orientation to the struggle for Rajiv's resignation. Earlier the demand was based only on charges of corruption in connection with the Bofors deal. This corruption was of course a matter of great nationjal concern because it was directly connected with the defence efficiency of the country. The matter got complicated when the scandal concerning the Submarine deal with West Germany burst out. But corruption alone could not shake the entire country. There were other grave issues facing the people—national unity, disintegration communal riots, rising unemployment, closures, drought, attacks on peasants, women, Harijans and minorities. There were problems connected with the economic functioning of the country, Rajiv's policy of liquidating the public sector, increased pressure of World Bank on our economy. Neglecting all these vital questions and concentrating only on corruption meant bypassing all class and national issues. The intervention of the left mass organisations of the trade unions, facilitated the task of mobilising large masses for the struggle for resignation and linked it with the sufferings of the masses under the capitalist path.

The trade union movement has to preserve and strengthen the unity achieved behind the charter of demands of 9th December Rally and 15th March Bandh. To the extent they succeeded, they will be successful in playing a role in activising wide popular unity of the common people backed by working class strength.

The two class lines regarding national unity, now stand clearly before the people. The line of the working class and the line of the bourgeois-landlord ruling party. In Punjab where the cadres of the CPI(M) and the CPI are shedding their blood to defend the integrity of the country against the secessionist terror, when thousands of Sikhs and Hindus responded to the 15th March call for Rajiv's resignation by assembling in big meetings, the Rajiv Government takes a surrenderist stand before the Khalistani secessionists, releases from the prison the originators of Khalistan slogan and tried to strike a deal with them. The result is there for all to see. The released reactionaries have reaffirmed their faith in Khalistan and the terrorists are encouraged to launch massive attacks and murders. The Central Committee of the CPI(M) recently very correctly described the Rajiv Govt as a government of national disintegration.

And now to crown its infamy the Rajiv Govt, has enacted the 59th Amendment Act which enables it to declare emergency in

Punjab any time. There was no necessity for such an act. What Punjab requires is not restriction of people's liberties as would happen under the emergency but the restriction on the activities of the terrorists, those operating from the Gurudwaras, for which the Govt has ample powers. But afraid of the terrorists, afraid of religious Akali fanatics and isolated from the people the Rajiv Govt stands paralysed before secessionist terrorism and every day loses the battle to the Khalistanis.

Fighting for the unity of the country means defeating this policy, rousing the working class and the people to the danger of disintegration, rousing national anger against Rajiv's policies. As in other countries, now in India also the working class has to lead the battle for unity when the bourgeois-landlord party is shrinking it. In Punjab, Assam and Darjeeling, the Congress(I) is nowhere seen in the battle to fight the secessionist attacks. In Darjeeling large number of CPI(M) and CITU cadres have been killed, their houses burnt, but the battle is on. The working class all over India has to learn and master this new responsibility to remain in the forefront for the battle for unity.

Recent development show larger and larger sections of people getting more determined to compel the Rajiv govt to resign. The Rajiv Govt seeks to curb their resolve by repression. March 15th saw, unheard of repression all over India. Nearly a lakh of people were arrested, 40 000 in Tamilnadu alone. There was firing in Assam, Bihar and other States. There were lathi charges by the police on women demonstrators. In Delhi women were beaten in police lock up. Alongwith this Congress (I) volunteers were asked to intervene and fight the people. These volunteers were mostly hired anti-socials, to terrorise and intimidate the people. It is clear, to keep itself in power, the Congress(I) will do anything including the suppression of people's rights. Proclamation of emergency in Punjab may enable it to prolong the term of the present Parliament packed with its dominees and deprive the people of all fundamental rights.

It has already demonstrated in Tripura how it intends it to deal with the people. Hundreds of people, tribals and others have been arrested on trumped up charges. They are charge-sheeted with criminal offences and collaboration with the TNV. Congress(I) hoodlums have forced hundreds to leave their homes and migrate to other places and states and at the same time the Cong(I) Ministry

is sueing for peace with the TNV terrorists. There must be continuous battle against these atrocities of the Congress(I) and against the 59th Amendment Act. The entire working class must demand an end to repression in Tripura.

During the course of 15th March campaign one important element of the situation was little emphasised and under-estimated. The US penetration in our economy, its penetration in our defence and the growing collaboration agreements spell great danger to our people and to our economic system. Along with this comes the increased pressure of the World Bank to remove economic controls, liquidate the public sector and transfer public sector concerns to private industrialist. Latest recommendation of the World Bank is that the public sector concerns in steel industry should be denationalised and handed over to the private sector. By and large the working class is ignorant of this danger. Only the pharmaceutical and chemical workers have taken fight against foreign multinationals. This weakness must be removed. All bourgeois parties turn a blind eye to this danger. The working class cannot but be vigilant about it.

For effective rallying of the working class to discharge the task placed before it by recent developments, it is essential that the trade unions accept responsibility for organising and voicing the demands of the vast mass of the unemployed. This is one of the many weaknesses of the trade union movement. It isolates it from the growing mass of the unemployed. This enables the ruling party and the ruling classes to use the unemployed against the common democratic and working class movement. The State Committees of the CITU in Kerala, Tamil Nadu and recently West Bengal have already taken steps to mobilise the unemployed and extend the process of working class unity. It is urgent that all State Committees take initiative in organising the battle of the unemployed.

Of course the coming months will see large sections of the working class poised for big struggles to secure their demand for wage rise and other urgent demands. The coal workers and many other sections of public sector workers have already gone on strike from 3 days to a week in support of their demands giving a clear warning to the government that the workers are determined to see that their grievances are redressed. Similarly in many other industries the workers are preparing for joint mass actions. These big struggles will be unfolded in the coming months and the entire

trade union movement must lend its full support to them to ensure these struggles and crush the resistance of the working class. The barbarous and repressive measures it has alopted to suppress the strike of Delhi Bus workers and the anti-trade union bill which it is bringing before the Parliament in this session clearly show that the Government is out for repressive measures against the working class. It is not only the working class, but every other section which is organising resistance, is being repressed and crushed by the Rajiv government. The lawyers' strike in Delhi was the direct result of police repression and use of goonda gangsters against the lawyer strikers. The fact that it continues for months in spite of severe repression and great cost and difficulties to the practising lawyers, shows the new defiant mood of the people. The CITU must understand the mood among the workers and unite in giving full expression to their sense of unity, organisation and militancy.

8.4.1988

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26

Questions Useful for The P & T Workers

[We are publishing hereunder an article written by Com. B.T. Ranadive, President of CITU, on the occasion of the 22nd state conference of the NFPTE held at Calicut from May 4-7, 1988—Ed.]

THE 15th March Bandh has raised pointed questions for the P & T Trade Union movement, for the entire movement of the Central Government employees. These questions are raised in relation to the struggle of the people of our country for national unity, for saving the country, for saving democracy against Rajiv's attack. Their conduct, except of the employees in Kerala and West Bengal constitutes a severe indictment of the opportunist policies pursued and leads to the disruption of the Trade Union movement.

The 15th March call was a call of almost all central trade unions and left and opposition parties to defend the unity of the country and demand Rajiv's resignation for pursuing policies subversive of national unity and democracy. It was a call transcending usual political party barriers and became a common call for national unity. It could be opposed only by the most loyal followers of Rajiv or the satellites of communal parties like BJP which opposed the call.

Because of the national appeal the call was enthusiastically responded to by wide sections of workers. Industrial workers, public sector workers, bank employees. LIC employees, Air Line workers, steel workers and coal miners, transport and electricity workers all rallied in an unprecedented sense of unity and protest.

There was lack of response from Railway workers, P & T and other Central Government employees. This is not to blame the workers, but to make them understand how their organisations working in collaboration with departmental heads, pitted the workers against the people, robbed them of all sense of democracy and participation and converted them into a selfish force. This is a tradition of the British days. The government employees of a foreign government were prevented from having the slightest sympathy for fellow Indians. They were treated as slaves, having no right of organisation, of strikes and above all no right to love their country and its people.

After 40 years of independence the same traditions continue. These years have seen prolonged struggles of all sections of workers. They have seen the P & T workers, the Railway workers and other Government employees waging a dour struggle for their immediate demands and sometimes by their organised efforts, they have been able to secure the demands and force the government to retreat. But inspite of these struggles, the idea of community of interest with the rest of the people, the mass of the peasantry, with other sections of workers and the democratic forces fighting for national unity against arbitrary moves of government, has not developed. The P & T workers and the Central Government employees as a whole have maintained themselves in a separate organisation very rarely co-operating with the major mass struggles of trade union workers and factory workers. Above all, they have refrained from joining any movement for defence of the political rights of the people. In the present situation when the country's unity is being assailed from all sides, when the secessional threat hangs over the country, the challenge of Khalistan from Punjab, of Gorkhaland from Darjeeling and the same challenge from Assam and other places, with repeated outbursts of communal riots in which the muslim minority is often hunted down in a most barbarous manner, is it ethical and moral for any section of the Indian people to stand alone from common struggles, to resist the attack on the unity and freedom of the people? This is in short the question that is forced by the 15th March developments before the P & T workers.

It is obvious that large number of people inside the trade unions may be having sympathetic ideas for Rajiv and his Government. But it is true at the same time that a considerable part, in fact

more than a majority of these sections, the P & T and the Central Government employees are not well disposed towards the Rajiv government and do protest against the policies pursued by it. But then why is it that even this majority refrained from joining this common protest in defence of democracy? The reason is not simply to be seen in the lead given by the existing leadership. But the reason lies in the narrow sectarian consciousness of large mass of P & T employees who think that as P & T employees and workers, as members of a common trade union, their business is only to defend their immediate interest and their unity has to be protected by remaining neutral and indifferent to the major political developments in the country.

When this question is raised the situation in the country must be taken into account. Perhaps the ordinary P & T employee does not realise the dangers assailing the country from all sides. It is not only the secessionist forces that are attacking the integrity of the country, and that these forces are backed by the might of US imperialism. The fact is, as days and months pass, the Indian Government is getting more and more influenced by the policies dictated by the World Bank. This means that there is every danger to the economic independence of our country. The latest demand of the World Bank is for privatisation of the entire steel industry and handing over the steel complexes to private industrialists like TATAs. Simultaneously there is a demand both from the World Bank and the multinationals on the Congress(I) Government to relax the existing labour legislations and introduce stricter discipline and permit computerisation and automation. The fact that the Rajiv Government is yielding to this pressure, shows that the Indian economy guided by the big bourgeois landlord interest is daily becoming non viable without growing help from outside and this help will now take the form of inviting the multi-nationals to directly invade the Indian market. Already certain sections of the Indian Industry are feeling themselves defrauded and being put to the wall. The most blatant case is that of the Indian Drug Industry which now stands the helpless victim of foreign drug multinationals. It is to the credit of the pharmaceutical and chemical workers that they have taken the fight against the invasion of the multinationals and are carrying out the fight against the new drug policy of the Rajiv Government. It is also to the credit of the public sector workers who last year organised an All India Strike protesting

against Rajiv Gandhi's policies of liquidating the public sector. These sections of workers have transcended their ordinary trade union and economic outlook and have taken up the question of protecting national interest and calling upon the Government to espouse a new policy both towards the multi-nationals and towards the public sector.

The question is that if the sections like P & T and Central Government employees remain insensitive to what is happening in the country, to the dangers inherent in the present situation, will they not be charged with dereliction of duty towards the people and the country? It is this question that has to be answered by the P & T and Central Government employees' trade unions. In fact they have to render explanation to the people of India where exactly they stand today in the common fight against the Rajiv Government, its anti-national policies and its ruinious economic policies.

The demand raised on 15th March related to the question of the growing impoverishment of the peasant, the defraudation of the peasant through non remunerative prices, the increasing unemployment in the country, the continued lock-out and closures of hundreds and thousand of factories and the anti unity policy pursued by Rajiv Government which daily succumbs to the force of obscurantism and religious reaction. Every person with patriotic and national feeling must fight for these demands and defeat the anti national policies pursued by the Rajiv Government. The millions of peasants, agricultural workers and industrial workers and employees who joined the 15th March Bandh would like to know whether the Central Government employees will always stand aloof from the common struggle, desert the common banner, or rely upon it, on remaining with the people to fight anti-national policies and demand an end to a rule which has done the biggest disservice to the Indian people, to their freedom. Notwithstanding the pull exercised by the present outlook, the P & T employees have to answer this question because another test is soon coming. The increasing massive discontent of the people against the policies of the Rajiv Government is going to burst in another huge mass agitation and the fighting masses this time will neither tolerate nor accept any desertion from their own ranks. The P & T employees have to prepare for this development and have to make up their minds in relations to this developing struggle.

How the situation is deteriorating is seen from the following:

In the name of "technological advance", the Indian Government has decided to encourage certain trans-national chemical corporations in their ambition to capture country's market for hybrid seeds and consolidating their position as suppliers of fertilisers and pesticides.

Four companies are making the pace : the Swiss-owned Sandoz Corporation (which recently bought up three hybrid seed manufacturers including the very well-known Northsop King concern) and three US-based trans-national corporations - Seedtech Inter-national, Cargill Incorporated, and Dehlgien Incorporated.

The threat to India's self-reliance and national sovereignty is considerable. Whoever controls the growing market for seeds, fertilisers and pesticides, not to mention the capital resources necessary to finance the rising cost of India's agriculture, also controls food production. A key politico-economic lever becomes available to foreign political and economic interests, particularly of course the chemicals and agro-business TNCs.

The Indian market for hybrid seeds is now worth Rs. 6000 million a year and it is fast expanding with 5.5 million quintals distributed annually, compared with only 600,000 ten years ago. The chemicals TNCs see in this an opportunity to make big profits, since the new varieties of hybrid seeds originally developed by India's own scientists, require a chemical coating in order to give "guaranteed" results.

There is widespread anxiety in scientific circles in India that the domination of the seed market by the TNCs will accelerate the process of "genetic erosion", whereby, as result of the indiscriminate introduction of hybrids by unregulated private laboratories, four-fifths of India's wheat and half of its rice varieties have already been lost. Motivated solely by considerations of maximising their super-profits, the TNCs are expected to aggravate the position, confirming the essentially negative impact of their role ever since the World Bank succeeded in making India dependent on imported fertilisers and pesticides as the price for its support to the strategy of "green revolution".

Other TNCs showing interest in India's hybrid seed market include Unilever, Imperial Chemical Industries and Hoechst of West Germany. The P & T employees must take note of this development.

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27

Forward to Further Victories

The result of the Lok Sabha and Assembly by-elections have gone against the Cong(I). While the Cong(I) has retained several of assembly seats, it has lost heavily in the Lok Sabha contest. All these were sitting seats of the Cong(I) won during the Indira wave with huge margins. Now the huge margin is earned by the opposition candidates. Such is the difference between 1984 and 1988.

Shri V.P. Singh, former Finance Minister of Rajiv Gandhi, who resigned from the Cong(I) and exposed the Bofors and Submarine deal scandals has secured an overwhelming victory in Allahabad with a margin of more than one lakh votes over his Congress rival. There are big margins in other constituencies also. Of great sigificance is the defeat of the Congress(I) in the Godhra Constituency in Gujarat. It could not have been possible without the Cong(I) loosing its solid base among the weaker sections of rural areas—the Harijans, Adivasis, the backward classes and the Muslims. This was the result of the oppurtunist policies of the Congress(I), which to retain the support and vote of these sections made inflated promises about reservation which could not be fulfilled. In recent months the Cong(I) Ministry was watering down its assurances to placate the opposition from landed interests and upper castes.

The elections were held in the background of a tense mass situation all over India which was leading to stormy protests at intervals. During the last four years a deep spontaneous discontentment was rising among the people following the consequences of Rajiv's economic policies, suppression of people, drought con-

ditions, raising unemployment and growing industrial sickness, woeful condition of the peasants and agricultural workers and the rising price level. Last year it came to head on several issues, the moment it was provided a proper democratic channel to express itself. The big kisan movement which saw three million peasants and agri-workers courting arrest, the 9th December rally demanding Rajiv's resignation and calling for defence of national unity and the defence of economic interests of the peasants, agricultural workers, the great 15th March bandh under the common call of the left and opposition secular parties which saw the huge participation of all public sector workers, expressed this deepening indignation. The demand for Rajiv's resignation was already carried to the mass of people during this agitation. It is in this background the elections were fought and mass mood was reflected in the rejection of the Cong(I).

The defeat of the Cong(I) is a big victory of democratic forces. It opens the way to further victories if the present victory is consolidated and proper lessons are drawn. The Cong(I) defeat shows that the ruling party is rapidly lossing the confidence of the electorate and has no right to continue in the Government. The demand for Rajiv's resignation must now be echoed all over the country.

The Cong(I) party, it must be noted, did everything to win the election by hook or by crook. It paraded the TV Star, Govil, the Rama of TV Ramayan serial in Allahabad to attract orthodox Hindu votes. In Allahabad the Cong(I) leaders seemed to have no other slogans than that of Ram Chandra kee Jai. In other constituencies also similar appeals were made. But the people refused to fall a victim to them. And at the eleventh hour in Allahabad the Chief Minister announced a grant of two crores of rupees for the benefit of the electorate. But this ruse also failed.

In its election campaign especially in Allahabad the Cong(I) had no political appeal to make, nothing to say on the question of importance to the people. It dared not defend Rajiv's policies nor reply to the charge of corruption in connection with Bofors and Submanrine deals.

How to consolidate this victory and defeat the Cong(I) in the coming election? This is the question before the people and the working class. The objective cannot be achieved if the bourgeois opposition parties mis-read the situation, attach exaggerated

importance to themselves and their unity and forget the ruling mass discontent. In the months to come there must be stronger and stronger links between the developing mass anger and secular opposition parties. This can be achieved by growing joint activities of secular opposition and left parties to defend the common interests of the masses and fight the divisive forces. The activities of the left parties, the activities of trade unions and other mass organisations must increase many fold to ensure victory for the people in the coming election. It is absolutely essential to immensely strengthen trade union unity and broaden it further. The achievements of the left front ministries of West Bengal and Kerala must be popularised all over the country. Equally important it is to denounce the authoritarian atrocities that have been perpetrated in Tripura and rally the people against the infamies of Cong(I) regime in that State.

The secular opposition parties must realise that in the coming election vital issues of policy will be raised. The economic policies of Rajiv Govt, challenge of divisive forces, the threat to national unity, the anti-working class policy of Rajiv Govt, the defrauding of the peasantry, all these will figure prominently in the coming battle. The communal and disruptive organisation will also be in the field to divide the democratic votes. In such a situation the opposition will have to take a forthright stand against communal forces. It will only undermine its credibility if it joined with communal parties or adopts an opportunist attitude towards them.

The coming battle will be a hard battle for the demorcatic forces. It can be won only by principled combination of left and secular opposition parties. The left parties and their mass organisations by uniting the people from below have to play a major role in this situation. Let all trade unions accept their responsibility and strengthen the unity of trade union movement for the victory of democratic forces. Let all unite larger and larger number of workers for demanding the immediate resignation of Rajiv Gandhi and fresh poll so that the people can have a government of their choice.

22.6.1988

The Working Class, Vol. 17, No. 11 July 1988

28

A New Step Forward in Trade Union Unity

THE 14th July Convention called by the National Campaign Committee to protest against the new Trade Unions and Industrial Disputes Amendment Bill and Hospital Employees Bill registered a new step in increasing the ambit of trade union unity and drawing in a common front sections hitherto not involved in joint struggle. The unions and federations of industrial workers and middle class employees participated with usual enthusiasm and unity. But a distinguishing mark of the convention was the new participants including professors, teachers, men of science and nurses and other hospital workers. Certain trade union organisations which were hitherto not a part of the all India movement led by the NCC also participated in the convention and added strength to the sense of developing unity.

It is but natural that the appeal for unity should attract larger and larger sections as the offensive of the employers and the Government increases. The two bills challenge the very basis of free independent trade union movement and attack the right to strike. They were bound to evoke the unanimous protest from all sections of the working class. The NCC must be congratulated for taking the initiative in time and starting the process of united campaign against the two measures. It has called for countrywide demonstration against this anti-working class measures on 27th July and there is no doubt that its call will be enthusiastically responded to by the entire trade union movement.

The speakers at the Convention condemned the Hospital and Other Employees Bill as a measure imposing servitude on the employees, deprive them of all trade union rights and subject their living conditions to the mercy of their employing agencies. It is an act which militates against the fundamental right of organisation and makes an employee an appendage of the management. It is a digraceful measure and the Lok Sabha will stultify itself if it accepts it.

The Trade Unions and Industrial Disputes Amendment Bill is a measure which is forthright in its attack against the workers. There is no prevarication, no slurring of intention but a shameless offensive against the workers to cripple their organisation and strength. By prescribing conditions for registrations like membership of 10 per cent of the work force the measures seeks to virtually illegalise many trade unions and prevent the gradual emergence of independent and fighting unions. This is necessary for the Government and the employers because day by day the organisations recognised by them are losing their hold over the workers. The young and militant sections are leaving them. By introducing the new legislation the Government seeks to deprive the disillusioned workers of a rallying point which can gradually become a powerful representative centre of working class resistance.

In relation to recognition also the bill refuses to accept secret ballot of workers and instead provides for check off. In Indian condition to force the worker to declare his preference for a union before the authorities is bound to lead to vitimisation when a worker prefer a fighting union to a pliant organisation.

The refusal to accept the proposal of recognition through ballot reveals that the Government has scant regard for protection of industrial peace. It is quite clear that unions who have authority of the majority of the workers through secret ballot can alone sign agreements which will be acceptable by the workers and observed in practice. By recognising only pliant unions who have no credibility with the mass of workers, the Government is only legislating for industrial disturbance and not protecting peace. It is a repeated experience that agreements signed by such unions are not honoured by the workers and industrial disputes continue to multiply because of this.

The institution of Industrial Relation Commission is intended to stifle all independent direct action of workers. It is an instrument

in the hands of the Government used to snuff out all resistance when the employers and administration think it necessary. The right to strike is further crippled and virtually negated by the provisions that the bargaining agent alone can declare strike if the proposal is supported by 75 per cent of its members. Severe punishment is provided for so-called illegal strikes and Government officials are permitted to intervene in the internal affairs of the union. The workers' right to choose and elect their leaders is being denied with the proviso of limiting the number of 'outsiders' in a union. Under the definition of outsiders victimised worker will have no place in the union.

The State Ministers—two left front Labour Ministers from Kerala and West Bengal and the Janata Labour Minister from Karnataka have expressed themselves against the Trade Unions and Industrial Disputes Amendment Bill. The Ministers who addressed the convention said in a joint statement, "By the Bill unfettered right has been given to the employer to declare lock out, whereas the workers' right to strike earned through decades of struggle and sufferings has been virtually taken away.

Enthusiastic and pointed speeches were made by the speakers from various organisations including the representatives of the nurses. Some of these organisations which have much bigger membership than many constituents of the National Campaign Committee, left no doubt about the earnestness, fighting mood and the organisational preparations of the participants. They expected a call for direct action, a date for organisation of protest strike from the Conference. Such a call with a fixed date would have galvanised the situation and activised the industrial areas of the country to move forward to action. It would have helped tremendously the gathering agitation of Kisans, all India agitation of peasants and agricultural workers for their immediate demands, an agitation organised by number of mass organisations. The combination of the two would have produced an electric effect on the economic and political situation in India. It would have strengthened the demand for resignation of the Rajiv Government like the united 15th March Bandh and the 9th December rally. It is a pity that the NCC failed to turn the fighting mood and contented itself with the call for demonstration. The NCC till now has made great contribution to the organisation and development of trade union unity. It should not commit such mistakes in judging the mood of the

masses.

It is necessary to note another thing. The meeting of the Convention was suddenly declared closed by the Presidium at about 3 p.m. when the hall was still near full and a number of delegates wanted to speak and sent their names. The representatives of organisations coming from far off places should not be treated as of no consequences. The NCC should realise that they have to function as the guardian of the democratic rights of the participants.

However, now a heavy responsibility rests on the shoulders of the NCC. It has taken upon itself the task of organising an effective all India protest strike against the two measures. The sooner it comes out with a date the better for the movement.

The CITU and its working class must remember that the attack through the two measures is a part of the growing attack on the democratic forces. The Rajiv Government has launched a campaign of terror in Tripura to curb the strength of the CPI(M) and the Left Forces. The Tripura Ministry has cancelled the registration of several CITU unions. Inhuman atrocities are being perpetrated on the people especially on the tribals. Women organisations have protested against the gang rape of tribal women. Hundreds of people have been arrested and charged with criminal offences. Pressed by the economic situation and the World Bank, eager to clear the ground for investment by the multi-nationals, the Rajiv Government is attacking the workers and seeks to crush their organisations. Keeping in view the coming elections it seeks to create illusions among the rural masses by advertising its anti-poverty programmes; it seeks to entrap women votes by talking about women's development; and in the cities it supports lock-outs, closes taken over mills and enacts new measures to attack the workers. The rural mass is suffering most under its hypocritical policy and the harijans got a taste of Congress(I) insincerity when the Rajasthan Govt banned their entry into the Nathdwara temple. The attacks against workers are part of the attack against the people of India and should be understood and fought as such.

23.7.1988

The Working Class, Vol. 17, No. 12, August 1988

29

Express Solidarity With The Peasant Masses

INDIA'S peasants and agri-workers are on the move. Following the historic rally in the capital on December 9 last year the peasants' and agri-workers' organisations led by the left parties took a decision on April 15 this year to organise wide-spread agitation for their demands in September. The first half of this month would be devoted to organisations of direct actions in one form or another. Picketing, gheraos, dharnas, rasta-roko, jail bharo, occupation of waste lands, and surplus lands campaigns—these will be the forms of direct action.

The peasants and agri-workers in this campaign will be raising the demands for land reform, remunerative prices for the peasants' produce, reduction of prices of inputs and taxes, a proper public distribution system, debt relief, minimum wages for agricultural workers, jobs for unemployed and end to atrocities on scheduled tribes and scheduled castes. They will voice their determination to fight against divisive, communal and secessionist forces.

It is a matter of great importance for the present democratic struggle and for the progress of the struggle for people's democracy that the peasants and agri-workers are forging all India unity to fight for their demands. Without such common action and unity neither the demands of peasantry nor the demands of agri-workers can be realised. Without it the slogan of an agrarian revolution will remain a cry in the wilderness.

The working class and all democratic forces must congratulate the left parties and their mass organisations for taking steps to build this unity in action. Sometimes divergent interests, caste and communal barriers prevent the unity of the two sections. If the September agitation puts this unity on a permanent basis it will be doing a splendid job in the service of the agrarian and democratic revolution.

The peasants and agri-workers of India have borne the main burden of the capitalist path. The miseries which the working class is facing today due to closures, lock-outs, wide-spread unemployment, has been a chronic feature of the rural area where huge masses are thrown into utter destitution with no jobs, no security of income. The peasant labour in the field is generally denied adequate return and sometimes it produces hardly any return. His house-hold budget is always a deficit budget throwing him more and more into the arms of traditional money lenders. Its is like a worker not getting his pay after a year's hard labour. Only difference is that this is a constant and chronic feature of the rural area. This is nothing but a deliberate defrauding of the Indian peasants and agri-workers to run the capitalist economy.

The low return for the peasants' produce, food grains and commercial crops is a necessary condition to keep the factory's wage bill at a low level and ensure high profit. The low return for commercial crops is necessary for the same purpose. The peasant doomed to this unending misery so long as the capitalist path continues, unless backed by the workers' movement is able to smash the official callousness and secure a better deal for himself.

The Indian peasant lost the battle in the years immediately following independence. He was cheated when the landlord abolition acts were passed. He was cheated when the Ceiling Acts were enacted. Once more he was cheated when the Tenancy Acts were passed to restrict the landlord's rent. These various acts in fact led to mass eviction of the peasants from the land. The law of capitalist path, the law of capitalist society that the mass of small producers must be growingly deprived of their means of subsistence is operating in India with unprecedented ferocity.

As a result, concentration of land increased. With it, concentration of money power and in some states, of water resources increased. Land reforms dropped from Congress vocabulary. The peasant was eliminated and the farmer replaced him in official pro-

grammes and states.

The utter hypocrisy of the Cong(I) regime in relation to the peasantry, its hypocrisy in relation to poverty alleviation programme, stands completely exposed with the failure of the Government to distribute surplus land. Inspite of millions of acres of surplus land being available and in possession of the Govt., only a very small proportion has been distributed. Only 4.40 million acres have been distributed of which 30 per cent are accounted for by the left front governments of West Bengal and Kerala.

Forty years of independence have been a fiery ordeal for the agricultural workers also. Landless, deprived of land and any other means of persistence, faced with stark unemployment for the better part of the year, unprotected by any all-India legislation for his wage, it is difficult to distinguish between a destitute and agri-worker in many states. Only where his organisations are strong or where he is protected by the left front Governments, his condition is somewhat better. In many places he is just a bonded labourer and nothing else. The Rajiv Government for fear of offending the landed vested interests refuses to enact legislation guaranteeing minimum wage for him.

Radical land reforms, redistribution of land, end of land and water resources monopoly, accompanied by all India wage legislation for agri-workers constitute a pre-condition for rescuing the rural masses from their present miseries. This has to be followed by Governmental obligation to give remunerative jobs to the needy or adequate unemployment relief till the job is made available.

The rural masses besides are defrauded through increased taxes, high prices and inadequate remuneration for their produce. A substantial part of their income is appropriated by the money lenders whom they owe huge debt. Out of a total rural debt of 15,000 crores of rupees, debt of as much as 6,000 crores of rupees is supplied by the traditional money lenders, who charge usurious rate of interest. The peasant has to sequester a substantial part of his hard earned income to meet the claims of the usurious sharks without whom he cannot run next year's production. This is a bizarre comment on Government claims about rural advance, green revolution, self sufficiency in food production, etc.

It is against these atrocious conditions the peasants and agri-workers are raising the banner of revolt. It is a banner of revolt against the policies of Rajiv Government, policies which defend the

interests of the capitalist and landlord classes. The peasant is confronting Rajiv Government on issues most vital to him and the Indian people. He is protesting against his fraudulent defraudation. He is protesting against the bonded status of agricultural workers. He is protesting against the inhuman brutalities perpetrated by the landed interests and Govt. agencies against the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, atrocities like Jehanabad massacres. He is calling for closing the ranks of the people and is raising his voice against the divisive and secessionist forces and for communal harmony, national unity and integrity.

The agitation promises to be the widest confrontation of the Indian people with the corrupt, inefficient, disruptive and anti-democratic Rajiv Government. Its success and consolidation will immensely strengthen the demand for Rajiv's resignation.

While oppositional bourgeois politicians and their parties engage in endless wranglings about forging unity against the Cong(I), while some of them regale the people with plans of sharing the loaves and fishes of office, the peasants and agri-workers are entering the firing line on behalf of entire Indian people.

The working class movement, the CITU, all its trade unions, all federations of industrial workers and employees, must unitedly lend their full support to the demand of peasants and agri-workers. The struggle of the working class against the proposed trade union legislation should be combined with full support to the peasant agitation. It will tremendously help the cause of workers and peasant unity if the contemplated strike against the trade union legislation is organised during the fortnight of the peasant agitation. In any case all CITU unions must be fully activised in the first half of September supporting and participating in the various forms of direct action holding meetings, conventions, rallies and demonstrations. Let our trade unions demonstrate their full mass strength in support of peasantry and agricultural workers making it clear to the ruling classes that the organised trade union movement stands fully behind the agitating peasants.

The support to the peasants and agri-workers' agitation is not just a demonstration of solidarity and sympathy with them. It is part of the working class endeavour to build a powerful workers' and peasants' alliance in the cause of agrarian revolution and supporting the demand of the agricultural workers. Without this

alliance the present social set-up cannot be changed, the bourgeois-landlord classes cannot be ousted from power. The achievement of a Peoples Democratic state cannot be ensured and the way cannot be opened for socialist society freeing the Indian masses from all exploitations.

16.8.1988.

The Working Class, Vol. 18, No. 1, September 1988

30

Presidential Address

General Council Meeting of CITU
Dhanbad, September 23 - 25, 1988

Comrades,

At the beginning I offer my homage to the memory of Comrade P.R., founder of our CITU and the first General Secretary. Months have passed since his demise, but the poignancy of the loss has not lessened and day day it is becoming clear that the void created by his passing away cannot be easily filled in. Comrade P.R. was one of our historic link with the infant period of the trade union movement and the earlier period of our national struggle. He embodied in his activities and consciousness the deep experience of both these movements together with deep Marxist-Leninist awareness. Comrade P.R. played a unique role in building the anti-imperialist, the working class movement and the communist movement in our country.

I pay my homage to the memory of Comrade Krishnapada Ghosh, member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and the leader of the trade union movement and the CITU.

Comrades,

On behalf of the CITU I express our solidarity with the victims of earthquake which shook Bihar last month. Thousands of houses have collapsed. Tens of thousands have been rendered homeless. There has been severe loss of lives. This was the severest earthquake experienced by the state since the earthquake of 1934. The CITU condemns the attempts to belittle the extent of ravages done

by the quake and calls on the Central and State Govt's. to spare no efforts in relieving the distress of the affected people. All our trade unions should do their best to send relief to the affected districts. On behalf of the CITU I express our solidarity with the flood affected people of Assam where perhaps the death toll may run into hundreds and distress and misery may affect millions. Let all men of good will and all our trade unions do all that is possible to relieve the misery and distress of the people in Assam. The CITU express its sympathy and solidarity with the flood affected people of West Bengal. There is no doubt that the left front Govt is doing everything possible to meet the situation. The trade unions in West Bengal are also in the forefront to help the affected people.

Comrades,

The events since our last Chandigarh meeting have revealed the great danger of authoritarian attack against our people and our democratic rights. The 59th Amendment Act passed by the ruling party holds the sword of emergency over the entire country; falsification of Tripura election and the terror regime established in that small state and the inhuman lethal attack on Com. Nripen Chakrabarty constituted another grave warning that the ruling party led by Rajiv Gandhi will observe no constitutional norms to suppress the democratic forces in order to remain in power; and lastly the new Defamation Bill to throttle the voice of the press and suppress exposure of financial scandals touching the highest in the administration and prohibiting the exposure of danger to the security of the country involved in corrupt defence deals have evoked justified and mighty wave of protest all over the country. There is no doubt that the Government is afraid of this united action and indignation of editors, journalists, press workers, leaders of public opinion and all political parties and it is preparing to retreat. If the popular resistance continues and gathers strength, the Congress(I) government will be forcedto withdawthebill. But these three measures are not the only weapons to scuttle democracy and prepare for one party rule. The new anti-trade union bill prepared by the government is intended to attack collective bargaining, trade union freedom and the right to strike. It is an offer to foreign multinationals, which are being woed by the government, assuring them that the field will be cleared for their exploitation of the workers and their profits will be completely safeguarded. This trade union bill together with the hospital employees bill which

also bans strikes constitute new attacks on the liberty of the mass movement and the struggle of the working class. They are intended to scuttle the basic democratic rights of the people and should be considered by all sections as an attack on the fundamental rights of freedom of organisation and strike. The unity that is witnessed on the question of the Defamation Bill should be maintained to fight the other two bills so that the democratic rights of all sections of the people are protected unitedly.

When we talk about democratic rights of the people, the trade unions, the working class and all democratic forces must strongly bear in mind that so far as the common man in India's rural areas is concerned he stands deprived of every democratic right and has to face every day the collusion between the police, landlords' gangs and dacoits. Democracy in India is more and more reduced to the formal right to vote every five years without any control over the bureaucracy or the State. The State of Bihar is a classic instance where landlord gangs indulge in free murders of agricultural worker, harijans, adivasis and the most exploited strata of the rural masses. The repeated massacres of Harijans in Bihar are never followed by any punitive measures against those guilty of the monstrous crimes. On the other hand those who have the courage and the conscience to protest against these barbarous inhuman acts are promptly arrested and even charged with all kinds of criminal offences. I have in mind the case of Virodhi, the Hindi poet, who is now in jail charged with serious offences for daring to protest against the murder of innocents. Of course, he resorted to the extraordinary method of blackening the face of the Chief Minister which only showed the emotional anger of a well-meaning poet. All men of goodwill and entire trade union movement should demand immediate release of Virodhi and ask the Bihar Government not to stultify itself by launching criminal prosecution against the poet.

The Bihar Congress(I) government and the Bihar administration has become a by-word for complete maladministration, corruption and landlord domination all over the country. The CITU at this General Council Session must strongly denounce the atrocities against the Harijans and adivasis and call upon the entire working class movement to raise its mighty voice of protest against the misdeeds of police and landlords in the state. No other state perhaps has witnessed a mass dismissal of University Vice-chan-

cellors to appease the political appetite of a few ministers. Even the audit, the Central Audit Commission of the Government of India had to denounce the Bihar Government for its total negligence towards obtaining the release of bonded labourers and their rehabilitation.

Comrades,

The General Secretary's Report refers to the attack of divisive forces and the urgent necessity to fight them. The working class of our country and the trade union movement, even now do not recognise the seriousness of the challenge coming from the communal, divisive and secessionist forces. Behind this challenge stands the hand of imperialism out to re-enslave our country. The Khalistani terrorists, it is known, are trained and financed from abroad and the government of India repeatedly mentions Pakistan in this connection, when the real culprit is US imperialism. But very few in our country including the bourgeois opposition parties really recognise this danger. The same divisive forces create trouble between Hindus and Muslims to smash the concept of Indian unity, to smash the consciousness that we are first Indians. They also seek to destroy the solidarity and unity of the working class and the toilers irrespective of religion and caste. The RSS communalists and the Muslim fundamentalists, whatever may be their pretensions about culture or religion only play the game of dividing the people and serve the cause of imperialism. The CITU is committed to fight this menace and save our nation and its unity. Its leaders and cadres are fighting the Khalistani secessionists in Punjab and sacrificing their lives. The tea garden workers rallying under its banner in Darjeeling fought the Gorkha secessionists and the same is true of our CITU cadres in Assam and Tripura. But this fight against divisive forces is to be carried by the entire trade union movement and not by the CITU alone. It should be the duty and privilege to see that the increasing influence of CITU and its unions unite the entire trade union movement to defeat the divisive forces and strengthen and maintain national unity.

A significant victory has been won in this fight against divisive forces with the signing of the Accord between the leaders of the agitation and the West Bengal and the Central Government. It is an important victory won for the cause of national unity, won because of a correct policy adopted by the Left Front Government of West Bengal led by the CPI(M). The Left forces in West Bengal did not

put exclusive reliance on the law and order machinery knowing that vast sections of masses were for the time being affected by the secessionist appeal. While using the administrative machinery to curb the mischief of the disruptors they carried on political agitation to win over the masses. They braved physical attacks from the secessionists and also sacrificed their lives and at the same time they showed full preparedness to meet the genuine demands of the people arising out of the backward conditions created by the capitalist path. It is this combination of correct democratic approach towards the masses and use of administrative power towards the disruptors and leaders and that in the final analysis enabled the people to score a victory over the divisive forces. It should be noted in this connection, the Congress(I) organisation in West Bengal remained a mere spectator in this great fight, sometimes even supporting the secessionists' scandals against the Left Governments. In fact it had earlier hoped to reap some political advantage while backing the separatist agitation but realised that it would discredit itself completely if it did so. A major political party which refuses to play any active role and defending national unity against secessionists reveals its bankruptcy and its total incapacity to run the government of the country.

We should also note that because of its bankruptcy and the selfishness that the Punjab problem continues to evade democratic solution. Today because of the continuous murders of innocent men at the hands of the Khalistani secessionists they stand completely isolated from the people. But the Congress(I) Party is unable to take advantage of the situation and inspire the confidence of the mass of people to fight the terrorists. It therefore chooses to rely on one or the other suspicious groups of Akali communalists working hand in hand with the terrorists.

These developments impose certain tasks on the CITU and the trade union movement, the task of defending national unity, isolating all communal forces exposing the game to oust the Congress(I) from power. In this struggle the CITU and the trade union movement find most reliable ally in the Left parties and the Left forces whom they must continuously support. It is necessary for the trade unions to defeat the conspiracies of the Congress(I) party against the two Left Front Governments, West Bengal and Kerala and popularise the various measures they have taken to defend the interests of the people. It is all the more necessary to

defend the trade union movement and the people of Tripura now under the terror regime of Congress(I). All over India our CITU and affiliated unions must fully expose the suppression of democracy and the Left forces in Tripura and rally popular opinion in support of the working class and people of Tripura.

Comrades,

The months since our Chandigarh meeting have witnessed an enormous deterioration in the economic and industrial situation forcing thousands of our workers to undergo suffering and misery beyond measures. The jute and textile and engineering industries have borne the burnt of this spreading misery. At the same time more than 1.5 lakhs small industrial concerns have become sick and lakhs have been deprived of their jobs. Traditional industries like handloom, coir and others have further witnessed intensified misery.

Our CITU express the deep sympathy and solidarity with the workers of jute and cotton textile industries and of the small industrial concerns. It is a fact that the crisis is of such a dimension that mere trade union agitation could do very little to prevent its consequences. It shows the helplessness of the working class and the people without political power in their hands to meet the onslaught of the property owners and profit gatherers supported by the government. The cotton textile crisis at least can be easily solved if enough purchasing power is put in the hands of the people especially in the rural mass. At least 27 crores of Indian people have very little to do with the market, purchase and sale. That is how national income is distributed in India. All the profits of green revolution, increased agricultural production are siphoned by big landlords and landed interests creating a crisis in demand. In Bihar where old feudal relations reign supreme you will find landlords having hundreds of acres of land. They treat peasants and agricultural workers worse than bonded labourers, even slaughtering them whenever they protest. What chance has market and textile industry when such a situation exists? In jute industry a similar situation exists with so many mills closed. The Central Government adds to the crisis by encouraging the use of artificial fibre endangering the living conditions of both jute growers and jute workers. In the cotton textile industry also there is encouragement for the use of man-made fibre to make the industry independent of the supply of cotton from the cotton growers. This need to

promote man-made fibre both in jute and cotton textile industry arises out of the needs to export Indian goods. Both the cotton and jute growers and the workers are ruined.

Comrades,

The period since our meeting at Chandigarh has seen further accentuation of the misery of the working class, accentuation of the attack of lock-outs, closures and increased loss of jobs with the bourgeois-landlord government sitting on its haunches or contributing further to our misery. The situation promises to worsen further unless Rajiv's policies of economic management are defeated.

These policies are leading India into a foreign debt-trap with the danger of abject dependence of our economy on recurring foreign loans. We shall soon be forced to borrow more exclusively to pay old loans like our indebted peasants with no escape route whatsoever. The foreign debt has mounted to more than Rs. 50,000 crores and the debt service ratio has risen to 24 per cent, beginning of a debt trap. 20 per cent ratio is considered to be a safe limit though many years back the World Bank and the economists used to give warning signals when the ratio exceeded 6 per cent. Every year our need for foreign loans seems to invite further onerous conditions from the World Bank and the foreign investors. Day by day concessional aids from World Bank and governmental sources are decreasing and the country is being forced to raise foreign commercial loans which charge very high interest rates resulting in heavy increase in debt obligation. These developments distort the perspective of Indian economy and sacrifice everything including workers' wage and employment to the need for exports. Now the purpose behind the economic and industrial advance is not so much the welfare of the workers, increased national income, increased employment to the people, increased good for public distribution among the people, but increased exports to make debt repayments, increased products to satisfy the demands and needs of people abroad and that too at the lowest rate and cheapest prices. This priority for debt repayment and exports over the immediate interests of the Indian people expresses the dependence of our economy on foreign countries. It is because of this that cotton textile industry, mills providing finer varieties for exports are doing well and the exports of Indian cloth are increasing whereas the majority of the mills providing for the needs of the common man are

languishing. The NTC mills are running at a loss and the workers are threatened with new closures. Many mills are already closed. The textile crisis is mainly due to the robbery of the peasants by governmental taxation, landlords and money-lenders exploitation, manipulations of prices, enforcement of adverse terms of trade on the peasant and lack of economic protection to the agricultural workers. With the addition of widespread drought last year, the purchasing power of the rural masses was further reduced. The peasant was unable to buy foodgrains concentrated in government godowns. How could he buy cloths?

The danger of debt-trap is accompanied by an adverse balance of payments position. Debt-payments, imports bill all have increased with great speed while exports lag behind. Foreign exchange reserves have come down and crossed the danger mark. Any sudden upset in the international trade, price crisis development in connection with the oil may throw the entire economy out of gear throwing fresh burdens on the people, increasing unemployment and closures.

Side by side with this the liquidation of public sector, handing over all profitable units to private parties including foreign concerns continues. The workers of BEL have launched a protest against the Central Governments bid on BEL Taloja unit into a joint sector. According to the representatives of workers the unit was doing well but the government has chosen to sell its shares to a private company with only 20 per cent of the shares to be retained by the BEL. After transferring majority of the shares to the private, the concern does not remain a joint concern but becomes a private concern. It is to be noted that the shares are being transferred to an American multinational company. This is not only privatisation but handing over vital strategic concerns to foreigners selling safety and security of the country. Rumours circulating about this deal allege that the American company is in alliance with an Indian company which is owned by people who have got very thick relations with the highest in the Cabinet. The liquidation of public sector in India has this meaning. It is not a question of choosing between socialism and capitalism but one of choosing between independence versus dependence of economy. The public sector in India was built with the aid of socialist countries and mostly in strategic industries without developing which India would have been abjectly dependent on Western capitalist countries. It is

because of this that the World Bank wishes to destroy it. It is openly demanding that the entire steel industry should be handed over to the private sector. Rajiv's obliging policy destabilises our economy and in the bargain hands over the workers at the mercy of the foreign multinationals or Indian capitalists. The foreigners, besides demand scuttling of labour protection legislation, curbs on strikes, on trade union rights and collective bargaining. The anti-trade union bill prepared by the Rajiv Government is an assurance to foreign capitalists that labour will be curbed and their profits will not be endangered. Both national interest and the minimum interest of the workers are at stake and the policy must be fought unitedly with firmness by the entire trade union movement. But the INTUC as yet refuses to join hands with us to save the country and its economic independence. The trade union movement cannot be said to have given its deep thought to the problem of fighting the basic policies of Rajiv Government. While the workers and their organisations are taking it easily new collaboration agreements with foreign companies are being arrived at jeopardising the country's future. At the end of August it was reported in the press that foreign collaboration approvals during the first six months of the current calendar year showed a substantial increase in the tie ups with Japan. West Germany, UK and the Non-resident Indians compared to those for the whole of 1987. In all during January-June this year as many as 450 foreign collaborations were approved against 853 for the whole of 1987. What is of interest, however, the press said, is the fact that there has been a sudden spurt in collaboration with Japan and West Germany. This is attributed to the fast channel opened by the Union Government. In need of foreign capital from any quarter India has now approached the two affluent capitalist economies for aid.

The policy of import liberalisation which was announced with great fanfare and was supposed to improve the competitiveness of Indian industry abroad and promote more exports has produced contrary results increasing our dependence and endangering many Indian concerns. It is clear that it was accepted under duress, under World Bank pressure and had very little to do with protecting Indian interest or Indian economy.

Comrades,

It is in conditions of increased accentuation of the situation with nearly two lakh concerns big and small going on the sick list,

in conditions of extreme anxiety and uncertainty of retaining jobs that our working class has been waging heroic battles through strikes, through struggle against lockouts to protect its interests and above all its organisation. It had often to wage a dogged and courageous fight against victimisation of trade union leaders. The following figures shows the prolonged character of the courageous fight of the workers.

Year	No. of strikes	Mandays lost due to strike
1985	8,77,945	11,486803 (11.4 million)
1986	14,44,397	18,823648 (18.8 ")
1987	14,94,613	14,026522 (14.0 ")
1988 (Jan-May)	4,63,225	6,401549 (6.4 ")

Eight to fourteen lakhs of workers came into action in the midst of adverse circumstances and carried on a prolonged fight braving hunger and starvation. In 1986 and 1987 the figure of striking workers is nearly double that of year 1985 and the number of mandays lost also increased by 30 to 60 per cent. In January-May, 1988 the strikes seem to have become more prolonged comparing the number of strikes with the mandays lost.

But this does not end the story of the heroism of the working class. It had to face the intensified offensive of the employers in the shape of lock-outs, to break down its resistance. The lock-outs show how protracted was the struggle of the working class to protect itself from defeat.

Year	No. of workers involved in the lock-out	Mandays lost in lock-out
1985	2,00,856	1,77,52,663 (17.7 million)
1986	2,00,485	1,39,24,580 (13.9 million)
1987	2,75,716	2,14,51,733 (21.4 million)
1988 (Jan-May)	79,243	40,48,239 (4.0 million)

With less number of workers involved in lock-outs compared

with the number in strikes, the loss of mandays in lock-outs is much higher than during the strikes this period. In 1985 two lakh workers were involved but the mandays exceeded 17 million. In the same year the number of workers involved in strikes was 4 times the number involved in lock-outs, but the loss was only 11.4 million days. In two years the mandays lost due to lock outs are more than the total loss of mandays in strikes. The lock-outs have become a weapon of class coercion.

While the courageous and united fight of the working class is matter of great pride for our CITU unions which have stood by them to the last, we owe it to the workers to ensure that our conduct of our struggles is flexible enough to ensure needed relief to the fighting workers. Closures and lock-outs, when they continue for months and threaten to drain away the last drop of working class resistance, demand flexible tactics to save the organisation, the fighting spirit of the workers and save as much of their gains as possible. For want of such tactics an appreciation of the situation, lack of understanding of the depth and gravity of offensive, there are some instances of trade unions getting isolated from the workers who are often forced to sign agreements with the managements by-passing their organisation. The workers are often driven to this position because they see no end to their miserable plight with the current tactics of some of our leaders. In these circumstances workers are forced to accept adverse terms, forced to retreat, in fact, often accept total defeat. But if in the circumstances of a retreat the unity of the workers is kept, their faith in organisation remains, then inspite of some of adverse economic terms, the battle is said to have been won. The leadership has to understand the strength of the resistance, mood of the workers and adopt flexible tactics which keeps the class together.

It is true that reformists of all hues take the first opportunity of accepting adverse compromises facilitating plans of retrenchment, pleading that under crisis conditions retreat is essential and inevitable. Their tactics are intended to facilitate the employers' offensive. The CITU on the other hand relies on the workers' strength and resistance and tries to get as favourable a bargain as possible in the most difficult circumstances. In the absence of combining militant resistance with flexible approach based on the resistance capacity of the workers false illusions are created among the workers and they are inveigled into disastrous agreements and are

often robbed of their provident fund earnings in the bargain. Both the Government and the employers often hold out rosy prospects for workers' cooperatives agreeing to run a closed concern. They are also tempted to purchase company's shares using their lives' savings. The workers do not understand that a workers' cooperative is no match against the crisis conditions. Ranged against it in the competition are financial giants supported by the government. On many occasions the workers may be forced to surrender some of their earlier gains accepting wage freeze, workload, freezing of DA etc., but they should be protected against handling over their provident fund money to purchase shares.

Such calamitus results can be avoided during the long period of struggle, if the union is in continuous touch with the workers, knows the level of their resistance and is able to make flexible proposals. At any rate the workers must see that the union is struggling to win a practical way out of the prolonged situation. The workers should not be made to wait till the last drop of their resistance is drained out. We should always remember the following words of Karl Marx : "From time to time the workers are victorious, though their victory is fleeting. The real fruit of their battle is not the immediate success but their own continually increasing unification."

Comrades,

At the same time where the impact of the crisis is not so severe our unions with their militancy secured good victories, good agreements for interim relief, higher wage grades, besides, many fringe benefits. In these negotiations which we had often to carry on along with others, we had to take a firm stand to overcome the vacillations of some of our colleague organisations.

Comrades,

Meeting in Dhanbad, the hub of coal area I express my great appreciation of the fighting coal-miners and their unions and the great work they have done in uniting the workers and securing their demands. Their seven days strike in March was a remarkable expression of their unity stretching over many organisations. All our Steel Unions and other public sector unions deserve high praise for their role in unifying the workers securing their demands and taking a principled stand in their negotiations. They played an important role in making the 15th March Bharat Bandh a success. I am sure that the mistakes discovered in their negotiations which

tended to estrange some sections of workers will not be repeated.
Comrades,

It is a matter of some satisfaction that our State Committees are giving greater attention to the question of unemployment and working women. Nonetheless the question of working women, defence of their rights, initiative to organise and draw them into active participation in trade union activities requires much more attention. It has to be recorded that the problem of the trade union movement and that lack of attention towards it invariably weakens working class unity. The feudal mind and outlook persists among many leaders and it must be overcome. Provide a minimum level of organisation and forum for women workers and you will give a new momentum to this important aspect of trade union activity and organisation.

Regarding unemployment the General Secretary's report deals with our activities and in many States initial steps have already been taken to break the wall between the unemployed and the employed workers. But now it is high time that we took some organisational steps. It is necessary that the trade unions in cooperation with the DYFI and SFI and women's organisations take steps to build an organisation of the unemployed to look after their interests. This organisation backed by the trade unions and others should move to pressurise the government to embark upon policies to check the growth of unemployment and provide additional employment. The trade unions should prepare a document outlining immediate schemes of relief for the industrial and the rural unemployed. It is necessary to expose the claims of the Government that they are fighting unemployment in the rural areas. The question of immediate unemployment relief should be placed before the unemployed as a practical demand while the right to work demand should be popularised through propaganda.
Comrades

While in socialist countries there is no unemployment, in advanced capitalist countries where unemployment prevails there is at least provision for relief. The following figures are revealing when we compare them with the situation obtaining in India :

FRG —63 per cent of former net wage.
Argentina—Upto 70 per cent of the Statutory minimum wage.
Australia—Beneficiary with child 97.90 Australian dollar per week.

Brazil—50 per cent of previous wage.

Canada—60 per cent of average previous earnings subject to a ceiling of 460 dollars per week.

Egypt—60 per cent of previous wage. 30 per cent of previous wage if unemployment occurs during the probationary period.

Spain—80 per cent of average wage during the first six months, 70 per cent during 7th to 12th month and 60 per cent from the 13th month.

USA —Approximately 50 per cent of previous wage, maximum 84-224 dollars per week. Unemployment in the event of collective dismissal due to increased imports 70 per cent of previous wage.

Italy—80 per cent of previous wage. Agricultural wage earners 66 per cent or 40 per cent of the provincial agricultural wage.

Japan—80 per cent of the daily wage. In higher categories 60 per cent of daily wage.

UK—Standard rate per persons below the age of entitlement pension 30.8 pound per week. Supplement for spouse and other dependents adult 19 pounds a week. For child 7.10 pounds a week.

But in India, there is absolutely no provision for any unemployment relief. The provision made by the Kerala Government under the Nayanar Ministry and by the West Bengal Left Front Government under the leadership of Jyoti Basu could be only a small beginning and assertion of a principle. The main resources for the relief to the unemployed have to come from the Centre under Central legislation. There is no sign of any such legislation being passed. Apart from the two states already mentioned, some other states also provide some miserable relief to the unemployed in the cities. The State's responsibility for giving relief to the people is not accepted by the present bourgeois-landlord government. It seems while changing technology and adopting modernisation appropriate to the 21st century, the Congress government is not unwilling to carry the unemployment load of the 20th century into the next century.

Comrades,

The problems before our trade union movement are getting complicated in the background of the crisis and the attack of the divisive forces and yet in our general trade union activities including our membership drive, we still follow old methods and ap-

proaches and do not reckon with the fact that division exists among workers on the caste and religion i.e. the influence of feudal ideology. Unless special efforts are made to approach the minority workers and the downtrodden caste workers taking into consideration their special difficulties because of feudal discrimination the trade union movement will not reach all sections of workers. It has been found that some of our biggest and well-organised unions are not able to attract more than 50 to 55 per cent of the total workers engaged in a big industry. For years the situation continues but no special attention is made to find out why it is so and locate the sources of weakness. In the meanwhile new generations of workers are coming into factories whose mind is already shaped by different types of politics and different types of influences. Hardly any notice is taken of their consciousness and political make up to approach them and overcome their prejudices. It is because of this that in election after election large sections of workers are unable to cross the political barriers that divide them and are unable to unite in a single mighty organisation. The trade union movement will soon reach a dead-end if it did not consciously fight the bourgeois and feudal influences on sections of members which prevent them from joining the common union. It is essential to change our agitational and propaganda approach in view of the increased offensive of divisive forces whose first aim is to break the unity of the working class, the unity of the toilers. I hope, comrades, that during the discussions at this session of the General Council you will throw some light on this particular question as it affects your union and enlighten others whether you are aware of the problem and you are taking some concrete steps to meet it.

Comrades,

The CITU, the State Committees of the CITU and affiliated trade unions deserve full congratulations for continuously carrying forward the line of trade union unity some times in face of great provocations, difficulties and narrow sectarian considerations of some of our colleagues. But on the whole it has to be stressed that in spite of minor vacillations the CITU and other colleague organisations of the National Campaign Committee all have put forward consistent efforts to strengthen trade union unity and carried forward the worker's struggles for their immediate demands and against reactionary government legislations. The recent Convention against the Anti-Trade Union Bill of the Government was

another step forward in building and consolidating the unity of the trade union movement. It also attracted new sections who were hitherto holding aloof from the activities of the NCC. The call for trade union unity and the unity of the working class no longer remains the call of the central organisations but is rapidly becoming a part of the consciousness of lakhs of workers who are facing the grim economic situation. It is, therefore, the bounden duty of our organisations to carry forward the struggle to see that organisations which have kept outside this united struggle are drawn into it and larger and larger sections of working class are inspired by it. It is a matter of regret that the INTUC, a section of whose leadership also feels the necessity of unity to resist the attack on the workers, is yet unable to join the common struggle. The Congress(I) government seeks to take advantage of this position, divide the ranks of the trade unions and push through the anti-Trade Union Legislation. It is all the more necessary for the CITU to continue the fight for trade union unity.

Comrades, before I turn to other topics let me on behalf of all of you congratulate the millions of peasants and agricultural workers who have been courting arrest all over India to focus attention on their immediate and basic demands. The CITU lends its support to their demands and wishes them success in their struggle. The CITU has already called upon its unions to actively support the peasants agitation. The CITU and the trade union movement must take initiative to develop joint activity with the rural mass to start the process of building a workers' and peasant alliance.

Comrades,

Before I conclude I must refer to our international responsibilities and express feelings of solidarity for those who are fighting against imperialist tyranny and enslavement. The CITU has repeatedly denounced the aparthied regime of South Africa and recently joined the world working class movement for the release of Nelson Mandela, the voice of South African freedom. All our unions and organisations fully participated in the agitation to demand the release of Nelson Mandela.

Comrades,

We must send our greeting and express our feelings of solidarity for the people and working class of Pakistan, who are still ruled by a military dictatorship. We hope that in the elections the voice

of democratic Pakistan will prevail and parliamentary liberties will be restored to the working class and the people. We must also express feelings of solidarity for the flood affected people of Bangladesh going through extreme distress and victim of ravages of diseases following the flood. The people of Bangladesh have been carrying on a courageous struggle against the military dictatorship and we wish them success in their struggle. Above all, we congratulate the democratic and progressive forces of that country who stood by the principles of secularism and objected to the Islamisation of the Constitution. Theirs was a courageous voice which sought to defend the basic principles of democracy against the hypocritical obscurantists who use appeal of religion to bolster dictatorial rule.

Comrades,

We send our warm greetings to the left and democratic forces of Sri Lanka who have correctly understood the democratic content of the India-Sri Lanka Accord and who are fighting the chauvinists who are denouncing the Accord. The Indian Peace Keeping Force has done a good work in fighting the reactionary LTTE whose activities only objectively help the imperialist conspiracy to divide and enslave Sri Lanka. Those of the Indian Peace Keeping Force who have laid down their lives in fighting the reactionary militants deserve the gratitude both of Indian people and the patriotic forces of Sri Lanka. But for this intervention from India, Sri Lanka would have been over run by imperialist merceneries. The CITU hopes that the Tamil militants will see reason to lay down arms and participate in the coming elections so that people of Sri Lanka and India jointly continue to resist the imperialist conspiracies against the two countries.

Comrades,

We send our warm greetings to the Soviet Union and the socialist countries who are taking quick steps to see that the world is spared the disaster of nuclear war. The entire humanity supports the various proposals made by the Soviet Union in this direction. But it is quite clear that the imperialists are in no mood to respond to genuine appeal for disarmament, to bury all nuclear weapons and free the world from the incubus of a war. The predatory activities of imperialism all over the world continue. It has no regard for Geneva Accord on Afghanistan. It supports aparthied and the Israeli aggression against Palestinian Arabs. It supports

counter-revolutionary forces against Nicaragua. Every where it intervenes to its further ambitions of global domination. In our sub-continent it pours arms in Pakistan to create tension between the two countries and divert immense resources for military buildup. Those who sow illusions that imperialism is in a peaceful mood do great harm to the anti-imperialist solidarity of the third world countries for whom elimination of imperialism is a life and death question. We from our own experience, the experiences of Khalistani terrorists trained in Pakistan with American money can entertain no illusion about a change in the mood of those who want to be masters of the world. To cherish such an illusion is to betray our country, our people and its freedom.

The Working Class, Vol. 18, No. 2, October 1988

31

Anniversary Of October Revolution

The CITU sends its warm greetings to the working class and the people of Soviet Union on the occasion of the 71st Anniversary of the October Revolution. The year since the 70th Anniversary has seen many changes in the world and inside the Soviet Union. The forces of peace have been strengthened due to the vigorous peace policy of the Soviet Union. Though some European countries are trying to off-set the effect of the Soviet-American Treaty to remove short and medium range missiles, the people of Europe and the world are determined to see that the nuclear danger is lessened and finally eliminated. Every one knows, at the same time, that the present favourable situation for peace would not have been possible without Soviet parity in nuclear weapons. The achievement of this parity has been the biggest single factor in checking the drift towards nuclear war. It is true at the same time that the world peace movement and the steps taken by the Soviet Union to protect peace have also played a powerful role in creating conditions for maintenance of peace. In September this year Comrade Gorbachev aptly described the peace situation in the following words :

"We have not yet passed the point beyond which it would be impossible to return to the former state of hostility, mutual distrust and feverish military build up.

"Consequences of such a 'return' would be catastrophic. No one would dare say mankind can tempt fate infinitely. Quite probably, we are now using one of the last chances to avert nuclear,

ecological and other disasters threatening the international community.

"There are grounds for concern.

"The matter at issue is not only the activeness of extreme right-wing, reactionary forces which do not like the current development.

"A deficit of responsibility for the future, which makes itself felt in the policies of some of our Western partners, and a desire to use the current situation for selfish interests ignoring possible baneful consequences for international cooperation, may prove even a more dangerous factor."

It is obvious that though the situation is greatly changed in favour of world peace, people of the world have to wage an arduous and relentless struggle to supplement the efforts of the Soviet Union to avoid and eliminate nuclear war. The CITU applauds and wishes success to the Soviet efforts and promises the Soviet people that it will make every effort to line up India's working class in the great struggle against nuclear war.

The working class and the people of India are deeply interested in the internal developments now taking place in the Soviet Union. The one sided reports emanating from interested quarters are creating confusion among the advocates of socialism in the country while they have served to create doubts about socialism among sections of our people. This is because it was idealistically believed that there could be no difficulties, no obstacles, and no setbacks in the development of socialist society. Reports of recent setbacks, declining growth rates of several socialist countries have created lot of confusion among workers and the people.

The working class of India must understand that the difficulties are arising after monumental achievements extending over years. In these years the means of production were socialised, capitalist exploitation was abolished, unemployment was liquidated, right to work, education and health and living conditions was guaranteed under the Constitution. The capitalist system with its poverty, ignorance and unemployment would never dream of such achievements.

The temporary difficulties in the Soviet Union are to be understood in this light and can not be equated with what is happening in the capitalist countries. They have arisen because there have been some failures and distortions in managing the vast

potential of Soviet economy. And as soon as they were recognised, immediate steps were taken to remedy the situation and this again, according to the Soviet leaders, have produced results. The CPSU Central Committee's motions to the 19th Conference says: "And still positive changes are taking place. The main thing is that we have been able to halt the growth of negative forces that threatened to grow into a crisis situation, to reverse the trend and create certain pre-requisites for a steady advance."

Notwithstanding these difficulties the Soviet Union and other socialist countries are planning for further rapid progress and increase in the well-being of the people. This is the difference between a capitalist society and socialist society.

Secondly, new reforms are being introduced to expand democracy and secure active participation of the mass of people in running and organising the economy and the state. And here the people of Soviet Union start from higher level of democracy than any where else. Comrade Gorbachev advocating the new reforms observed in his speech to the 19th Conference: "We are beginning this work not on an unbroken ground, not from the scratch. We have behind us the unique experience of the world's first socialist democracy. The forms and methods of governing engendered by socialism have had a profound influence on the socialist progress of mankind, and have become part of the contemporary political culture. It was in our country that the Government of the working people was born embodying a Republic of Soviets, workers' control, the right to work and other major social rights of the individuals and the equal rights of men and women, nations and nationalities. In other words we pioneered many of the democratic beginnings of the 20th century.

The new democratic reforms to be successful must represent a historical continuation of the grand democratic achievements of the earlier years and the expansion of the principles laid down when the socialist state was formed. They will not be successful if the achievements of the earlier period are denounced in the name of fighting the distortions during the leadership of Stalin. They will fulfil their purpose if they maintain their link with the achievements of the dictatorship of the proletariat. It is equally true that the reforms will fulfil their historic purpose when guided by the vanguard party based on Marxism-Leninism.

The widespread character of the new reforms is seen from the

following :

The reform is necessary because a developing and a developed socialist society cannot function without the widest possible spread of democracy, widest possible participation of the masses in running the economy and the State. Such participation is unthinkable in a capitalist state where power is concentrated in the hands of a small class. The Resolution of the recently held 19th Conference says: "The Conference holds that the reforms of the political system has to tackle the following tasks: give the utmost possible scope to our society's self-government and create conditions for the full functioning of the initiative displayed by individual citizens, representative government bodies, party and public organisations and work collectives; secure necessary conditions for the further free development of every Soviet nation and nationality; for consolidating their friendship and equitable cooperation on the principle of internationalism, radically re-enforced socialist legality, law and order so as to rule out usurpation of power; efficiently combating bureaucratism and formalistic attitude and ensure reliable guarantees for the protection of citizens' civic rights and liberty and for the performance by the citizens' civic rights and liberty and for the performance by the citizens of their obligations before society and the state; clearly delineate the functioning of the party and the Government bodies in the consonance with the Leninist concept; the role played by the Communist Party and the political vanguard of the Soviet and the role of the Soviet state as the entity organised by the popular power... The election of district, town, area, regional and territorial courts by superior Soviets of People's Deputies and the institution of longer term office for them must be one of the guarantees for the independence of the judiciary."

The new democratic reforms and the economic reforms are part of the growing understanding of how to manage and run a developing socialist society assuring full democracy in the matter of Government and full participation and initiative of the people in organising the economy. The various steps and measures suggested will be tested through experience, estimated how far they contribute to the growth of socialist society, and changed if they do not fulfil the purpose. The acid test of Marxism-Leninism has to be applied to judge their effectiveness.

The CITU wishes success to the Soviet people and the working

class in their efforts to expand democracy and overcome all economic difficulties and give full scope to the vast productive forces at the disposal of the Soviet people.

15.10.88.

The Working Class, Vol. 18 No. 3 November 88

32

On The Trade Union Movement In Research Institutions

Friends,

I am glad to be in your midst to share with you the discussions on the problems that are facing you. I have gone through the literature, the leaflets, the circulars that you have issued earlier and the latest document issued in November this year. From all this I could get a very comprehensive idea of the nature of your organisation, the problems faced by it and the perspective of your organisation. At the outset I must say that it is a very unique organisation, perhaps nowhere in the country this kind of organisation exists or if it exists I am not aware of it...an organisation which brings within its folds various categories of people from research workers to administrative staff, scientists to others and tries to keep them together on the basis of a proper restructuring of the research institute. Such an organisation is very rare and of course the problems it faces are also quite special. One thing that you must understand is that though 'perhaps' it started with an idea of forming a very well conducted research workers organisation in which various sections are able to join in the struggle, but all those who joined you did not necessarily have that consciousness. This is a peculiar situation in all the trade union movements in which the immediate demands of the workers are to be combined with the perspective of the organisations for serving the people. The organisations necessarily have a broad idea, abroad understanding and a correct understanding regarding the relationship of

the organisation with the other democratic movements of the country, so that the leading people concentrate on this aspect and move forwards. Immediately the leadership is faced with the task of ensuring the trade union rights of the workers or the organisation, like the demand for the security of job. If there is security of job, each person in the society is able to devote his time to the job on hand and contribute to his best to the good of the country and the institution.

Now it appears that some problems for you have come. From the documents I find that there seems to be a certain amount of lack of fiery enthusiasm that was earlier in evidence in building the common organisation and gathering many units together. It appears that it is also a direct result of your success. The movements secure successes and after achieving successes the movements always show some slackening of effort. This is not unusual. In fact this is a part of the historical development of any struggle. Success also creates a certain amount of complacency, success also creates a certain amount of self-satisfaction. Though the leading elements of any organisation start with higher consciousness and they are able to move larger sections of the masses into action, they take it for granted that they have already succeeded in transferring higher consciousness to the rest of the people, which is a delusion. Large number of people are practical people. They judge you by the practical result of your movement. Thus there is always a certain dichotomy, a certain divergence between the consciousness of the leaders and those who are following them. The present problems that you are facing today, viz. a certain amount of slackness etc., should not bother you at all. They are part of your struggle. It shows also that the leading people have got higher consciousness and the other fractions are trying to come up to the mark and that coming up to the mark is not an easy thing. Generally man moves by practical experience. Only a small section of people is able to generalise those practical experiences into a general theory and therefore they are able to move forward. So when you mentioned a certain amount of slackness, I emphasize that this is a part of the historical process.

In fact, you may find that even in politics, and particularly in West Bengal, people are facing the same thing. A government led by advanced political parties is able to give some relief to certain sections, for instance by distribution of lands. If by distribution of

land to certain peasants, a section of poor peasants get more land, then the psychology of these people becomes that of a middle peasant and they look forward to that direction where they would get support for their status as the middle peasant. Same thing takes place in the working class movements in the advanced countries. It is taken for granted that when an ordinary worker gets promoted to the post of a foreman in a factory, he is bound to vote for the conservative party in Great Britain and not for the labour party. The changes which have taken place at that moment are definitely good. But the man nurses his inspiration to improve upon his new status and sometime even forgets the movement of the past. Yet it is good that the struggle is launched. What is the net gain in this movement? That is what Marx told us about the working class struggle against the capitalist class. Starting from its inception the working class is engaged in its battle with the oppressor and it goes on like a guerilla warfare. Apparently, in the final analysis, what does a worker get out of a movement? The main class status of the working class does not change. One facility given today may be taken away tomorrow. What is the real gain? **The real gain to the working class is the ever expanding union of its class.** What remains in the end is the growing solidarity, the growing work-consciousness and the growing organisation of the class. However the success of any movement creates some kind of complacency, which is very dangerous. The leadership, of course, understands that this complacency is due to the very success. But the rest of the mass takes time to realise that the complacency is no good. This is what has been referred to as the guerilla warfare and in this war sometime you will have to retreat. But through this process, the consciousness of the people becomes better and better. The same thing is happening today in the main working class movement. Today you will find, in many places, the main militant mass of the working class is coming from the workers of the unorganised sector. The main mass of the factory workers in many places have become complacent. The very success of their movement have created this complacency. What is the success of the movement? The organised working class movement of about forty years back was able to wrest even from the British Imperialism the system of continuous expansion of dearness allowance which in proportion and upto certain extent could save them from major inflation. But what about the agricultural workers? what about the unorganised

workers? What about the hospital workers? In comparison to the wage of an agricultural worker, the wage of an average industrial worker, even the one who only sweeps the factory, is much bigger. There is hardly any worker in the organised factories, whose emoluments along with the allowances, will be less than one thousand or fifteen hundred rupees. In terms of the real value of the money it does not mean much. But it means a lot in the background of the inflationary pressure the workers had faced in the past. Now he need not have to struggle for it, because it comes automatically. The earlier trade union movements had successfully launched the struggle to compel the industries to introduce a system of regular dearness allowance and to a certain extent they had attained it. This leads to the complacency of the industrial workers.

In the meantime another interesting thing has happened. These trade union rights were being established exactly in the same period when great industries were being developed. New techniques were required, new manpower was needed. As a result a huge rural mass got attracted to the urban area. This rural mass came from a large section of untouchables and adivasis whose families had never received any proper wage. A four figure wage was something unimaginable to them. Because of this reason as well as for certain reservation of jobs etc., they remain completely satisfied for the time being, until the new generation comes. It is the second generation of the working class that is revolting now.

So what we have learnt from this? The success of the movement sometimes creates some complacency and it takes some time for the people to realize that this complacency is no good. Again the class struggle takes its course. You have to continuously create that consciousness and at the same time remain alert about the self-centeredness and economism, which are the worst diseases of the present day trade union movement in India. The CITU is trying to correct it, but the major part of the trade union movement in India is suffering from this self-centeredness which is creating certain amount of selfishness. The self-centeredness leads to the ignorance about the problems of their own classes and largely about the problems of the country. So you are to lead this mass from self-centeredness to better consciousness and from a better consciousness to class consciousness through a continuous struggle. At least you will have to tell the people that they would have to go through this process of struggle.

So during this process in the general line of class struggle certain amount of slackening is inevitable. You should not have an idealistic conception about the working class that they are ready to fight, fight and fight for twenty four hours everytime without any reason. That is an idealistic contention and the mass rejects it at the end. The people as a whole, when they move as a social force, try to tackle practical questions. And that is how gradually they develop consciousness, strengthen the organisation and go ahead. This can be achieved by further efforts of enlightenment and efforts of education. If you properly educate the people, they should be in a position to lose their delusions as soon as some real problem starts. This is only a part of the problem. Also consider the following thing. The entire hundred percent of the people are not depending on great ideas. In the most organised unions, industrial unions inside the CITU, such as tea workers union, chatkal majdur union, even at the time of crisis the membership cannot go beyond 15% to 50% or 55%. This is happening in almost every institution. Even when I go to Durgapur, a very substantial part of the workers, though they are reportedly within our section, are out of the union. They support the union. But there is a variance of the level of consciousness that they have gained. At the same time you should not be discouraged. **In the final analysis these people will be within the organisation.**

These problems arise from a lack of understanding on the part of these workers about the importance of the trade unions and these problems are to be overcome by the conscious effort of the leadership through a correct understanding of the class character of this section of the working people. For example we believe as if all the sections of the working class feel a strong opposition to capitalism. In reality for a very important section of the Indian working class, the main problem is the rural exploitation. He feels liberated when he comes to the city but is a slave when he goes to the village. The untouchables, the adivasis and the backwards, who have not yet got rid of their relations in the village, feel that the behaviour they receive within the factory is quite good. For them the democratic rights are only available within the factory but nothing is available within their village. The trade unions also do not appreciate the background of this working class neither do they respond to their antifeudal fight; they simply use this section. The reservation policy of the Government of India is also indirectly

contributing to this process. These various factors, which try to retard our development, should be properly sensed. The important trade unions also are not free from this disease and that is how they break. The very powerful unions such as the banking unions or even the unions led by CITU, for whom I have great respect and in fact who have a very rare quality of leadership, have told me that they have no influence on their class IV employees whereas they are the real proletarian section amongst them. Can you see why? Class III sections consist of mostly Bengalees and the class IV section is mostly from the lower strata of villages of Bihar. The main problem for them is untouchability, casteism and other problems of the adivasis. The leadership of the working class movement never expresses its concern about the problems which are dangerous for these people (*class IV employees*). Where is the deficiency? Our people, who are going to teach them, do not try to understand their class-character. These class IV people have poor standard of living in Bihar and have no responsibility, like the responsibility of educating their children. Therefore they have taken the profession of money-lending and cannot be drawn easily into the mainstream of the class-struggle. You can see the reason of the failure of the trade union movement.

The leadership of these movements fail to understand the actual psychology of the people involved. The main problem which is confronting the trade unions today is the problem of the exclusive privilege of one class of the society in India over the other. The Muslims, the Harijans, the Adivasis and other similar classes of people are concerned about it. So though a very powerful political process is alive in India, whichever or whatever organisation is formed, a lack of understanding of these problems may sometime bring their death. Traditional trade union movements have now lost these senses and are being confined more and more to the movements of the permanent workers. Those who are non-permanent are just confused. They feel that they are just left out.

Comrades, it is very good that in your document you have mentioned many other things, which are adding on to the problems of the Indian people. One important point you have raised in your document is the new bill—new trade union bill which tries to scuttle all trade union rights of the hospital workers and workers of other research institutions with a plea that they are not producing commodities. We are to be observant about the recent happen-

ings. Recently when terror has been unleashed in Tripura, the tribal power has again been revived. Remember the incidents of the period preceding emergency. Initially people were not adequately alarmed. Then there came the bills like MISA, ESMA etc. and everything was ready. The same process is going on now. Bills are coming one after another. 59th Amendment Act, Anti-Trade Union Bill, package of reforms or the package of repressive measures to subdue the people and to subdue the working class. You have connected these happenings together and your analysis is absolutely correct. But that consciousness has to be imparted to the people, to the working class, to the research institutions and to the people who are working there. We cannot stay away. This is a struggle. The recent bill is only a part of the general attack on the democratic movement. Significantly here, perhaps, the traditional expression of the political analysis, as usual, is not very correct. The general expression is to target Rajiv Gandhi. Is he such a big man? A man who has reached this position because of the murder of his mother is being called a big man. This is called the analysis of the bourgeois party. Is Rajiv Gandhi the supremo? Actually what is happening? **The drama of parliamentary democracy cannot be played for long by the bourgeoisie in a newly liberated backward country. Such a system sometime or later is bound to show its weaknesses.** The main character of our Government, committed to the capitalist path, remained a bourgeois landlord alliance. Such an alliance, pursuing the capitalist path, will precipitate crisis in the functioning of the parliamentary democracy. If this is not properly understood the same thing will happen again. What happened with the Janata Government? It collapsed in two years. What is happening? Why the parliamentary system is not working? It cannot work. **Nowhere in the world this bourgeois parliamentary system works without freeing the peasants.** Peasants in this country are still bonded. This cannot work. Everything is becoming a farce. Opportunity for voting is a very nice thing for the people but that cannot sustain the system for long. Historic judgement on the Indian parliament is coming. All the members are pursuing the other members. It is going to collapse. Parliament itself is becoming a forum of exposing the incapacity of the whole class. There are only two alternatives...to go back or to move forward. This is the transitional period we are facing now. First of all you must understand and convince the people that it is not the question of which

class is leading. Coalition of classes (*Left and democratic front*) is needed. Otherwise the collapse will come. The people who think themselves as very revolutionary do not think about this point. Take for instance the case of Left Front Government in West Bengal. You can prepare a list, a long list, telling that they are not doing this or that, but what will be able to prove? You can prove from the whole list that the West Bengal Government is working under severe limitations. Does this prove that they are anti-revolutionary? The Government under parliamentary system, under the bourgeois-landlord class, is being charged why it is not able to bring fundamental changes in the society!

It is a disease to think that the reforms in the society can be brought by a particular person. It is a disease to think that one man can do it and another man cannot do it and this is the disease of the bourgeois parties. These parties simply see the persons and forget the classes behind them. Today when we are concentrating our attack on the ruling party i.e. Cong. (I), we are to be extremely cautious on this point. What will you teach the people? The basic fact that you will have to teach them is that the bourgeois-landlord combination is the root cause of all evil things. If this fact is properly exposed the people will understand and learn the proper tactics. Whoever from this combination comes to the power, no transformation will take place. The basic evil i.e. the bourgeois-landlord combination is to be destroyed. Only then the new forces will appear and the people will be able to move forward. It will be totally insufficient if you simply go on attacking the Cong(I) without exposing their class character. In that case the people never get any proper direction. But at the same time the people should also be given to understand that their fight against the general attack on democracy, against the attack on trade unions, against the authoritarian one party rule is a very correct path. While encouraging this fight they are also to be taught that the real battle is class battle. **None of these battles is a battle between two parties but is a battle between two classes.**

Third point that I want to stress is something very important. Throughout India in many educational institutions, people are fighting nepotism, favouritism and other vices. This struggle has started from a good intention and it is a very good struggle. But one thing is very clear i.e., the entire structure is collapsing. Parts of the old structure are never getting re-organised. The capitalist system

in our country, the capitalist path of our country is destroying the entire value system of this land. Everybody is believing that he is living only for himself. Every battle is being fought for mere personal gain. Corruption has become a part of our life. A small government official draws insufficient wage for his daily core and cannot escape the temptation of indulging in corruption. Capitalism has set this value. You cannot blame anybody. Such a degraded value system has been set by the present capitalist system even in educational institutions. You hear startling facts about nepotism and other vices. Almost, regularly you get news of scientists committing suicide. No real investigation is done. Even if it is done, it leads to more harassment. Life is getting corroded. You are carrying on a very courageous battle, But don't get disappointed if you cannot achieve the desired result. People have become so selfish and opportunist. **You are to put in the consciousness of the people that they are not fighting for their selfish gain, but for the betterment of the country, betterment of the science in the country.**

Scientists and research workers have an important role in this country at this moment. The Government of India is going to continuously degrade indigenous science. Every kind of conceivable pressure is being used on our Government by the multinationals. Scientific institutions are going to be either degraded or abolished.

The latest thing that is going to happen is a very dangerous thing. This is the complete curbing of the indigenous science and manufacturing by the new patent laws. We are virtually going to give patent rights for every conceivable product to some foreign country or foreign multinational. Each of these developments is going to directly affect the scientific work. These are to be properly understood and proper protest is to be lodged against these problems. Main mass of Indian public is totally indifferent to science and is ignorant. Only recently the trade union movements led by the scientists have become some issue. What is the force that is changing modern science? **In the earlier period science was only a help in the development of the productive forces, but now science itself is becoming a productive force. Tremendous change is now taking place all over the world. No nation can live without science and technology. A nation, which wants to remain free, which wants to pursue the path of self-reliance, cannot ignore the**

role of modern science and technology and cannot retain its freedom without the development of indigenous capacity.

It is a credit to the Indian scientists that they have achieved a lot and are not completely dependent on outside. What is the difference between Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal and India? It is only in our country that an independent bourgeois development of science could take place. Note also the difference between the beginning of the capitalist path and the end of the capitalist path—the difference between the grandfather and the grandson. Grandfather started with the idea of harnessing science. He had the full support of men like Kosambi. He had some vision. He started with the idea of building a public sector. Indigenous science, atomic science—all these things he started looking forward to the economic development of the country.

Forty years have passed from the father to the daughter, from the daughter to the son, showing the signs of the failure of the capitalist path. Now they have started liquidating the public sector and bringing restrictions on the developments of modern science. A country, which is still to move forward, is being forced to accept imported technology. It is being told that these new technologies are not available in our country. It must be emphasized that which technology is good for the country, which technology is available in the country, which technology can be produced indigenously and which need not be imported is something which only the scientists can tell. To ignore the opinion of the scientists in this vital decision is as good as destroying the self-reliance of the country.

The capitalist path can never entertain the question of self-reliance. It does not stop at economics. As I have said, science has become a productive force. Therefore the immediate attack starts on science. Indigenous science is the most dangerous thing for imperialism. Their main aim, I should say, is the domination over the productive apparatus. They do not like that you should protect your industry. Now they are saying that you should not protect even the services of the people. All foreign banks and foreign insurance companies should be allowed to compete freely with Indian companies. Same thing is happening for science. It is an unusual situation when they say that you cannot judge about your own atomic plants. If you want to make a bomb, that will have to be examined. Who are going to examine it? There are some people who are called as environmentalists. They are to protect the envi-

ronment and they give the verdict that there should be no atomic plants anywhere. Already hundred percent damage has been done to the natural environment. Now we are to decide whether we should go forward or go back to the bullock-cart days. If you look at the history of the countries, it is a history of man's gradual conquest over nature. During the last century, every body knows that it is the railway locomotive which contributed most to the pollution of the atmosphere. Despite this, thousands of kilometers of railway lines were laid down for the progress of civilisation. Ultimately it is science that came forward to check that pollution. Similarly the industrialisation of our country will pose many problems and subsequently those will be tackled by Science and Technology. This is the historical course of development of human society. Now comes the environmentalists with a very sensitive issue. According to them if a man dies—that is not a threat to survival. However if an animal dies—that becomes a threat to nature. Many years back, I remember, the Nizam of Hyderabad issued an order that, for the protection of the environment, nobody should kill a tiger without having prior approval from the Governor. One day a tiger came and raided the villagers. One man, with great courage, fought and was able to kill the tiger. He was prosecuted for killing a tiger without proper permission.

Today it is a great patriotic duty of the Indian scientists to speak out their views on what is happening in technology, on what is happening in science in the Indian scene—both in the management and in the pursuation of the final goal. One point should always be remembered that in India the general public holds a great esteem for the views of the learned people. **So if the scientists come out with their opinion, driving the public opinion, on the social values of science, as to how should it re-organize, which technology should be adopted for the betterment of the people, by exposing and criticising the Government and by correcting the ways of its science policy to the details of the participation of multinationals and foreign technologies...that should be regarded as the biggest patriotic contribution of the Indian scientists.**

No political parties, excepting a few left parties, ever speak out about the danger of imperialism. The fraternity of the leaders of bourgeois origin will remain the same. It is in the same place they do belong...same families...same outlets. Have you ever heard any

bourgeois party denouncing the advancement of the private sector? No. Have you ever heard them very enthusiastic about the continuation of the foreign policy of non-alignment? No. The idea of considering the imperialism as a danger is never accepted by the bourgeois-landlord alliance. It is in this context that they are demanding certain changes in the science policy in the country. Since the bourgeois-landlord alliance is getting dominated by the bourgeois, the landlords are pressing for their consolidation. Their main attack comes on science. Since modern science functions mainly in the cities and since the villages are not a part of this programme the landlord section wants to stop the development of science. They want to frame a science policy of their own. For example, somebody proposes that two tons of ghee should be poured to test whether the pouring of ghee can bring the rain. Because it was not raining, they indeed poured some ghee. The rain did not come. Of course I do not know whether from the economic reason they put dalda instead of ghee! This is what is happening. Fundamentalists, feudalists, multinationals, all bourgeois parties and the landlords are more and more dragging science to oppose the cause of science. Scientific temperament the people believe that the establishment of atomic power plants completes the process of modernisation of India. Global situation is changing. The role of scientists has increased tenfold in the recent years. We are also to concentrate on technology and science. We are facing a big battle ground whether economic self-reliance will remain or we shall give it up. There are two aspects of self-reliance. One part is the public sector and the other part is the science and technology. **That is why the organisation of scientists, research workers etc. cannot simply confine their struggle of the better running of their institutions, but they must now evolve in the national plan the formulation of a correct science and technology policy in order to strengthen the economic self-reliance of the country.**

This is the situation that have developed in the last ten years along with the other problems like keeping the unity, safeguarding the interest of the workers etc. You are now to take these various problems of science and technology and you with your rich experience of the last ten years should be the most proper organisation to develop an all-India opinion on this problem. Recently some scientific workers met me in Bangalore. I told them to send their people to you and to invite your people there to develop an

understanding and to prepare a scheme for an all-India conference with an aim of rousing an all-India opinion. You are also to take initiative to carry on an exercise with these groups of scientists, at least locally, to evolve some kind of national policy. If all these people are brought together in the all-India frame that itself will create a pressure on the national policy. I am very confident that from the type of problems you have successfully tackled for the last ten years, you should be able to move one step forward, believe that in the near future, through your effort, science will be used for the development of this country and for the protection of our economic self-reliance.

Thank you.

(This address was delivered in the open session of the ninth annual general meeting of Joint Action Committee of Unions and associations of autonomous research institutions, held on December 7, 1988 at Calcutta)

33

Comrade Gorbachev's Visit

The working class and the people of India must understand the great significance of Comrade Gorbachev's visit to India and the further cementing of friendship between India and the USSR following from it. Driven to concentrate attention on the urgent problems under the present class rule they forget the high importance of foreign policy, of the need of friendship with international progressive forces and socialist countries to strengthen our country's independence and ensure its march towards a better social system that is socialism. The working class which professes its internationalism and every year on May Day raises the slogan of the "workers of the world unite" cannot forget the international importance of friendship between India and socialist Soviet Union.

India since its liberation from its British yoke, adopted under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru, a foreign policy of Non-alignment, an independent foreign policy based on support to the progressive forces in the world and opposed to imperialist domination of any country and national enslavement. This logically led to close friendship with Soviet Union and the Socialist countries. India knew that during her days of freedom struggle the Soviet Union championed the rights of all oppressed nations to freedom and liberty and stood for elimination of imperialist domination from all colonial countries. During the days of freedom struggle itself Indian National Congress and the people of India had developed great sympathy for the Soviet Union and the great advance it

had registered in economic and social spheres. Their admiration increased when the Soviet Union alone heroically fought Hitler's armies and defeated them, saving the rest of the world from fascist domination. The Indian National Congress did not forget to mention its concern for the Soviet Union and the struggle of the people of China in its August 1942 Resolution. On the morrow of independence therefore sympathy of earlier years was logically converted into friendship and alliance between the two peoples and the governments of the two countries.

The friendship could last four decades because of the revolutionary traditions of the Soviet Union and the anti-imperialist traditions and outlook of India's freedom struggle and the identity of interests of our country with the interests of the progressive forces of the world, the forces standing for national liberation and social advance. It was not surprising therefore that close economic cooperation between the two countries should develop and the Soviet Union should help India to build her public sector and strategic industry which was necessary to put India on the road of self-reliance and overcome her dependence on western countries. The Indo-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Alliance was another landmark which protected the security interests of our country at a time when imperialists were threatening to blackmail her by displaying their military might and propping neighbourly governments against her. Very few in our country realise how this friendship and alliance have helped us strengthen our independence and economy and how it has spoiled many attempts of the imperialists against our people. Opportunists of all shades in our country have decried this policy of nonalignment, of supporting liberation and opposing imperialist aggression, of friendship with socialist countries as one-sided policy. They however, do not tell the people what happens to a country which joins an imperialist military bloc. The example of Pakistan is there for all to see—the country was blessed with the military dictatorship subservient to the imperialist financiers.

It is because of the common approach and perceptions on several issues of world importance that India and USSR find themselves on the same side. The common understanding was further strengthened on the question of war and peace, India whole heartedly supporting the Soviet Union's struggle against nuclear war to save the world from utter destruction. The role played by

India's non-aligned policy, and non-aligned movement in which India plays a prominent role, was correctly emphasised in the Indo-Soviet declaration : "The Soviet Union and India emphasis. the outstanding role of the Non-aligned movement in the world. It has emerged as a constructive force for resolving the problems of peace, disarmament and development and has made its contribution to the relaxation of international tension. The parties are deeply convinced that the movement will continue to play an ever increasing role to meet the challenge confronting the world."

The Indo-Soviet Declaration marks another outstanding event in the pages of Indo-Soviet friendship. It opposes all nuclear armaments and designs for nuclear war and calls for peace and security for all. It fully upholds the banner of world peace without ifs and buts and lent support to the Soviet proposals and immediate reduction of strategic nuclear weapons by 50 per cent. In regard to the major problems of the world there is common understanding on the question of Palestine, South Africa, Afghan Accord and other important questions. The declaration marks not only close unity and friendship between the two countries but a common perception of the major problems of the world and how to solve them in the interest of freedom, peace and progress. Very rarely such unity is seen. It arises because of a common approach to defend peace and freedom. Gorbachev in his speech at the ceremony of the presentation of the Indira Gandhi Prize said, "We especially rely on the understanding and cooperation of India without which the problems of the Asia-Pacific region cannot be solved."

It is clear that India with her foreign policy of non-alignment has to play an important role in world affairs in safeguarding world peace and independence and freedom of nations and countries. This policy also safeguards the interests of the Indian people, their independence and their struggle for a new social order in India. It is a policy which also meets the needs of the international outlook of India's working class. To preserve and consolidate this policy is the duty of India's working class and the people of India. This has to be emphasised because in India the reactionary forces, the communalists the secessionists and the bourgeois opportunists all are one in assailing this policy and demanding a tilt towards U.S. imperialism. Even the ruling party and the Government of India which continue this policy do not popularise it among the Indian

masses and make it impregnable. In fact because of the economic pressures of the World Bank, the concessions to multi-nationals, the reactionary pressure to change this policy are increasing. It is always possible that vacillations may arise on vital questions. Under the present circumstances the policy of non-alignment cannot be taken for granted. To maintain it and consolidate it constant support and vigilance of India's working class and the masses are necessary.

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34

Contemporary Challenges and The Trade Union Movement

The working class and the trade union movement of our country are now face to face with challenges before the entire country and the entire people. No longer is it possible for the workers and their organisations to concentrate only on the immediate economic problems neglecting what is happening to the rest of the country. Neglect of economic policies of the Government, concentration only on some immediate economic demands has already led to a situation where the jobs of the workers are being massacred by thousands and lakhs with the total urban unemployment figure exceeding three crores. Simultaneously the entire country is threatened with economic dependence on multi-nationals, and World Bank aid which compromise the political independence of our country. As a logical corollary of the class policies pursued by the Rajiv Government the democratic rights of the people are being attacked. The 59th Amendment Act which hangs the sword of emergency over the country, the anti-terrorists and other Acts of legislation including the preventive detention acts are instruments of suppressing democracy. The working class has been specially chosen for attack. The ESMA, MISA and the newly proposed trade union and trade dispute bills are weapons to curb the rights of the working class and turn it into an obedient tools of the multinationals and big capitalists. The economic misery imposed by the policy of appeasing the multinationals has created unbearable conditions for the working class. Sickness of indus-

tries, lock-outs extending over months, prolonged strikes all have been imposed on this fighting class with the end of misery nowhere in sight and yet the inate militancy and consciousness of the class has been shown in the continuous struggle which it has been waging. In the last three years, years of most adverse conditions more than a million workers have come on strike, and offered a prolonged resistance to the assaults of the Congress(I) economic policies and attacks of the employers.

But at the same time it has to be realised that the fighting capacity of the class and its revolutionary potentialities to advance the democratic struggle of the people and the country are not fully utilised, thanks to the non-political stand of many trade union leaders and organisations. All trade unions and working class organisations except perhaps those belonging to the BMS frankly proclaim that they stand for socialism, for a classless society. Many of them do not tell the workers that the objective of socialism and freedom from exploitation cannot be reached without a revolutionary change in the social system, a political transformation placing power in the hands of the democratic masses headed by the working class. The united strength of the working class, its militancy must be fully politicalised and brought into the political arena to combat the Congress(I) misrule, the rule of the bourgeois-landlord classes.

The working class movement has to be understood as the advanced detachment of the democratic movement of our country, the movement against poverty, unemployment, against Congress(I) misrule. It has to shoulder heavy responsibilities on behalf of the people, responsibilities which no other section can discharge because the working class is placed in the most advantageous position to discharge them. The working class with its strength of several lakhs in factories can become the most powerful vehicle of protest in cities gathering behind it all the fighting sections. The 15th March Bandh was the visual demonstration of what an aroused working class can do to organise the protest of the people on behalf of the peasant masses of India. The working class, a big section of which still comes from peasants and agricultural workers can set the rural areas on a revolutionary path if it throws its organised strength and awakening behind them. The political parties and reformist trade union organisations do not understand the importance of the working class in the democratic struggle, the

importance of rousing its revolutinary capacities. All of them combine to keep the working class and the trade union movement confine to narrow economic demands so that like other sections it can be still influenced by non-revolutionary bourgeois or feudal ideologies. The CPI(M) is consistently working for trade union unity but at the same time endeavouring to see that the full political capacities of the working class as an oppressed class are brought into operation and India's democratic movement and the immediate movement against Congress(I) misrule secure the soild support from the organised strength of the trade union movement.

Today after 40 years of independence it is impossible for the trade union movement to continue in the old rut of isolated economic struggles. The major problems now facing the common people and the country have already become the problem of the trade union movement. First Rajiv Gandhi's economic policy of encouraging multinationals, of import liberalisation, of depending on foreign capital for internal development all have created a tremendous danger to self-reliance of Indian economy. The danger increases ten-fold with Rajiv's policy of growingly liquidating the public sector which was considered at one time the foundation of a self-reliant economy. The working class cannot remain indifferent to this danger to our country and to our economy. And the situation is such that even the most backward workers cannot remain silent today because this policy of undermining self-reliance of Indian economy is simultaneously leading to closure of Indian industries and massacring of jobs of lakhs of workers. Circumstances are already compelling trade unions to protest against this policy and the working class had to take to united mass action in January 1987 to protest against the anti-public sector policies of the Rajiv Gandhi Government. The massive public sector strike of January 1987 was an act not only to defend the interests of the affected workers but a protest on behalf of the entire people of India against danger to our self-reliance. Significance of this action was not noted by many political parties and many organisations. But it was a sign that the working class through its own experience was coming forward in the battle for protecting India's economic independence. Though it was just an initial step forward it also showed how the organised strength of the working class can be a great source of strength for the popular cause of defending India's economic independence.

The united and organised trade union movement has its responsibility of carrrying forward the battle for economic self-reliance on behalf of the people and it is the responsibility of all political parties to growingly support this battle. This has got great relevance in the coming elections in which there is every prospect of all secular opposition parties combining with the Left parties to give a final defeat to the Congress(I). In the elections the question of Congress(I)'s economic policies as it affects the various sections will come to the forefront and especially the question of India's growing dependence on foreign multinationals. The working class consciousness, its organised action and its exposure of the Congress(I) policies will definitely play an important role in winning over the electorate against the Congress(I).

On another vital question also today the working class is making contribution to maintain the unity of the Indian people and the democratic movement. Perhaps no other section of the Indian people is now so much conscious of fighting for the unity of the country and the people as certain sections of the working class who are directly involved in the fight against communal and divisive forces in our country. The example of workers from the CPI and the CPI(M) who continue to fight against the Khalistani disruptors in Punjab, the sacrifices made by the cadres of those parties and the number of State Government employees that have been killed in Punjab in the course of this fight to maintain national unity shows the vitality of the working class and the revolutionary character of its class consciousness. The same is the record of working class cadres in Assam in fighting the divisive forces. And in Darjeeling district of West Bengal the Nepali speaking tea-garden workers with their consciousness trained in the several class struggle upheld the banner of national unity with more than a hundred of them sacrificing their lives to defend national unity. This is not accidental. The common working class struggle for daily demands brings together thousands of workers belonging to all sections, all castes and all religions and makes them into a single whole as a united class fighting for its common demands. This initial process of unity which the trade union movement starts is to be consolidated by continuous ideological propaganda that the oppressed sections have to stand united whatever may be their affiliations. It is through this prolonged struggle that the sense of class unity is being created among massive sections of the working class. No

other struggle offers such an opportunity and that is why the working class movement of our country is today to be understood as a great source of uniting people irrespective of religion and faith and leading the battle for national unity against communal forces and against divisive forces. It is not accidental that whenever the working class movement is strong and whenever the left and CPI(M) influence is strong communalists of all shades are deprived of their mischief making capacity. In West Bengal with the anti-imperialist traditions and the great influence of the CPI(M) and the large trade union movement led by the CITU, the communal forces have been put in a straight-jacket for years. In Kerala in recent elections the communal forces allied with the Congress(I) were defeated and the secular and left forces were able to form a Ministry of their own. These are examples to show that once the working class is roused it can become the most consistent defender of national unity, wage a fight against communalism, intervene with its mass strength in communal riots and put all the fundamentalists to flight. Here again a number of reformist leaders and number of leaders of political parties are afraid of developing these consciousness of the working class because this consciousness simultaneously arises out of a keen struggle to defend rights of the working class against capitalist exploitation. Those political leaders who have not given up their illusions about capitalist path are naturally afraid of encouraging the working class to find its own revolutionary consciousness and thereby prevent the working class from emerging as the bastion of national unity. The CPI(M) and the left forces, however, are keen to see that the working class plays its role in defending national unity, fighting the communal forces and in the coming elections is able to mobilise its full strength in support of secular opposition and left parties for the defeat of Congress(I).

An immediate problem today facing the country and the people is a problem of growing unemployment. It is not only an economic problem, but has become a serious political problem. The communal and divisive forces are using it for their own nefarious purpose. The Congress(I) also uses it for its own selfish ends.

The problem of unemployment has become a major problem of our country. It has become an all pervading problem from which no community or caste is free. Those who pray in the Church or Mosque, temples and synagogue along with those who have

nowhere to pray, all are affected by the curse of unemployment accompanied by poverty. The religious faith of the Muslims, the Hindus, the Harijans, the Catholics does not save them from these mundane sufferings which call for unity of all toilers, of all affected people irrespective of caste or religion. It also calls for unity of those with jobs and those without jobs.

The trade union movement by uniting all sections of the unemployed irrespective of their faith and caste has to play a big role in preventing the mischief of the communal forces, of the Congress(I) selfishness and creating a common feeling of class unity so that the working class movement against unemployment strengthens national unity. This role, the left trade unions especially those guided by the CPI(M) are persistently playing knowing fully well the interests of the working class cannot be separated from the interests of national unity and the interests of the people as a whole. In the coming elections the problem of unemployment will occupy an important position and parties contending the elections will have to give their answer how they will meet this problem. The Congress(I) is already coming forward with the tempting promise of providing employment at least for one person per family. It refuses to tell the people why this problem had arisen at all. It refuses to tell them that the problem expresses the bankruptcy of its policy of moving in alliance with landlords and relying on private capitalist production. Unless in the elections there is a clear-cut direction how the opposition parties seek to meet this problem it will be difficult for them to expose the real character of Congress(I) promises. The trade union movement proposes two things, one, right to work to be embodied in the Constitution as the fundamental right and pending it, unemployment benefit to be introduced for unemployed both in urban and rural areas.

With this slogan the entire unemployed mass in urban and rural areas can be easily mobilised by the opposition parties, secular and left parties isolating the Congress(I) from the main mass of the Indian people.

The Congress(I) misrule has to be replaced because it offers a direct threat to Indian democracy. The Congress(I) leaders had earlier declared that there will be no re-enactment of emergency for hundred years. Still bit by bit the democratic norms, democratic institutions and democracy as a whole are being rapidly undermined during the last three years of Rajiv Government. The 59th

Amendment Act is a blatant measure to enable the Government to create emergency like conditions all over the country. The way in which the Governors are used arbitrarily and unconstitutionally against elected opposition ministries constitutes another sign of authoritarian attack against the Constitution and democracy. But this is not all. In large sections of the country under Congress(I) rule there is absolutely no democracy for the common man and a police rule combined with gangsters rule is spread over these areas. Complaints about murder, kidnapping, rape are not even registered. Hundreds of persons are kept in jail without trial for years. There is a growing collapse of administration in many Congress(I) ruled states. The only law being police arbitrariness, gangster attacks and widespread corruption. The fight against these attacks on people's right will be a major item in the coming elections. The working class movement itself is feeling the attack daily when the strikers are killed, when false charges are made against them and jailed with so-called offences. Day by day the trade union movement itself is being forced to come out in the open arena in the defence of democratic rights, not for the trade union rights but for the people as a whole. The terror in Tripura, the invasion of T. U. offices in that State, the falsification of election there have all combined to create a sense of urgency for the trade union movement to wage a sharp struggle in defence of the democratic rights for the people as a whole. It has to be admitted, however, that all sections of the trade union are not yet keenly aware of the urgency to fight for common democratic rights. But a major part of the trade union movement is bound to come to the arena to protect the fundamental rights of the workers and the people. It is necessary in the coming days that the entire strength of the vast organised class is gathered together to see that it fights against assaults on the democratic rights of every section. It would have electrified the entire political atmosphere in India if the entire working class of India had struck work in protest against the attack on the Indian press through the anti-defamation Bill. Nonetheless the left trade union movement are preparing the working class to engage itself in a definite battle against the Congress(I) misrule to protect the democratic rights under the Constitution and to prevent the curtailment of any fundamental right. Here again many bourgeois political parties do not see the importance of this working class action and want to confine themselves only to exposure of corruption and

other issues. That will be a fatal mistake. In the coming months if all the trade unions, bourgeois secular opposition and left parties join together in rousing the working class to wage a wider and wider struggle for fighting the authoritarian attacks of the Congress(I) they will succeed in routing the Congress(I) in the next elections in all big cities and industrial towns. The organised strength and the weight of the working class will be able to carry the entire population of towns. The CPI(M) and the left trade unions are intent on concretely helping the opposition secular forces by rousing the working class to protect the democratic rights of all sections.

The trade union movement as a whole and the working class movement must emerge in the coming months as an active force supporting the left parties, supporting the left front Government, supporting the common struggles of the secular opposition parties and left parties against the Congress(I) misrule and above all championing the basic demands of India's rural masses and the working class. They must further emerge as the fighting champions of national unity, defenders of minority rights and fighters against all secessionists and divisive forces. It is on this basis the trade union movement will be in a position to make a valuable contribution for the defeat of the Congress(I) in the next elections and simultaneously keep open the way to further advance of the democratic masses.

The left trade unions unlike many opposition parties are keenly aware of the imperialist conspiracies of our country. The imperialist support to Khalistanis is quite open. But it is not known to ordinary people that behind many communal and secessionist force stand the purse and agencies of imperialism. The Left trade unions with their international awareness constantly expose imperialist conspiracies and criticise the Goverment also whenever it retreats before their offensive. Taking India's national interests and its security interests into consideration the trade unions lend their support to India's policy of non-alignment and welcome friendship with socialist countries. While they stand for peaceful and friendly relations with all countries including our neighbours they wish to see that India and her people throw their weight on the side of world peace and against imperialist conspiracies against the third world countries. They warn the people against imperialist attempts to penetratethe countryandtheir machinations for global

domination. It will be wrong to turn a blind eye to the imperialist conspiracies towards our country while fighting the misdeeds of the Congress(I) rule. In the coming elections India's foreign policy, imperialist conspiracies against our country and our role in the struggle for peace and freedom all over the world will definitely come before the people. While the working class will be forthright in taking its stand it is problematic whether the bourgeois opposition parties will take a similar forthright stand. If they do not they will jeopardise the chances of a outright victory against the Congress(I) in the next elections.

The Working Class, Vol. 18, No. 7, March '89

35

Speech To The Jute Workers Conference In Calcutta

Please accept my greetings for the courageous way in which you have met the full blast of the economic crisis, Rajiv Government's policies and maintain the unity of your organisation. In times of crisis retreat or defeat, the first casualty is often the unity of the workers, the disruption of their class organisation, of the fighting instrument of their defence. It is the earnest desire and design of the employers and all capitalist governments to ensure this outcome so that they can continue to manage without any serious opposition from the workers for a long time. But you with your unity have denied the masters of jute industry this pleasure and have continued your fight and unity in the most adverse circumstances as befits the biggest union of our fighting CITU.

Comrades,

The last three or four years have been years of distress, loss of jobs, prolonged strikes and lock-outs for our workers. The jute, cotton textile and engineering industries have had to bear the brunt of this attack imposed by India's rulers following the path of capitalist development. Never since independence was there such a devastating economic crisis sending lakhs of people to unemployment, homelessness and even destitution. According to the Government figures and the recently published economic survey the number of sick industries totalled 1,59,000 with West Bengal and Maharashtra as the main centres of this sickness. Every year in the last four or five years the number increases and there is no hope

of running sick or closed concerns. According to the recent survey of the Government of India out of 1,59,938 sick concerns only 12,600 are viable, 1,40,086 are non-viable and viability of 7,000 is yet to be decided. For the majority of workers in these industries their jobs are permanently lost and there is no chance of securing a new job. Employment increased only marginally, in 1987-88 by 1.2 per cent in public sector and 0.8 per cent in private sector. The figures further show that the employment in private sector has declined during the last eight years. This is how bourgeois-landlord government of Rajiv Gandhi is managing the economies while making boastful claims of increased industrial growth rates in the country. Already there are more than 3 crores of persons on the register of employment exchanges. The poor prospects of employment are further revealed by the Economic Survey. Monthly average vacancies notified during April to September 1988 was of the order of 48,400 as compared to 50,000 during the corresponding period of last year, thereby showing fall of about 7 per cent. Similarly average monthly placement during April-September 1988 declined to 28,500 from the monthly average of 28,600 over the same period in 1987.

Comrades,

In fighting this reality, in fighting the closures andlock-outs in the jute industries and from the infamous behaviour of the employers trade union has learnt a rich experience of how to conduct the working class struggle in times of continuous economic offensive under the impact of the economic crisis. Tactics and manoeuvres had to be adopted to the reality of the economic offensive and the crisis condition and at our defence, working class interests had to be taken even under the most adverse circumstances. The usual plea of the reformist that nothing can be done under economic crisis, the treacherous plea to betray the workers interests without utilising the fighting capacity of the workers to mitigate the offensive. This plea our union rejected and mobilised the full resistance of the working class against any deterioration in the employment situation or in the living conditions. At the same time taken into consideration the enormity of the offensive, its prolonged character the union simultaneously concentrated on adopting such methods and tactics as to keep the unity of the workers together and deny the employers the dispersal of their fighting organisations. In all this we sometimes had our best moments our triumphs also retreat forced on us. But the main thing we have saved the fighting spirit

and the militant unity of the workers organisation.

Jute industry and its workers are still undergoing a period of distress; some mills still stands closed with the workers denied their jobs. Some have been taken over by speculators who are out for making quick money and therefore are imposing on the workers high workload and drastic wage cuts. The Government of India itself shows no desire to protect the jute industries from the threat of synthetics and is thereby providing for distress for the worker and the jute grower. The demand for nationalisation of jute and cotton textile industry made by the CITU has been rejected by the Rajiv Government. If that demand had been accepted the CITU and its workers would have agreed to participate in the management of the factories with equal status guaranteed and ensured a full profitable working of the concern. As I have said the Rajiv Government has no plan for reviving 1,59,000 sick industries. It is true that there are nearly a 100 textile mills which have been taken over which did provide some relief to the workers who would have been otherwise unemployed. But the Government is now deciding to close many of these mills and throw these workers out of employment and we will see later on that Rajiv Gandhi's later budget has absolutely no provision to give relief to the workers of sick and closed industries.

The Central Government has turned down the demand for nationalisation because the Government is embarking upon a policy of growing liquidation of public sector and growing freedom for private industry under the pressure of the World Bank. However, we must continue to demand nationalisation of jute and cotton textile industries, reviving of sick concerns, right to work and full unemployment relief pending acceptance of the right to work. Without this we cannot defend ourselves and this means that we must have greater and stronger unity than that we have today.

Comrades,

The extremely precarious situation reminds us of what Karl Marx has said in the Communist Manifesto "But the modern worker instead of rising as industry develops, sinks even lower in the scale, and even falls into conditions of existence below those pauper to his own class. The worker is becoming a pauper and pauperism is increasing even more rapidly than population and wealth. This shows that the bourgeoisie is no longer pitted to be the ruling class in our country or to impose his own social system of

supreme law of society as at large. It is unfit to rule because it is incompetent to provide security for its slaves even within the confines of their slavish existence; because it has no option but to let them lapse into a condition in which it has to feed them instead of being fed by them. Society cannot continue to live under bourgeois rule. This means that the life of the bourgeoisie has become incompatible of life of society."

Comrades,

All this show only one thing. There is no escape from poverty and wage enslavement, from unemployment and misery, unless the entire capitalism is put an end to and political power rests, secure in the hands of the masses, the working class, the peasantry and other toilers. The experience of socially liberated countries again points out that unless socialism is established and the people are free from all exploitation the economic emancipation of working class and the mass of people will not be achieved.

Comrades,

It is necessary to remember this because large sections of workers pin their faith in one election after another hoping that the new world of liberation will be born out of ballot verdict and there are enough innocents in our country and abroad who preach to the workers the same thing asking them to seek their fortune in the lottery of the ballot boxes.

Comrades,

Our own experience in West Bengal tells us the simple thing. The Left Front Government headed by Chief Minister Jyoti Basu is doing everything possible to save the situation to alleviate or reduce the sufferings of the working mass of West Bengal. What it can do is restricted to the confines of the Constitution, the bourgeois-landlord constitution will guarantee the sanctity of the property rights and with its rights of exploitation. So long as this situation prevails there will be very little change in our country. For right to work, for full employment, for emancipation of all exploitation, we require a different constitution, a different power equation with power in our hands. It should be the constant endeavour that all militant workers remember this thing and work for socialism, work for power to the masses to carry forward this consciousness in every struggle and every meeting. It is therefore essential that the workers through their full weight on the side of defence of democracy in our country and fight all the attacks coming from the

Rajiv Government curtailing or curbing the democratic right of the people. The defence of democracy and its expansion in face of the authoritarian trend of the Rajiv Government must be our constant endeavour.

The real face of the economic policies of the Rajiv Government and its implications for the working class is seen in the recent Budget of the Central Government.

Pretending to be serious in dealing with the acute problem of unemployment in rural areas the Budget announces a new programme. But from the Budget figures it is seen that the total provision made for rural employment only slightly exceeds the figures of the last year. There is no sense of urgency and the increased gravity of the problem.

The Budget announces provision of 500 crores of rupees for rural unemployed under the "Nehru Employment Scheme". This seems to have a purpose of its own. This special programme is to be directed and guided by the Centre only with the help of the district administration. It is to be implemented in 120 districts to be selected by the Central authorities. It is to be entirely separate from other programmes which are to be worked in cooperation with the state administration. Apart from the fact that the Centre directly dealing with the district authorities over the head of states constitutes an attack on the autonomy and powers of the State Governments, the proposal can be legitimately described as a manoeuvre of the ruling party for electoral advantage. The 120 districts to be chosen will be selected with an eye to provide safe constituencies for congress(I) candidates and the machinery of the district authorities will be used for the purpose. How much the rural unemployed will get out of this scheme none can say. The administrators and interceptors will necessarily pocket a big part of the money. There should not be two opinions on the immediate need for employment programme for the rural masses. Such programmes have been announced in the past on several occasions with the promise of one job at least per family. But every time they have been cheated though all claims have been made.

The most striking fact for the working class is that the budget does not recognise that there is unemployment among workers, that there are crores of unemployed in the cities, workers, employees, graduates and matriculates. It does not recognise that more than 1,60,000 concerns are closed and lakhs of workers are roaming

in the streets for jobs. It is unaware of the fact that there are lakhs of trained workers, skilled and unskilled workers, educated youth who have never seen a job and not likely to get one for years. There is no mention of any scheme or provision to provide jobs or provide unemployment relief to the unemployed in the cities. Congress(I) socialism demands that the unemployed workers must starve and disappear from the world as soon as possible to ease the pressure on the Government finances. In the official language the workers deprived of jobs and those awaiting for jobs all are redundant people, unwanted people.

How can the Congress(I) Government talk of offering jobs when it is pursuing a deliberate policy of reducing jobs in the name of introducing high-tech and making Indian industry competitive in the world market. This policy is spelt in the Budget and therefore there is no reference or measures against industrial unemployment. It should be noted in this connection that with all the claims about industrial progress and advance, employment in private sector has not increased at all in the last 10 years and in the public sector it is increased at the rate of 2.2 percent per year.

The other direct effect of this policy is the growing crisis in the balance of payments position and the increased foreign debt payments. Though exports have increased, imports have increased at still more accelerated rate, thanks to the liberalisation policy. The gain from increased exports have been wiped out and every year the balance of payment position worsens. India therefore is unable to meet her debt obligations through the earnings of the exports. These foreign debt obligations will by the end of 1989 amount to $ 5200 million, equivalent to 8000 crores of rupees at the prevalent rate of exchange. They will account for 30 per cent of the country's export earnings. To escape bankruptcy India will be forced to seek another IMF loan accepting humiliating conditions, throwing new burdens on the people and undermining the independence of the economy. The Government's hope that a new loan can be negotiated at concessional rates is totally misplaced. If there are concessional rates the conditions will be still harder.

In fact "The Times of India" report indicates that India has already approached the IMF for a loan between Rs. 5100 hundred crores to Rs. 8600 hundred crores, depending on availability of funds. This is where Rajiv Gandhi Government is leading the country and its economy. It is therefore necessary for all trade

unions, all workers to understand the implications of the Budget for the economy, for the people and workers themselves. There should be strong protests against new burdens; there should be protests against refusal to give unemployment relief and increased jobs and protests against import liberalisation, undermining of self-reliance and further raising of debts.

This is the reality we have to face this year. Notwithstanding so many attacks our resistance is getting strengthened. The CITU unions have been waging persistent struggles and defending the workers living conditions and their jobs. They are taking seriously the cause of the unorganised workers and waging struggles for adequate minimum wage for these sections. In particular, I may mention the recent strike for minimum wage for unorganised workers organised by the fighting Delhi CITU Committee. The same battle is spreading now in Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and many other states. In West Bengal and many other States the CITU State Committees are entering the fray on behalf of the neglected unemployed and in all States now the problem of working women are being attended to. This persistent activity of the CITU is an expansion to new sections and the beginning of discharging its responsibility towards the neglected sections, working women, unemployed, all are enhancing the prestige of the CITU and improving the fighting capacity of the working class. I may assure you that the influence of the CITU, its policy and line is now reaching unions and workers who are not formally affiliated to CITU. All this gathering strength will be of great help to us in meeting the new conditions that we will have to face this year.

Comrades,

Because of our intense initiative and activity we have been able to achieve wider and broader trade union unity involving all important central trade union organisations and federations. The National Campaign Committee continues to be more active than before and tackling vital issues like the opposition to new consumer price index series, anti-trade union legislation, the problem of cotton textile workers and presenting a joint front in negotiations as well as action in many issues. It is necessary to strengthen this unity and as you know we have given a call for confederation of all trade unions and industrial federations irrespective of their political affiliations but this call has not yet been responded to by any organisation in fact some have indulged in footling points and

farcical criticism raising issues like how the office bearers will be elected and that kind of things but we are firmly convinced that the mind of the workers is more and more moving for such common organisation based on independence of the various constituents. That is the essence of our call for confederation of trade union which does not ask any trade union organisation to submerge its individuality nor accept any decision to which it is not a party. But it calls for a free discussion of all the problems affecting labour so that the entire mass of working class is involved in understanding and outstanding issues.

Comrades,

The developing situation in the country has already imposed a new political and democratic duty of the working class and the trade union movement. All over India Left Front Government of West Bengal and Kerala are regarded as the advanced outposts of democratic fight against authoritarian attacks and trends of the Rajiv Government. It is the duty of the working class and the advance forces to defend this governments and foil all efforts of Rajiv Government against them. The working class in Bengal realises its responsibility and has been in the forefront of fight against Congress(I) machinations directed against the Left Front Government. Against the Left Front Governments as well as the non-Congress Governments the Central Governments wants to make use of Governors powers to disturb their smooth functioning and create difficulties and crisis. You all know what happened in West Bengal Legislative Assembly. The Governor was nearly assaulted by the howling Congress(I) members. Obviously the anger against the Governor was because of its failure to attune itself to the partisan demands of some people. And in West Bengal the Congress(I) party openly calls for taking up arms to fight Left Front Government. These are signs that the Congress(I) party have become desperate knowing that in West Bengal it is losing rapidly among the people and has no chance of coming back to power on the basis of a democratic verdict. But these are not only the doings of an individual but they are malady which are affecting the Congress(I) which is becoming more and more anti-democratic, the more it loses rapport with the people. The authoritarian attack from the Central Government therefore will have to be resisted in a firm manner and any design to tamper with the functioning of the Left Front Government in West Bengal will have to be defeated

with the strength of the working class and the people.

Along with the anti-democratic practices of the Congress(I) the working class has to fight its policies which contribute to the disintegration of the country. You all know that the question of defence of national unity has become an important and urgent question and our comrades in Punjab, Assam and Darjeeling district of West Bengal has to shed their blood to defend this unity. But the Central Government and the party which leads it stand paralysed before this offensive. Not only this secessionist offensive but even the communal offensive inside the country they are unable to face and go on compromising on every issue. It has to be realised therefore that the Central Government and the party which leads it are incapable of defending the unity of the country and that task has to be done by us and the common people. No amount of criticism only of Rajiv's policy will be of any use unless we of our own as in Darjeeling and Punjab entered the field to defend unity.

Comrades,

All this has to be born in mind, our economic suffering, the attack against democratic rights, the danger to national unity and the growing pressure of the World Bank when we will enter the fight for electing a new central Government in the coming elections.

There must be a definite No to Rajiv's claims to get the verdict of the people in his favour and there must be also a definite No to the manoeuvres of the communal parties the BJP, RSS, Muslim League and others which exploits the situation and queer the verdict of the people.

30.3.1989

36

Central Budget

The Budget of the Central Government presented on the 1st March underlines the opportunist and anti-people line of the Rajiv Government. It reveals the reckless progress of the Rajiv Government towards undermining the independence of the country's economy in the name of "international competitiveness" and introduction of hi-tech development of private industry in the country. The Budget is not just a sum total of revenue and expenditure of taxes and their distribution but also lays down the line of development of economy. Its effects on national economy, its independence and well-being of the people are far-reaching.

In the first place the recent Budget continues to levy heavy taxation on the common people. The total pre-Budget taxation, burdens of administered prices and increases in railway freight—all add to the already unbearable burdens which the people have been shouldering all these years. In the earlier years with plenty of hope born out of victory sense in the freedom struggle these were accepted willingly and cheerfully as the price to be paid for economic freedom and release from backwardness and poverty. But now they have become a permanent feature telling the people to expect no relief under Rajiv's economic policy in pursuit of the capitalist path.

The same capitalist path demands one-sided concessions to the accumulators and grabbers of capital at the expense of those who sweat to create capital, the workers, peasants and mass of

Indians. As against the increased tax burdens of hundreds of crores of rupees the Budget grants paltry relief to the lowest group of income-tax payers and promises to spend Rs. 9000 crores including food and clothing subsidies for the rural areas. There has been persistent pressure from the World Bank to reduce food subsidies which is nothing but a demand to raise food prices for the common man. This was unthinkable for the Government in this Budget which is a pre-election Budget. Even otherwise the Government will find it difficult to submit to the demands of the World Bank because the food subsidies lower the wage bill of the capitalists and ensure higher profits.

As against these reliefs—though despite the food subsidies food prices are rising—heavy concessions are made to private capitalists. The increase in price of steel, the decontrol of aluminium and several other measures are bound to lead to price rise and finally affect the people. The working class is already being defrauded through non-budgetary measures of falsified and fraudulent Consumer Price Index which has lowered the earnings of Bombay textile workers by Rs. 30 to 40.

Besides the price increase through indirect taxes the people will be face to face with rising prices following from deficit financing which is officially reckoned to be Rs. 7000 crores and unofficially to be more than Rs. 9000 crores to start with. No one can guess the figure likely to be reached at the end of the Budget year. All this means increased inroads on the hard earnings of the people. Sugar, milk, pulses, edible oil, vegetable and meat all are getting beyond the reach of the ordinary earner. The people in distress have to buy adulterated grain and food articles from ration shops which often declare that they have no stock to sell. And worst still, prices of essential drugs being very high, people are sold adulterated stuff which is danger to their health and even life. The Budget promises no relief from the present situation but forecasts its worsening in view of the huge deficit financing.

Pretending to be serious in dealing with the acute problem of unemployment in rural areas the Budget announces a new programme. But from the Budget figures it is seen that the total provision made for rural employment only slightly exceeds the figures of the last year. There is no sense of urgency and the increased gravity of the problem.

The Budget announces provision of 500 crores of rupees for

rural unemployed under the "Nehru Employment Scheme." This seems to have a purpose of its own. This special programme is to be directed and guided by the Centre only with the help of the district administration. It is to be implemented in 120 districts to be selected by the Central authorities. It is to be entirely separate from other programmes which are to be worked in cooperation with the State administration. Apart from the fact that the Centre directly dealing with the district authorities over the head of the states constitutes an attack on the autonomy and powers of the State Governments, the proposal can be legitimately described as a manoeuvre of the ruling party for electoral advantage. The 120 districts to be chosen will be selected with an eye to provide safe constituencies for Congress(I) candidates and the machinery of the district authorities will be used for the purpose. How much the rural unemployed will get out of this scheme none can say. The administrators and interceptors will necessarily pocket a big part of the money. There should not be two opinions on the immediate need for employment programme for the rural masses. Such programmes have been announced in the past on several occasions with the promise of one job at least per family. But every time they have been cheated though all claims have been made.

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How can the Congress(I) Government talk of offering jobs when it is pursuing a deliberate policy of reducing jobs in the name of introducing high tech and making Indian industry competitive in the world market. This policy is spelt in the Budget and therefore

there is no reference or measures against industrial unemployment. It should be noted in this connection that with all the claims about industrial progress and advance, employment in private sector has not increased at all in the last 10 years and in the public sector it is increased at the rate of only 2.2 per cent per year.

The budget announces that there will be no increase in defence expenditure. Growing expenditure on defence, armaments acquiring and manufacture of new weapons constitutes deduction from the funds necessary for economic development. But in the present day world infested by imperialists and their predatory activities it is necessary to protect a country's independence. Any relaxation here will cost the Indian people, their freedom and liberty. With the US imperialists determined to pour in sophisticated weapons and aircraft in Pakistan and openly encouraging its nuclear build up it would be foolish to expect that the defence expenditure can be maintained at the present level. With all tall talk about dialogue and US being ready for world peace the reality being that the US encourages Pakistani rulers to intervene against Afghanistan and build her military strength against India, one should be prepared for escalation of military expenditure.

Finally where does the budget stand in relation to Indian economy, how does it protect its future, its self-reliance and development? There is no change in the policy of imports liberalisation which has had disastrous results on the balance of payment position. Liberalisation, besides, had further led to import of goods manufactured in India including capital goods leaving Indian factories high and dry. The Government is so much committed to this policy under the pressure of the World Bank that it dares not save Indian interests affected by the imports. It is not only an open door policy for the multinationals to invade Indian market, it is positively discriminative against Indian industries. Many public sector concerns are now without orders, while goods which they can manufacture are allowed to be imported from outside on concessional rates. This is where the policy of import liberalisation leads. No wonder the workers are losing jobs and the Government does not want to provide either jobs or unemployment relief. This is nothing but a process of undermining the self-reliance of economy and making it growingly dependent on import from foreign countries. Whatever progress has been registered since independence is being liquidated by these policies.

The other direct effect of this policy is the growing crisis in the balance of payments position and the increased foreign debt payments. Though exports have increased, imports have increased at at still more accelerated rate, thanks to the liberalisation policy. The gain from increased exports have been wiped out and every year the balance of payment position worsens. India therefore is unable to meet her debt obligations through the earnings of the exports. These foreign debt obligations will by the end of 1989 amount to $ 5200 million, equivalent to 8000 crores of rupees at the prevalent rate of exchange. They will account for the 30 per cent of the country's export earnings. To escape bankruptcy India will be forced to seek another IMF loan accepting humiliating conditions, throwing new burdens on the people and undermining the independence of the economy. The Government's hope that a new loan can be negotiated at concessional rates is totally misplaced. If there are concessional rates the conditions will be still harder.

In fact "The Times of India" report indicates that India has already approached the IMF for a loan between Rs 5100 hundred crores to Rs 8600 hundred crores, depending on availability of funds. This is where Rajiv Gandhi Government is leading the country and its economy. It is therefore necessary for all trade unions, all workers to understand the implications of the Budget for the economy, for the people and workers themselves. There should be strong protests against new burdens; there should be protest against refusal to give unemployment relief and increased jobs and protests against import liberalisation, undermining of self-reliance and further raising of debts.

The Working Class, Vol. 18, No. 8, April 1989

37

The Working Class and The Peasantry

The All India Kisan Sabha, the largest mass organisation in the country with a membership of nearly over a crore is holding its Session at Khammam in Andhra Pradesh on the eve of May Day. The CITU and the working class greets the peasants, the agricultural workers and the Kisan Sabha on this occasion.

The importance of the AIKS Session and the decision it might take is obvious in the background of the widespread discontent against the Congress(I) policies in the rural areas. Last four or five years have witnessed intensification of the agrarian crisis uprooting thousands from their soil and homes and turning them into destitutes flocking to the crowded cities for jobs where three crores of unemployed and 1.6 lakhs closed factories await them. The intensity of this crisis, the unbearable sufferings it has inflicted on Indian peasants and agricultural workers, the backbone of our nation and people is missed by many, including, it is regrettable to admit, by the working class and its trade union movement. A working class which is oblivious to the mass suffering of the country's majority is not capable of achieving its emancipation from capitalist slavery. It is only capable of guilting its fatters with a measure of bonus, D.A. etc., which brings no radical change in its social status.

The plight of the rural mass is correctly described in the following from the Resolution of the 13th Congress of the CPI(M): "For the huge mass of agricultural workers there is neither work

nor the protection of all-India legislation to guarantee a minimum wage. Even where such legislations exist at the State level these are seldom implemented. Those demanding such minimum wages are often subjected to atrocities of all kinds. And the peasant producer is continuously made a debtor through unfair prices and unequal trade. Peasant indebtedness has increased and with higher rates of interest the peasant has to part with a larger share of his produce to his creditors. The institutions created to provide rural credit serve only the landlord and the rural rich."

Now this huge mass is again getting into action. Before the Session of the Kisan Sabha at Khammam takes its important decision to set the pace of peasants' and agricultural workers' resistance, a joint meeting of Kisan and Agricultural workers' organisation led by left parties, the CPI, the CPI(M) and others is to be held in New Delhi on 18th April. This is another important decision to unify the forces of the left to develop common action of the Kisan and agricultural workers on the vital question of land reforms. The united action by the organisations of two Parties will definitely be a precursor of a wide movement of the rural masses.

This left initiative for peasant action is of great political importance in the present situation in the country. The rural areas are bursting with anger and discontent. The Congress(I) is already in the field to cultivate the rural mass with populist slogans. It has announced that it will renew the reservation system for Harijans and Adivasis. It has announced Nehru Employment Scheme for the rural unemployed whose cause has been neglected by all including the working class and its trade union movement. The Congress(I) is also announcing a new anti-poverty programme to attract the rural mass in the coming elections. It is a matter of great regret that the secular opposition parties which are dreaming of coming to power in the next elections are busy in their own squabbles and have no time for the distress of the peasants and agricultural labour.

But the rural mass is determined to move forward and manifest its discontent in various ways. There are elements who wish to trap the peasants and use its unrest for their own purpose.

The 9th December 1987 Rally of the peasants was a mighty demonstration of rural discontent. It has a unique importance of its own because it was organised by the Left Parties and their mass organisations. But it was not the only mass expression of peasant dis-

content in this period. There are other manifestations and movements on local scale which mobilised thousands of peasants through Rasta Roko, Gherao, Gaon Bandh etc. They were organised by organisations of indifferent hues and groups; some of them openly hostile to the Left i.e., to a programme of serious agrarian overhaul uniting the peasants and agricultural workers on a common platform. Sharad Joshi, Tikait and their counterpart in the South in the main represented the rural vested interest while speaking in the name of rural community as a whole. Their opposition to all political parties is an attempt to depoliticalise the peasantry and keep it away from the Left and democratic forces. If successful they will succeed in manipulating the peasants' anger in favour of the landlords and rural upper-strata, leaving the peasants and agricultural workers high and dry.

A tussle is on for securing the allegiance of the peasantry between the Congress(I) party with its anti-poverty programme, rural employment guarantee, reservation for harijans, the rural vested interests and the kisan organisations led by the Left Parties. The significance of the recent direct intervention of the landlord lobby in peasant agitation lies in the fact that an attempt is being made now to consolidate the earlier ideological leadership into an organisational leadership.

Both for the future of democratic movement in the country and for success in the coming election struggle it is essential that the balance in the kisan areas shifts towards the Left and democratic forces.

Each party and each class has its own objective and methods. The communalists and fundamentalists are playing upon the religiosity of the peasants and seek to divert the discontent to divisive issues like Babri Masjid/Ramjanmbhoomi. The rural vested interests seek to use it as a tool of their electoral and class interests. The Congress and Rajiv Gandhi seek to make a special appeal to the weaker sections while advertising their anti-poverty programme for the rural masses as a whole. It is unfortunate that the secular opposition parties has yet failed to jump into with a clearcut programme of peasants' unity and advance. Such promises as ensuring 60 per cent seats for backward classes may win over a few leaders but may not stir the vast masses. The main responsibility for rallying the rural masses and their diverse movements in the common cause of the agrarian reforms, defeat of Rajiv Gandhi and

rebuff of communal and divisive forces rests on the Kisan organisations led by the Left parties. This they will be able to achieve provided they stick to their principled programme and at the same time show their capacity to cooperate with all secular opposition parties when they approach the rural masses. There is no doubt the All India Kisan Sabha Session will succeed in planning and taking steps for uniting all sections and provide a new and reliable basis for the advance of the common democratic movement in our country.

The working class and the trade union movement must intervene to ensure support for the left parties, to ensure growing unity between peasants and agricultural workers. All CITU trade unions in particular must do everything to mobilise the peasants for the action programme of the Kisan Sabha. Besides, the peasants' questions must become an integral part of trade union agitation, action and education.

The importance of the peasants rallying behind Left and Secular forces in the coming elections struggle is obvious. Without the mass support of the peasants and agricultural workers the election cannot be won. The working class and its trade unions by their support and action must strengthen peasants unity so that the reactionary agencies in the rural areas are isolated, the fundamentalists and communalists are exposed and Rajiv is defeated. In their propaganda and agitation they are in a position to use the performance of the two Left Front Governments of West Bengal and Kerala in favour of peasants and agricultural workers. It is now well-known that more land has been distributed to the peasants in West Bengal than anywhere else. Besides these, the several measures taken by the two Governments to defend the peasantry stand in sharp contrast to the actions of other Governments. In Congress(I) ruled states in particular atrocities against agricultural workers continue to increase with landlord agents combining with the police and anti-socials.

But it is not a question of immediate election struggle alone. The workers and peasants of India cannot have a fair deal under the bourgeois-landlord rule. 40 years experience have shown that continuation of this class rule means misery and unemployment for all along with disintegration of the country. What they need is political power in the hands of the masses, the state of people's democracy. But such state cannot be ushered into existence unless

a firm workers' and peasants' alliance is established to fight for it. In the immediate situation while strengthening the peasants' and agricultural workers' unity, our workers and unions must constantly think in terms of building workers' and peasants' alliance and guide the trade union movement in that direction.

17.4.89

The Working Class, Vol. 18, No. 9, May 1989

38

Sino-Soviet Summit

The Sino-Soviet Summit meeting with the communique and statements following it and the results achieved promise great and important developments in world politics. The meeting and its results are acclaimed by all progressive forces with the imperialists and war-mongers unable to express their unhappiness publicly.

At the banquet hosted in honour of Comrade Gorbachev the Chinese President Comrade Yang Shangkun said: "the two giant neighbours, China and the Soviet Union, bidding goodbye to the past and opening up a new type of relations on the five principles of co-existence. This helps push forward the current world trend towards peace and development, in compliance with the desire and aspirations of the people of the two countries and the rest of the world."

The difficulties to achieve the summit meeting were well stated by Comrade Gorbachev when he said : "It is not easy to have the present meeting, for this requires both sides to give full scope to their wisdom and responsibility and to make sustained efforts to overcome negative factors and prejudice that had heavily loomed for many years over the relations between the Soviet Union and China."

The leadership of the two countries and parties deserve congratulations for overcoming the past prejudices and recognising their historical responsibility to world and the international movement.

There is no doubt that the affirmation of friendship and cooperation between the two great countries of socialism will strengthen the cause of peace, freedom, democracy and socialism all over the world. The two countries, their working class and the people have been the architects of the biggest social transformation of our period, the triumph of socialism over one-third of the world. The two in the best traditions of socialism have incessantly worked for world peace, for avoiding an all destructive nuclear war while not failing to maintain their defence capacity. The two have unilaterally declared that they will not be the first to use the nuclear strike against any adversary. The two have been a great source of strength to the national liberation movements in the world. The summit meeting will strengthen the fight for world peace against nuclear designs, machinations and maneuvering of U.S. imperialism.

The establishment of normal relationship between the two countries followed by normalisation of party-to-party relations is bound to lead to better cooperation in important issues of world politics and issues directly affecting the interests of the two countries especially issues of economic cooperation. This cooperation should strengthen all socialist countries and will be of great help to the economies of many third world countries. The Non-aligned movement in particular will be greatly helped with the increased cooperation of the USSR and People's China on the world plans.

For the international working class movement the summit brings to an end an unprecedented bizarre nightmarish period. The period witnessed the disunity of the socialist camp, sharp differences, opposition and even hostility between those who had held aloft the great banner of proletarian internationalism and marched forward to secure decisive victories against capitalism. It witnessed a growing disintegration of the granite communist unity of which Lenin spoke and felt proud. Comrade Gorbachev very correctly said at one of the meetings in Beijing that "each side must make its own assessment of the period."

That is absolutely essential so that the world movement can learn from the past and avoid such pitfalls in the future. Workers of all lands ardently wish that present day normalisation within the framework of peaceful co-existence, non-intervention, etc., will soon be transformed into the great fraternity of earlier years which liberated one-third of the world for socialism.

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39

The Mighty Working Class Protest

The trade unions of West Bengal led by left-led parties have decided to observe a mighty Bengal Bandh on 30th August to protest against the anti-working class policies of Rajiv Gandhi government. The demands include opening of closed and locked out mills, nationalisation of jute industry and trade, peasants' demands, end of discrimination against the left front government and people of West Bengal and finally the ouster of Rajiv Government.

The working class and people of West Bengal will be registering their mass protest against the ruinous economic policies of the Rajiv Government. Every year the number of sick industry grows; it has already exceeded one-and-a half lakhs. Every year the number of unemployed grows. It already exceeded three crores in the cities and more than ten crores in the villages. Every year a new promise is made to curb unemployment to find new jobs, but like sickness in industry it grows along with lockouts and closures. And at the same time Rajiv Government announces that industrial growth rate is increasing every year.

The entire working class of India is interested in defeating this policy, set the wheels of industry running and ensure employment for the lacks that have been thrown out of their jobs. The demand raised by the West Bengal trade unions includes the urgent demand for nationalisation of jute industry and jute trade. The Government of India cannot boast of any effective remedy and

measure to ease the situation and bring relief to jute industry and workers. The jute workers concentrated in most parts in West Bengal have had to undergo misery due to the bankrupt and anti-working class policies followed by the Rajiv Gandhi Government.

Along with the jute industry the cotton textile industry, the biggest industry in India is in the throes of crisis. The total number of workers involved in the production of cotton textile goods—mills, handloom and powerloom workers exceed a crore. Yet this mass of workers have been thrown into indescribable misery by the Rajiv Government. The new cotton textile policy has turned out to be a hoax, inflicting further suffering on the workers. The NTC mills, more than 100, are also run inefficiently and turning sick. The Government seems to have no other policy except of denotifying them and throwing the workers to the wolfs. Its policy towards powerloom has ruined the workers who have been getting starvation wage all along. So far as the handloom workers are concerned the official policy, notwithstanding tall talks, is one of continuous ruination and forced starvation. The lakhs of handloom workers continue to ply their trade just because outright starvation awaits them if they stop plying the handlooms. The CITU has held several conventions to voice the urgent demands of all these sections. In September again there will be a big rally of all sections to protest the official policies.

On the 30th of August while demanding justice to powerloom and handloom workers the entire trade union movement must demand nationalisation of organised cotton textile industry with workers' participation. Sickness exposes the bankruptcy of private ownership. The plight of NTC mills exposes the bankruptcy of running the mills without participation of workers on equal terms. The more than 100 nationalised textile mills under the NTC have shown enormous losses leading to huge waste of public money because of failure to ensure genuine participation of workers and the lack of desire and the will to produce the best possible results for the people. The nationalised textile mills and their working is not an affair between the workers and the management, but a trust held on behalf of the people of India. The Government has no plan of running the industry in the interest of people and the workers. In fact they seem to have only one plan, a plan for massacre of jobs. Private capital circles and their research bureau forecast that the share of composite mills in cloth production will shrink to 10 per cent in another ten years. About 50 per cent of the composite mills will not see the turn of the century and the labour employed in the

textile industry today is surplus by 25 per cent for available levels of technology. Nobody knows what fate awaits the workers of handloom and powerloom at the turn of the century.

There can be no relief for the workers concerned unless the organised textile industry is nationalised, workers' participation is ensured and transitional measures to reorganise the industry are decided in consultation with the trade unions. Besides, justice should be ensured to powerloom and handloom workers.

But it is not only a question of jute and cotton textile industry. Lock-out, sickness, closures affect thousands of engineering and other concerns. The drug industry in India is again faced with closures because of competition from multi-nationals. The economic policy of Rajiv Gandhi Government is leading to increased closures and lock-outs. The entire policy regarding closures, lock-outs, denotification, non-interference of the Government is dictated by World Bank pressure and guidelines leading to victimisation of lakhs of Indian workers. This is accompanied by a terrific computerisation drive. According to estimates of Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, India's production of computers will be worth Rs. 950 crore in 1990, Rs. 3500 crores in 1995 and Rs. 1400 crores in 2000 A.D. In 1991 production of micro-computers will go up from 75000 numbers in 1989 to 1,10,000 numbers and mini-computers would register a growth from 35,000 numbers to 45,000 numbers.

Simultaneously the working class is defrauded by the rising inflation and the introduction of fraudulent cost of living index series. On top of an inflation rate of 10.6 per cent in 1987-88 there was an additional inflation of 6.6 per cent in 1988-89. To cheat the workers of higher D.A. the new series of cost of living index was introduced despite its unanimous rejection by the entire trade union movement.

All this makes it urgent for the trade union movement to join together on 30th August to protest against lock-outs, closures, sickness of industry and other forms of attack on the working class and demand opening of closed concerns.

The Government will not move without a united working class challenge. Lack of unity has enabled the government to introduce the new cost of living index without any protest action from the working class. Only in Bombay the CITU observed a protest strike, but nowhere else any direct protest action was planned.

It has to be admitted that considering the all round offensive

from the Government and the capitalist class, trade union unity and its counter offensive has not been effective. This lacunae has to be overcome on 30th August and the entire CITU must demonstrate on the day its protest against the anti-working class policy of the Rajiv Government. The CITU calls upon all trade union centres and Federations, federations of employees and industrial federations to join in this protest and make it a mighty working class demonstration against Rajiv's policies. The CITU calls upon all trade unions to support the demand for Rajiv Government's ouster raised by the West Bengal trade unions. The Rajiv Government has not only inflicted immense economic suffering on the working class and the people of India, it has also endangered the unity and integrity of the country by pursuing opportunist policies, policies of compromise with communal and reactionary forces for self interest of the ruling party. The Rajiv Government besides is engaged in concentrating further power in its hands attacking the rights of the State Governments and violating all accepted democratic norms.

It is pursuing an authoritarian drive against the masses. In particular it launches a vicious violent attack against the trade unions and CPI(M) in Tripura where it recognises no law whatsoever. Besides it pursues, a policy of discrimination against the people of West Bengal. The entire working class must fully support the demands on end of discrimination against the Left Front Government which is an advanced outpost of Indian democracy.

On 30th August all trade unions of CITU must not only protest against the policies of closures and lockout and also demand the ouster of Rajiv Government which has covered itself with shame for its corruption and anti-national compromises.

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40

The Great French Revolution

"The Great French Revolution was the third uprising of the bourgeoisie but the first that had entirely cast off the religious cloak and was fought out on undisguised political lines; it was the first, too, that was really fought out to the destruction of one of the combatants, the aristocracy, and the complete triumph of the other, the bourgeoisie." (Engels—Socialism, Utopian and Scientific)

Engels here brilliantly summed up the class character of the Great French Revolution which initiated and accentuated revolutionary processes in Europe. No Revolution of modern times except the Great October Revolution led to such widespread international consequences as the French Revolution was announcing and proclaiming a new era or stage of society—Bourgeois society with individual freedom and democratic liberties. These democratic rights and liberties were unheard of under the feudal regime which was overthrown by the revolution. The cry of "liberty, equality and fraternity" which represented the new society became the watch-word of the revolution and was repeated by millions of people in the succeeding revolutions. The French revolution was an event of world importance proclaiming the arrival of a new society which was destined to take humanity forward notwithstanding subsequent failures and injustices inflicted in the suffering and victorious people.

Such a great historic victory with its stress on individual liberty and freedom could not be achieved without a new ideology,

without an ideology which challenges the ideology of the ruling feudal classes and the dominant church and proclaimed new principles and outlook on the basis of modern knowledge. The French materialists, encyclopaedists, physiocrats, Voltaire, Rousseau with their thoughts and criticism of the current society and church laid the ideological foundation for the new revolution. The encyclopaedists were the most famous bourgeois thinkers of 18th Century. "They gathered together all the knowledge of the world and coordinated it into a general system in order that the work of past centuries must be made useful to future generations and that our own discendants enlightening their understanding may be more virtuous and more happy." (Didardo)

The physiocrats representing the economic ideas of 18th Century class upheld the principle of free competition as a natural one against all artificial, that is feudal regulations and control. The French materialists challenged the idealist philosophy and the church and the authority of religion. Voltaire strove to convince the despots of the necessity of granting reforms in the interest of bourgeois development. Montesquieu, another eminent bourgeois thinker, in order to protect the people from despotic rule called for division of state power into legislature, executive and judiciary. Rousseau, the representative of the petty-bourgeoisie was the theoretician of popular sovereignty. He preached that the will of the majority was decisive. His theory of Social Contract gave a big blow to the prevailing ideas about monarchy and absolute rule.

Engels writes: "The great men, who in France prepared men's minds for the coming revolution, were themselves extreme revolutionaries. they recognised no external authority of any kind whatever. Religion, natural science, society, political institutions—everything was subjected to the most unsparing criticism: everything must justify its existence before the judgement—seat of reason or give up existence. Reason became the sole measure of everything. Every form of society and government then existing, every old traditional notion was flung into the lumber-room as irrational: Now, for the first time, appeared the light of day, the kingdom of reason; henceforth, superstition, injustice, privilege, oppression, were to be superseded by eternal truth, eternal Right, equality based on Nature and the inalienable right of man."

"We know today that this kingdom of reason was nothing more than the idealised kingdom of the bourgeoisie; that this

eternal Right found its realisation in bourgeois justice; that this equality reduced itself to bourgeois equality before the law; that bourgeois property was proclaimed as one of the essential rights of man; and that the government of reason, the Contrat Social of Rousseau, came into being, and only could come into being, as a democratic bourgeois republic. The great thinkers of the eighteenth century could no more than their predecessors, go beyond the limits imposed upon them by their epoch." (Engels: Socialism, Utopian and Scientific)

The 18th Century had a few representatives of communist thought, also Meslieu exposed himself to death for starvation and in his statement denounced the religion as inequality. He demanded that the labour should form the basis of society and expressed the hope that "the great ones of the earth might be strangled by the guts of the priests." There were two other leaders of communist thoughts, Morelly and Mably (1709-1783). Mably attributed all evil to private property in land.

This ideological onslaught against the old order was the result of the changing economic reality and situation in France. France was getting ripe for the bourgeois society with the growing development of industry and trade. By 1780, conditions necessary for the introduction of machinery already existed. This development of industry and trade came into sharp conflict with the state's interference. The new industrial bourgeoisie was demanding abolition of feudal regulations and restrictions and complete freedom for trade, transport and exchange and industrial activity. The feudal regime, its regulations, the taxes levied by several feudal lords all obstructed industrial development. They were the biggest barriers to the free development of bourgeois industry and society and had to be overcome if industry were to develop. The bourgeoisie were realising that without capturing political power from the ruling feudal class their interests will continue to be jeopardised. The ground was clear for a battle for a political power.

But if the bourgeoisie felt that their progress was being stalled, the peasant masses felt they were being strangled by poverty, feudal exploitation and taxes and total lack of rights. The peasant was not the owner of the land. On church land he was actually a serf. Over the greater part of the country the peasant was allowed to till the land in return for burdensome obligation and dues which appropriated a large part of the product of his labour. A vicious

system developed with the peasant facing a number of appropriators of his produce. In the course of centuries a hierarchy of appropriators had developed between the peasants and the landlords. The same phenomena that was seen in Bengal during the period of Permanent Settlement with a series of middlemen Patnidars and Darpatnidars between the tillers and the landlords.

Besides, the peasant was oppressed by number of taxes, the most detested being the tax on salt. Taxes claimed nearly two-thirds of the entire product of the soil while the privileged classes, the nobility and the clergy secured exemption from paying the majority of the taxes. Peasants besides had to meet feudal obligations such as service on the roads, in the stables, in the army.

The economic distress of the peasantry was brought to a head by the terrible harvest failure of 1788-1789. The economic crisis engendered a crisis in State finances. Attempts were made earlier to cover the financial deficits with the aid of the representatives of feudal aristocracy. The nobility failed to ease the situation and suggest measures for raising resources for the government. Neither the feudal aristocracy nor the landed clergy were in a position to offer any solution. So desperate was the situation that Louis XVI, the monarch was forced to call a Session of the Old Body known as States General. The States General consisted of three estates the church, the nobility and the burghers. The third estate had about twice as much representation as the other two.

The summoning of the States General with the predominance of the third estate was fatal to the regime. The third estate which represented bourgeois interests was not in a mood to provide finances to the King. The assembly was opened on May 5th, 1789 and turned its attention to altering the Constitution with the aim of ending the rule of the privileged classes. Overcoming the resistance of the government, the feudal aristocracy and the church, the assembly declared itself as national assembly, "the only publicly and legally ratified representative of the people, sent here directly by the whole nation." With this declaration the new class, the bourgeoisie asserted the sovereignty of the people and led the foundation of the Parliamentary system. But they could not have succeeded had not the insurrectionary masses supported them. On July 12, the suffering people began to arm themselves and on 14th July they stormed the Bastille prison, the symbol of king;s tyranny. The armed masses were in the field. The 14th July was to be

remembered in France and in many countries as the day of victory of liberty and freedom and end of feudal tyranny. In the rural areas the peasants stormed the castles of the lords, burnt feudal obligations and dues. The revolutionary wave reached the provincial towns where the urban bourgeoisie set up autonomous municipal administrations armed themselves, and organised a national guard.

On the night of August 4th National Assembly proclaimed abolition of feudal privileges and feudal burdens. But in reality the peasant question was not solved. Certain feudal obligations were to be abolished only under a money payment. This was because of the bourgeoisie and the nobility still dominated the constituent assembly. But the assembly struck decisively against the church. All church lands were confuscated and titles were abolished.

The bourgeois leadership which was able to overthrow feudal rule because of the insurrectionary masses, now utilised their position to consolidate its own interests. The constituent assembly removed all feudal obstacles to trade and declared that the workers submit to the will of the capitalist masters. On June 14th, 1791, it passed a decree forbidding the workers to organise and prohibiting strikes. The restricted class character of liberty and equality was revealed during the initial stage of the revolution itself. The workers protested in one of their appeals when they said "in the days of July 12 to 14, 1789 the rich crawled into their cellars, but when they saw that the propertyless classes carried through the Revolution alone, they came out of their holes to treat us as rioters and to begin their intrigues, to keep their comfortable blacks and then they felt stronger and tried to suppress us completely.

The national assembly went on proclaiming now their rights and liberties. In August 1789 it passed the declaration of the rights of man declaring, "men are born free and equal and remain so. Social differences can only be justified on the ground of the welfare of the whole.... The object of all civil association is the maintenance of the natural and inalienable rights of man. These are liberty, property, security and resistance to every force of oppression." But this did not prevent the assembly from proclaiming a restricted class constitution. The 1791 constitution conferred the right to be a member of the national assembly, to have a share in the municipal administration, the right to elect deputies only upon active citizens, that is propertied classes who paid a high direct tax. It was inevitable that the contradiction between the people and the na-

tional assembly, between the masses and the interests of the bourgeoisie and the privileged estates to try a hand at a counter-revolutionary classes should lead to an outburst of class struggle and civil strife. The compromising attitude of the bourgeoisi-aristocratic assembly encouraged the privileged conspiracy. On June 20th 1791 the King attempted to escape to the frontier and join the foreign armies to declare war against the revolution. But the vigilant people frustrated the plan and the king was brought to Paris. The angry people now sought to depose the king and declare a republic. But the Paris Municipal administration declared a state of seige and issued the order to open fire on the demonstration seeking the republic. The assembly now joined hands with the representative of absolutism to protect property. The butchery of July 17 followed by police terror forced many leaders of revolution like Danton to flee or go into hiding, like Marat. The butchery and police terror started when the main task of the revolution, complete liquidation of feudalism and feudal rule and liberation of peasant was yet to be finished. The bourgeoisie was not in a mood to move forward to revolutionary onslaught against the old order. With their predominance in the national assembly and the power in their hands they were prepared to strike a deal with the monarch and nobility on their own terms.

In this situation when the fate of the revolution was in balance, another counter-revolutionary force came to aid the French monarchy. The absolutist governments of Europe joined in a coalition to attack and defeat the revolution.

Increased popular distress sharpened the division between the bourgeoisie and the masses. Now two classes confronted each other and fought the civil war. The victorious bourgeoisie dominating the national assembly was confronted by the urban petty bourgeoisie which was now in alliance with the peasants and workers. The battle centered around the completion of the anti-feudal revolution, completion of the bourgeois democratic revolution which the bourgeoisie was compromising. On August 10, 1792 Paris saw a new insurrection against the monarchy, the storming Tuileries. This was the people's reply to the compromising national assembly and the national bourgeoisie. The victorious people also accepted the challenge of feudal Europe and marched to the frontiers to defend France against foreign arms with the cry "fatherland in danger". It was decided to arm all citizens. The insur-

rection of August 10, 1792 abolished the monarchy and withdrew the earlier constitution. France became a democratic republic. Now the victorious people turned their attention to the counter-revolutionaries at home working in unison with foreign armies and governments. On September 2nd and 3rd about 1600 counter-revolutionaries in the prisons of Paris were executed. The national assembly attempted to resist the further progress of revolution but the people forced the assembly to dissolve itself and convene a revolutionary representative body which was to be elected by universal franchise.

Marx observed "that the history of convention was the history of civil war in France. The revolutionary minority in the convention represented by the Paris deputies was opposed by majority led by moderate republican parties who represented the interests of trade and industry. Now it was a battle for completing the anti-feudal revolution overcoming the vacillations and opposition of the bourgeoisie." Marx pointed out that the revolutionary minority thought of rendering permanent justice and equality to the common man but its practical actions could not go beyond clearing the ground for bourgeois development of society. The country was not yet ripe to escape all class dominations, political and economic.

The Convention began its work directing that only a constitution drawn by the people is legal, person and property are protected by the nation. The revolutionary minority in the convention saw that the King had become the centre for organising counter-revolutionary activities. He was found to be in league with the foreign powers to attack the revolution. A section of the convention tried to save the king. But on January 1793 the king was executed.

The conflict between the Gerondists and Jacobins now sharpened with the former representing the interests of trading and industrial bourgeoisie opposing all measures in the interest of the people suggested by the latter, representative of the petty-bourgeoisie. The differences now centre on whether all feudal burdens should be abolished without compensation, whether war should be declared on those who hold up supplies in the hope of reaping higher prices, whether high contributions should be levied on the rich and finally whether political terror, use of force should be adopted against the counter-revolutionaries and opponents of the revolution. The Gerondists true to their class interests opposed every attack on property, opposed special capital taxation and

other measures. However, they continued to hold sway so long as the revolutionary armies of France won victories in the battle against the coalition troops. But betrayal by a Gerondist General compromised their position in the assembly. Gerondist deputies were driven out from the convention. On May 31st and June 2nd 1793, the day when 29 Gerondist leaders were arrested, the Gerondists rushed to the provinces and raised the standard revolt. But the peasantry and the urban poor saved the situation. The attack on revolution was again defeated.

After the defeat of the Gerondists, the Jacobins proceeded to draft a new constitution known as 1793 constitution in consonance with the democratic aims of the new revolution. The new revolution introduced universal franchise and plebiscite. It declared that it was the duty of the society to protect equality, liberty, security and property. At the suggestion of Robespiere, the Jacobin leader, it was declared in the constitution—"society owns support to needy citizens; it provides them with work or secure to those incapable of work the means of existence." The convention led by the Jacobins proceeded to liberate the peasants. It abolished all siegnorial obligations and burdens without compensation, returned the common lands to the village communities, adopted measures to facilitate the sale of land from the state to peasants. The convention at the same time took measures to protect the interests of the common man against high prices, traders' speculation and low wages of workers, measures which adversely affected the interests of the bourgeoisie.

These measures could not be carried out without continuing fight and suppression of counter-revolutionary resistance. The convention carried the struggles through the committee of public welfare and public safety. The Jacobins terror has been denounced by bourgeois historians. But it was directed against the class opposing the completion of the revolution.

Accomplishing the chief task of the revolution, the abolition of feudal order in teeth of bourgeois opposition, Roberspiere and Jacobins cleared the path for the rapid development of France on capitalist lines. Historically French society was matured only for capitalism and there was no possibility of going beyond this framework. Robespiere's positive programme which he tried to implement at the beginning of 1794 created difficulties. It was a utopian programme which talked of agrarian republic society of

equal property holders, abolition of poverty and division of land among the needy. All Jacobin groups in the convention could not agree on this programme. And some like Danton were representatives of bourgeois intelligentsia and stood to the right. In the centre stood Robespiere and Saint just representing the urban and rural petty-bourgeoisie. The fight among these groups led to the liquidation of one group after another. The extreme group was got rid of Danton also had to walk to the guillotine. Roberspiere got rid of opposition from the right and left and started his own programme. But within a few months he also followed his opponents to the guillotine. His execution on Tenth Thermidor July 28, 1794 signalised the defeat of the petty-bourgeoisie by the capitalist class.

But Robespiere and Jacobins secured a complete victory for the anti-feudal revolution. The peasants were liberated. The monarch was gone. The aristocarcy was deprived of all political power, firm foundations for bourgeois parliamentary system were laid. Lenin paid high tribute to the Jacobins; "The Jacobins of 1793 belonged to the most revolutionary class of the 18th Century, the town and country poor. It was again of this class which had in fact (and not just in words) done away with its monarch, its landlords and its moderate bourgeoisie by the most revolutionary measures, including the guillone—against this truely revolutionary class of the 18th Century—that the monarchs of Europe combined to wage a war." (page 57 vol. 25)

The defeat of Robespiere became inevitable because the revolution could not go further than the destruction of the feudal regime. With the liberation of the peasants and the development of bourgeois economy the mass of people were more interested in consolidating what they had achieved. Only the Parisian workers wanted to move forward. The Paris municipalities rallied to Robespiere's defence but he hesitated to give a call for insurrection.

Robespiere was not the last revolutionary to be guillotined. The rising bourgeois society saw the first sprouting of communist ideology and aspirations, Babuf a Jacobin leader planned to overthrow the bourgeois government and instal a revolutionary democratic dictatorship. Babuf and his followers were the earliest communists because they had understood that freedom was impossible without equality, that is, so long as private property exists. Babuf was betrayed by a spy and the conspiracy failed. Babuf and his colleagues became the earliest communist martyrs.

Bourgeois republic was now fully established. The subsequent changes, rise of Nepolean, his war etc all were part of consolidation of the bourgeois regime. As years passes the regime revealed its ugly face when it was confronted by the revolutionary working class. The way in which it suppressed the 1848 insurrection of the Parisian working class, atrocities it committed against, the Paris Commune were the final culmination of this bourgeois republic. And in a few years after the Paris Commune this republic entered upon imperialist policies conquering colonies and oppressing colonial peoples. It further revealed its thorough going reactionary character when along with British it did everything to encourage Hitler to invade the Soviet Union and refused to support the demand of collective security against Hitler's aggression. Today also it believes in nuclear deterrent and consolidating the power of European monopolists and multinationals in the name of European unity. It is quite clear that neither the present rulers of France nor the crowd of capitalist and imperialist rulers who have gathered for bi-centenal anniversary had any right to claim the heritage of the French revolution. Their coming together to celebrate the bicentenary is an example of international class hypocrisy and cynicism.

The Working Class, Vol. 18, No. 12, August 1989

41

Presidential Address

Working Committee Meeting of CITU Kalyani, September 4-6, 1989

Comrades,

We are meeting after our Dhanbad meeting after a long interval. You are aware of the reason for this delay and I offer my apology to you for failure to meet according to the schedule prescribed by the Constitution.

Before I turn my attention to the pressing problems facing us let me on behalf of all of you recall the courage and sacrifice of Comrade Safdar Hashmi, a devoted comrade of ours who has placed his art in the service of the working class and the people. Hashmi was murdered by gangsters while arousing and mobilising the workers of Gaziabad through this inspiring drama. The entire progressive literary world condemned this outrage under the Congress(I) regime. Hashmi's sacrificing life, his identification with the cause of the downtrodden and his passion to fight the injustices of present day society recall to our mind lines from Mayakovsky's Order of the Day to the Army of Arts:

> Streets for paint-brushes we'll use,
> our palettes—squares with their wide open space.
> Into the streets, the crowds among,
> futurists,
> drummers,
> masters of rhyme!

Counter Revolutionary Rebellion in China

Comrades,

The most outstanding international event of recent times relates to May-June developments in People's China described in bourgeois press as a student struggle for democracy. What was passed of as a student struggle was in reality a struggle using the students and other sections against the Communist Party of China, for the rejection of socialist path of development and taking a turn towards capitalism, for replacing the state of People's Democracy by a bourgeois capitalist state.

Leaders of the movement circulated leaflets and raised slogans a gainst the Communist Party calling for its ousting, denigrated socialism and people's democracy and called for bourgeois parliamentary republic. They expressed their determination to cooperate with Taiwan and the Kuomintang to overthrow the present order. And their ideological leader Fang Lizhi finding that the tide was turning, took hasty shelter in the US Embassy exposing what type of democracy he and his followers were demanding.

The world was made to believe that the movement was a genuine struggle for democratic rights; that the Government of China was suppressing the students, killing them by thousands. The entire imperialist and bourgeois press joined in a chorus of denunciation of the Chinese Government and the Communist Party of China. Many well-meaning people in our country were misled by this propaganda and joined in expressing their condemnation of the Government of People's China. Not one of them raised the question if it was a democratic struggle, why were the imperialists and their media vociferously supporting it. Since when Bush, Thatcher and their imperialist colleagues have become the champions of democracy? The ruling imperialists with their class instinct knew that the struggle was undermining socialism, that its protagonists were helping restoration of capitalism in China.

It is now seen that the PLA (People's Liberation Army) refused to open fire on the unarmed people and lost more than hundred soldiers with hundreds getting injured. Only when the masses were separated from the counter-revolutionary forces did the PLA decide to use forces ending in a total death of 300 of which more than 100 were PLA soldiers.

Here was an instance of the entire imperialist camp coming to

bring down a socialist state. Bush, Thatcher and others all with one voice denounced China and adopted several measures of sanctions against her. This gang of imperialist has resisted for years imposing of sanctions against South Africa for its apartheid. Now these marauders of other people's rights suddenly flowered into human right defenders. Their attempts to indict the Chinese regime shows the intensified contradiction between the two systems of socialist and imperialist.

The imperialists' support to the counter revolutionaries in China shows that imperialism will remain imperialism notwithstanding the illusions of some people that the contradictions between the two systems are getting moderated. This is a doctrine of negation of class struggle. We must never forget that the socialist world and the third world countries are an object of constant attacks by the imperialists and lack of vigilance will lead to betrayal.

While the Chinese revolution was being attacked internally and externally, while the imperialists camp was unitedly throwing all its weight in favour of counter-revolutionaries, international working class stood confused, divided and disorganised.

Many ask the question why this challenge of counter-revolutionary forces should have arisen in China after years of successful socialist revolution. Some mistakes of earlier period have delayed the developmental process in China, but the main reason is that China which was a backward country when the revolution put the people in power, had to go through prolonged transitional period before it could be a fulfledged socialist country. In this transition process to move forward, many concessions have to be made to private producers, foreign capital and these concessions often create a climate in favour of capitalist values and outlook. These have to be fought repeatedly and those who are victims of these illusions are to be fought ideologically and defeated. It is obvious that this latter task was done in a half-hearted way as admitted by the CPC, otherwise the organisers of the movement would not have succeeded in securing the temporary support of masses including the students. The latter which claim universal sympathy were used by the reactionaries as a shield to cover their counter-revolutionary objectives. This was the third time that the CPC had to face such a challenge showing that such outbursts are possible till the end of the process of transition, though their appeal and

impact will continue to weaken.

The CITU expresses its support to the Communist Party of China in the way it handled a very grave situation and expresses its joy that the counter-revolutionary challenge has been defeated. The CPC and the PLA have rendered tremendous service to the cause of the international movement by defeating this reactionary challenge. The world movement would have been thrown decades back had the reactionaries succeeded in their objective. The CITU calls for greater international unity and greater working class vigilance in the intensified conflict between socialism and imperialism.

Sino-Soviet Summit

Comrades,

Another event of great importance which was overshadowed by the developments in China was the visit of Comrade Gorbachev to China and the beginning of normalisation of relations between the Governments of the two socialist countries.

For the international working class movement the Summit brings to an end an unprecedented nightmarish period. It witnessed the disunity of the socialist camp, sharp differencess, opposition, even hostility between those who for years and decades held aloft the great banner of proletarian internationalism and marched forward to achieve decisive victories against capitalism. It witnessed the disintegration of that granite unity of which Lenin spoke and felt proud. Comrade Gorbachev has correctly observed in one of his meetings in Beijing that each side make its own assessment of the period. This is absolutely essential so that the world movement learns from the past and avoids such pitfalls in the future. The CITU and India's working class ardently wish that the present day normalisation within the framework of peaceful coexistence, non-intervention in each other's affairs will be soon transformed into the great fraternity of earlier years which liberated one-third of the world for socialism. The restoration of old relations will create an invincible force inspiring millions to intensify the fight against imperialism to march forward to socialism.

US Drive for Space War

Comrades,

The forces defending world peace continue to carry on the fight against nuclear war with greater vigour. On behalf of the USSR Comrade Gorbachev has made several new proposals to

reduce nuclear armaments and conventional weapons but there is no response from the US and its allies. The optimism of some people that the reduction of short and medium range missiles in Europe will lead to quick progress in further reductions has proved to be wishful thinking having no relation to imperialist practice, tactics and manoeuvres. The U.S. imperialists are attempting to circumvent the understanding on short and medium range missiles by placing missiles of larger nuclear potential in Europe. Besides huge sums running into billions of dollars have been sanctioned recently by the U.S. Senate for pushing forward the Space War programme of the USA. In recent times, every proposal made in the eleventh round of Soviet-American talks on nuclear space weapons has been turned down once again exposing U.S. obduracy and lack of sincerity for nuclear disarmament. Head of Soviet delegation said after the completion of the talks, "the only documents remaining unchanged are the texts of draft agreements on space. In this area side's positions are too wide apart to allow for any progress. The U.S. position holds that ABM deployment, in particular, space-based defences are possible in the framework of SDI programme—something which is incompatible with the ABM Treaty currently in force. As for the Soviet side, it stands for an agreement to observe the ABM Treaty as signed in 1972. It is our understanding that since there is an objective relationship between strategic defensive and offensive arms, a Treaty on reduction in strategic offensive arms can be made possible only if the ABM Treaty is observed."

This mild protest reveals the refusal of the USA to give up its plans of offensive Space War. The U.S. has accepted reduction of Short and Medium Range Missiles for Europe, but it is preparing for a Space weaponary where it thinks it is ahead of the USSR.

Other European allies of the USA are no different. Speaking before the Supreme Soviet on 1st of August on his visit to Britain, West Germany and France, Gorbachev said: "For the British leadership nuclear deterrent is a fixed idea; while West Germany is concerned about its being located on the line of nuclear confrontation and a special threat posed to it by any nuclear weapon. France is insistant on its specific position in Atlantic Alliance and stresses that "exceptional significance of its nuclear potential". In this connection Gorbachev said that the Soviet Union opposes the nuclear deterrent strategy which can depreciate coventional weap-

ons cut and which runs counter to the task of eliminating military confrontation in Europe. In passing it should be noted that Gorbachev, who is an ardent advocate of a common European home had the following to say about the recent visit of President Bush to Hungary and Poland. In his speech to the Supreme Soviet he observed that the recent visits paid by U.S. President Bush to Hungary and Poland, this was natural on condition that temptation is controlled to take advantage of the complicated problems in countries with a different system hoping to drive them off the path they chose.

This is the dismal sequel to the high hopes raised by the agreement to reduce nuclear war-heads in Europe. It is now seen that the imperialist camp had no intention of reducing such less eliminating nuclear weapons. Their line was to produce more offensive and destructive weapons to replace them by the current ones. And they made people believe that they were sincerely interested in reduction of nuclear weapons.

Greetings to Democratic Struggles

Comrades,

We send our warmest greetings to the brave and courageous people of Palestine who are waging a heroic struggle in the occupied area and defying the terrorist Hitler-like repression of the Israeli Government. The Intifada has become a byword for resolute and fiery struggle for freedom. We send our warm greetings to the people of South Africa fighting the apartheid regime and the courageous people of Nicaragua who have succeeded in frustrating US designs.

Comrades,

Nearer home, we sent our warm greetings to the people and working class of Pakistan who are now enjoying a state of democracy though under constant attack from the reactionary forces. We wish them successes in the struggle to consolidate the democratic advance already restored and forge closer bonds of unity between the working class and people of Pakistan and the working class and people of India.

We send our warm greetings to the fighting people of Bangladesh, the progressive section among whom had already raised a voice of protest against the establishment of theocratic Islamic state. The people of Bangladesh are still ruled by a military dictator and we wish them success in the struggle to eliminate military rule

and establish a genuine democratic government under a free and fair election.

Settle Differences with Nepal

We send our warm greetings to the working class and people of Nepal and the working class and people of Sri Lanka. The working class of India calls upon both the Governments of India and the Government of Nepal to overcome the immediate differences and settle them in the mutual interest of both peoples and both countries. They should be aware that forces inimical to the freedom and integrity of both countries are ever ready to magnify the differences and exploit them for their own dominating interests. The working class of India calls upon the Government of India to ensure that the existing difficulties created by lapse of the earlier treaty should be immediately overcome to ensure that the people of Nepal are not put to any economic difficulties. The CITU congratulates the progressive forces in Nepal and the Communist Parties on their correct stand to protect the common interests of both people and friendship between the two countries.

Restoration of Friendship with Sri Lanka

The CITU expresses concern over the recent development concerning the relationship between India and Sri Lanka. It is, however, relieved to find that the two Governments are negotiating over the question of IPKF withdrawal and security of the Tamils in Sri Lanka. An agreed solution of the problems will restore the old friendship between the two peoples and also keep away all the mischief makers who want to take advantage of the present situation. The IPKF can remain in Sri Lanka only with the consent of the sovereign Government of Sri Lanka and not otherwise.

Homage to Martyrs in Punjab

Comrades,

We send our warm greetings to our fighting comrades in Punjab, who are fighting the extremist disruptors of national unity despite terrorist attacks. Long is the list of martyrs that have earned glory in this fight against imperialist encouraged secessionist disruption in Punjab; the names of martyrs will remain in our memory and the story of the courage of the families of these martyrs; the courage with which they bore their losses continue to be active in the fight, will be told and retold all over India. We honour the memory of martyrs of other organisations who fearlessly faced the bullets of the Khalistani assassins.

Valiant Struggle of the People of Tripura

Comrades,

I am sure all of you will rise in admiration for the valiant fight carried on by our comrades in Tripura, our workers, CITU units, leaders and cadres, by men and women, students and youth by the courageous tribals and their women under the leadership of the CPI(M) headed by Com. Nripen Chakraborty, Dasrath Deb and others. No other section of Indian people is face to face with such fascist like terror. The gang rape of tribal women, murders of our cadres, occupation of our union offices, forcible migration of thousands of people have not created a dent in the fighting capacity of the working class and people of Tripura. The people of Tripura constitute the vanguard in the fight against authoritarianism of the Congress(I) and they are bearing the worst outrage with revolutionary zeal to fight the oppressive regime of Rajiv Gandhi.

ILO Indicts the Repressive Regime

This regime has now been internationally branded as colluding with murderers to dispose of political rights. On a complaint made by the CITU to the ILO committee against the misdeeds of the Tripura Government the Committee has made queries and arrived at conclusions which indict the Government with illegal deeds and violation of procedures. In regard to the complaint about the forcible occuption of CITU union's office by Congress(I) storm-troopers the ILO Committee has asked the Government to provide further information as to the manner in which the specific case of a capture of an office belonging to a CITU affiliate was attended to as per law. "The Committee regrets the absence of a climate in the State of Tripura which is conducive to the development and maintenance of a geneuinely free and independent trade union movement."

Having thus indicted the State Government for repressing the trade union movement the Committee further suggested its collusion with anti-socials and noted its refusal to take legal action against those who attack the Government's opponents. "The Committee further asked the Government to provide information as to the outcome of the investigations into the murders of Gopal Ghosh and Nripendra Rudra Pal including details of the outcome of any relevant court proceedings which may have been instituted in consequences of these investigations.

"The Committee further asked the Government to provide

further particulars as to the alleged complixity of Badan Gope and Laxmi Narain Chauhan in the murder of Haripada Dey. In particular it asked the Government to indicate whether these individuals have been charged with any offence in relation to this matter and if so whether these charges have been brought before the court." The gang rape and assaults on tribal rights in Tripura stand in bizarre contrast to Rajiv Gandhi's new promises of transferring power to the people through the Panchyati Raj Bill. For thirty per cent reservation for women promised under the Bill they have to accept gang rape of women with no punishment for offenders. The Panchayti Raj Bill provides that 30 per cent of Panchayati's expenditure should be spent for the benefit of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes. But in Tripura the tribals are being deprived of land and other rights secured by them under the Autonomous District Legislation.

Raise Voice against the Semi-fascist Terror

Comrades,

The repression in Tripura, the terror against the masses, the total suppression of trade union rights should have been made major campaign issue by all trade unions and secular political parties. The vicious and inhuman attack is an integral part of the authoritarian drive of the Congress(I). It should not be forgotten that the semi-fascist terror in West Bengal in 1972 finally led to the imposition of emergency rule all over India. Some parties at that time thought that the terror was an affair between the Congress(I) Government and the CPI(M) and refused to fight against it. The mistake is being repeated again. Among the political parties only the CPI(M) considers it a major political issue. Even the left parties have left the Tripura masses to their fate. Among the central trade unions only the CITU fights for the people of Tripura the rest pass the terror in silence.

Our CITU must redouble its efforts in defence of Tripura and must constantly awaken all sections of the working class to the terror regime in the State and the brave fight of our comrades and the people of Tripura against it.

Economic Situation:
Growing Penetration by Western Economy

Comrades,

Let me turn to the dangerous aspects of our economic situation. We have repeatedly warned that the new economic policy of

the Rajiv Govt. with its emphasis on imports liberalisation, call for competitiveness of industry and new openings to foreign capital to invest in our country will lead us into trouble and engender growing dependence of our economy on foreign loans and that this will jeopardise our efforts to build an independent self-reliant economy. This is precisely what is happening. Finding our economy to be in growing need of Western help the US imperialists are now brazen-facedly demanding total surrender and calling on the Government to open every avenue of our national economy to their penetration. In their new offensive they are charging India with following restricted trade practices which really means that Indian capital and industry should not be shown any preference and Indian must treat Indians as strangers in their own country and allow the Americans to take over. They further demand that they should be allowed to invade the services sector fields—insurance, banking, etc.

Imposition of Super 301 to Subjugate Indian Economy

The latest dominating demand under Super 301 is made in connection with what is called "The Protection of Intellectual Property Rights." As a newspaper despatch very aptly puts it the demand for Patent Trade negotiations under GATT, the demand that India and other countries conform to US dictates is intended to exercise veto over technological development in India, capture India's market and subject her further progress to the US dictates. In short it is a demand for the subjugation of the economy. Once you accept it you are not allowed to do anything on your own. If you protect home market and restrict entry of foreign multinationals you will be charged with unfair trade practices and subjected to penal action against your trade. If you introduce licence for any purpose including location of industry or priority for industry you will be again charged with the same thing. If you invent new processes to manufacture existing patent product of a multinational you will be again charged with the same accusations. The entire gamut of economy comes under the GATT with the acceptance of the US demand on patent law.

Raise Voice of Protest Against Super 301

Though the Government of India has registered a strong protest and declared that it will not allow anyone to interfere with its right to manage its economy it is doubtful whether this good resolve can be implemented in the present situation. In fact accusa-

tions have been made that by agreeing to discuss US demand at the GATT level, India has already yielded ground.

The anxiety comes from the fact that in years since independence the USA occupies an important position as India's trading partner. Besides there are large scale US investments in India and collaboration agreements. It is also known that success of India's efforts to develop exports to foreign countries often depends to a large extent on US goodwill. All these factors raise doubts whether the Government of India with its present policy of propitiating foreign capital and foreign markets will stand the strain and pressure of adverse US acts which may dislocate trade and export markets.

The CITU and the country's trade union movement cannot neglect this danger to national economy. They must raise their protest in time and save the country from being mortgaged to the US and its allies. It is a matter of great concern that most of the bourgeois opposition parties fail to recognise this danger. The working class must take the lead in fighting it, our trade unions must continually place this question before the mass of workers and rouse their united protest.

Growing Debt Burden Mortgaging the Economy

The vulnerability to outside pressure has increased because of our growing foreign indebtedness. India's aggregate foreign debt at the end of March this year totalled 68,851 crores of rupees, Lok Sabha was told in July this year. Eminent economists, however, consider this to be an underestimate and estimate India's indebtedness at Rs 100 thousand crores. According to the figures given to the Lok Sabha the amount of interests distributed on the outstanding debt during 1988-89 amounted to Rs 2698 crores. Over the years interests and repayment of past debt i.e., debt service obligations amounted to more than 50 per cent of the new debt, reducing the net inflow of foreign assistance to that extent. In the earlier years 1980-81 debt servicing amounted for 30 per cent of the gross aid whereas in the years 1984-85 to 1988-89 the payment amounted to 52 percent of the new debt. A conference of eminent economists held in Delhi this August has warned that the burden of debt service has mounted to 40 per cent of export earnings and more than 25 per cent of current receipts. External debt as a proportionate national Income is 30 per cent as compared with 10 per cent seven years ago.

This speaks of a process of mortgaging our economy and imposing further unbearable burden on the people to meet the foreign obligations. India's hectic commercial borrowings are causing concern and World Bank circle feels that India will have to be rescued by an IMF loan i.e., India cannot afford to incur further obligation at commercial rates. If this happens, stringent economic condition will be imposed on India and that means that the masses will be made to swallow another dose of high prices, reduction of food subsidies and reduction of standard of living.

Unless this disastrous policy of Rajiv Gandhi is defeated and new viable policies are implemented India may face an economic disaster undermining our independence.

Comrades,

Fleecing by Growing Deficit Budget

The country's economy is run on huge deficit budgets which mounted every year and inflicted high prices on the people. The overwhelming majority of the Congress (I) in the Lok Sabha, a majority secured mainly because of emotional reasons, refuses to raise its voice against a financial policy based on borrowing from abroad and looting inside the country through deficit budgets. The Finance Minister recently said that the budget deficits of 1989-90 will be higher by Rs 1500 crores than last year. The perennial budget deficits have already set the inflationary process in motion. On July 27 this year the Government informed the Lok Sabha that the rate of inflation in 1988-89 was 6.6 per cent against 10.6 per cent in 1987-88. In 1988-89 the value of notes printed amounted to Rs 15,018.20 crores. Lathis, police firing and the printing press are the intruments with which the Rajiv Gandhi is ruling and ruining the country.

Rising Prices

Inflation rate has further accentuated in the context of rising high prices of necessities of life and forcing starvation and semi-starvation on large sections of people. Latest official estimate of people living below poverty line is 37 crores. How can this 37 crores escape outright starvation with the rising inflation rate following from notes manufacturing business of the Government. Now under Rajiv Gandhi every year good or bad must sow distress among the people. The year 1988-89 saw a big bumper crop but wholesale price index went up by 7.5 per cent. The result is that despite good harvest the rural mass continue to starve because it cannot match its purchasing capacity with the rising prices of

foodgrains.

Liquidating the Public Distrubtion System

It seems that Rajiv Government has found another way of forcing high prices on the people and mulcting them. Despite ample production, the Government agencies have procured less foodgrains this year. The result is that the open market has cornered the stocks. There is insufficient supply through the public distribution system. State Governments like the West Bengal and Kerala are complaining against short supplies. Rajiv's reply is "don't come with the begging bowl to the Centre." What it means is go and purchase in the open market at higher prices and inflict high prices on the people. This meets the demand of the World Bank that food-subsidy should be reduced and people should pay higher prices for food.

Now this is the situation deliberately created by the Rajiv Gandhi Government for the lakhs thrown out of their employment, for the crores employed in the unorganised industry, those who have never seen a job and for the vast rural masses. A Government of this type have no right to continue and the crime it has committed is many times worse, more criminal than the Bofors deal.

Industrial Situation: Closing Down the Sick Concerns

The working class of India is the victim of this situation. There has been intense aggravation of working class distress since our last meeting. What is the official policy of Rajiv Government in relation to the industrial situation? Allow as many sick concerns to die as possible, never mind what happens to the jobs of the workers. The sick concerns are to be considered as non-competitive and therefore to be wiped out. The World Bank objects to spend money for the revival and therefore the policy of gradually strangulating them is being adopted. The same policy is to be adopted towards textile mills under the NTC, the mills which are declared non-viable, and modernisation process is to be carried on in a few chosen mills. This modernisation will dispense with thousands of redundant workers to make the concerns competitive on the world market. Denotification of concerns is another measure to lessen the responsibility of the government which considers itself a socialist government. The concerns are to be handed over to former private owners who may promptly close them down. The more than 1,60,000 concerns are to be disposed of in this way. The responsibility of self declared welfare state to nurse back failing concerns is

to be given up in the hunt for new competitive industry and new technology. But the matter does not end here. There are other ways in which the working class has been victimised. Illegal lock-outs and closures are not prohibited. The culprits are allowed to go scot-free. The fradulent misappropriation of workers' Provident Fund contributions is again allowed to go virtually unpunished. In fact the Congress (I) Government's law provides such light punishment that the legislation becomes an incitement to rob the workers of their contribution. Private and government concerns are contriving more and more to reduce the number of permanent workers and increase the strength of temporary workers, the latter will be without the right of ESI and Provident Fund. A big saving in wage bills is to be achieved this way. And finally the Defence Department of the Union Government and other departments and private industries all are engaged in transferring part of the work to private contractors. The labourers engaged by the contractors have no rights even to DA, ESI and Provident fund and even to a prescribed wage. It is a monstrous wage cut to save money for the Government and the capitalists. Day-by-day such rights as DA, ESI, Provident Fund, leave with pay are being restricted to a narrowing circle of permanent workers in organised industry and their number is also being reduced daily. The workers in unorganised industry have no protection of legislation even minimum wage legislation. Their condition does not differ at all from that of Indian workers under British colonial rule.

Anti-Labour Legislations

In this situation to stem the tide of militant trade union movement, the Government introduced the new anti-working class legislations to curb the right to strike and the right to collective bargaining of all sections of workers and employess including the hospital and other employees. Yielding to the demand of the World Bank to relax labour legislations, it was an assurance to the multinationals that the field will be cleared for their exploitation of workers. The anti-trade union legislation should be considered as an attack on the fundamental rights of organisation and strike.

Dispersing Production Process

And now another technique is adopted to reduce the capacity of the workers to fight collectively to reduce the confidence of numbers. A number of big factories especially those connected with multinationals have started part of work outside the factory

by dispersing production process. Part of work is transferred to low wage areas where government concessions are available in the name of helping the development of backward regions. In some cases production process is dispersed in the city itself, part of which are being handed over to industrial workers working at home and unable to defend their interests. And over and above this there is an attack of the revised fraudulent cost of living index. The trade union movement and working class of our country are face to face with these attacks in the midst of unheard of unemployment. No doubt last year has been a hard year for us to maintain our rights, our jobs and above all our organisation.

Fake Scheme of Workers' Participation

This was a situation in which there was utmost need to take counsel with the workers and secure their cooperation in running production in industrial concerns. It was above all necessary to secure their cooperation on equal terms to restore to health the sick concerns and eliminate huge losses due to non-untilisation of country's production potential. The CITU has repeatedly called for a genuine scheme of workers' participation based on equal status so that the skill and initiative of workers can contribute fully to Social Production. The workers do not wish to be silent spectators or outsiders in the production process. They want to play an active role in shaping, influencing and improving country's production. But the capitalists and Rajiv's socialist Government have refused to accept any particaption based on equal rights and status with the workers having all the rights to know about production details, state of orders, supply of raw materials, finances, etc. Even the farcical scheme of participation introduced by the Government was not implemented by them. The Rajiv Government's labour legislation pieces are only meant for international reporting and propaganda and not for implementation. The Rajya Sabha Committee on Government Assurances says in its 36th Report that the Board level participation of workers is more important than shop or floor or plant level participation. No suggestion has been made by the Labour Ministry on the question of consensus and due to its casual and perfunctory attitude the scheme would prove non starter. After hearing the statements, views and comments of the Secretary, Ministry of Labour, the Committee concluded that the Ministry of Labour and the Tripartite Committee had no teeth in effecting implementation of the scheme of employees' participa-

tion in management—no mechanism whatsoever existed to check the veracity of the information furnished to them by the latter. The ministry of labour was not properly applying their mind to resolve the impasse over the mode of selection of workers' representatives at the board of director's level and was simply harping upon consensus which appeared to the committee to be inapplicable. The clarification given by the Secretary, Ministry of Labour was highly unsatisfactory and unconvincing.

Crisis in Jute and Textile Industries

Comrades,

On behalf of the CITU, I express our warm sympathy for the cotton textile and jute workers who had to bear the main burden of the closures and retrenchement. Our sympathies are with the rest of the workers who also have been forced to accept prolonged lock-outs and closures. Despite the most critical situation the textile and jute workers have held their organisations and unity in tact. The lock out offensive could not shake their organisational loyalty.

I warmly congratulate the working class of Bengal, all sections of workers and employees for their magnificent contribution to the Bakreshwar project. Comrades, to make such a contribution in the midst of an agonising and excruciating industrial situation with tens of thousands without work was an expression of high political consciousness and loyalty to working class and democratic movement. It revealed the mighty support and confidence that the Left Front Government of West Bengal headed by Comrade Jyoti Basu, Vice President of the CITU has earned among working class.

The condition of jute industry can be imagined from the following: "The jute employers continue to be guided by speculative trading and greed for earning high profits. They are attempting to solve their problems at the expense of workers. One after another the mills are locked out for the purpose. The lock-out figures in jute mills vis-a-vis production figures indicate that the jute employers kept the total production figures almost stable though, about 25 per cent of the capacity remain idle during the period due to the periodical lock-outs." (West Bengal Labour 1988)

The offensive takes the form of arbitrary changes in the man-machine ratio, increased work load and wage cuts. The offensive of synthetic fibre was to an extent reduced by the Government of India's order for mandatory use of jute goods for packaging of some articles. But the use of circular looms to manufacture bags of jute and synthetic fibre has created danger of large scale re-trenchement. The Government of India is helping this process in

the name of modernisation and also financing it. In this condition the nationalisation of jute industry provides the only way out of the present impasse when lock-outs and other pressures are used to overcome workers' resistance and gather profits for the mill owners. The demand for nationalisation has been repeatedly raised by the CITU and all left trade unions in West Bengal. A delegation of MPs from all Parties including the Congress(I) met the Central Industries Minister to press the demand. But the Central Government showed no response. The Centre's policy is to solve the problems of the industry at the expense of the workers and for profiteering interests of jute barons. While pressing for this urgent demand our CITU units must make every effort to ensure the opening of the lock-out mills by negotiating agreements which are acceptable to the mass of workers and which do not prejudice their future.

Along with the jute industry the cotton textile industry, the biggest industry in India is in the throes of crisis. The total number of workers involved in the production of cotton textile goods—mills, handloom and powerloom workers exceed a crore. Yet this mass of workers have been thrown into indescribable misery by the Rajiv Government. The new cotton textile policy has turned out to be a hoax, inflicting further suffering on the workers. The NTC mills, more than 100, are also run inefficiently and turning sick. The Government seems to have no other policy except of denotifying them and throwing the workers to the wolfs. Its policy towards powerloom has ruined the workers who have been getting starvation wage all along. So far as the handloom workers are concerned the official policy, notwithstanding tall talks, is one of continuous ruination and forced starvation. The lakhs of handloom workers continue to ply their trade just because outright starvation awaits them if they stop plying the handlooms. The CITU has held several convention to voice the urgent demands of all these sections. In September again there will be a big rally of all sections to protest the offical policies.

Nationalisation with Workers' Participation—the only Solution

On the 30th of August while demanding justice to powerloom and handloom workers the entire trade union movement must demand nationalisation of organised cotton textile industry with workers'

participation. Sickness exposes the bankruptcy of private ownership. The plight of NTC mills exposes the bankruptcy of running the mills without participation of workers on equal terms. The more than 100 nationalised textile mills under the NTC have shown enormous losses leading to huge waste of public money because of failure to ensure genuine participation of workers and lack of desire and the will to produce the best possible results for the people. The nationalised textile mills and their working is not an affair between the workers and the management, but a trust held on behalf of the people of India.

The Government has no plan of running the industry in the interest of people and the workers. In fact they seem to have only one plan, a plan for massacre of jobs. Private capital circles and their research bureau forecast that the share of composite mills in cloth production will shrink to 10 per cent in another ten years. About 50 per cent of the composite mills will not see the turn of the century and the labour employed in the textile industry today is surplus by 25 per cent for available levels of technology. The NTC is pursuing the same objective. It controls 14 mills in West Bengal, which employ about 14,000 workers. The management of the NTC has given a proposal for conversion of 14 mills into seven mills through amalgamation to make these amalgamated mills viable. But this will affect the job of 9000 workers. Nobody knows what fate awaits the workers of handloom and powerloom at the turn of the century.

There can be no relief for the workers concerned unless the organised textile industry is nationalised, workers' participation is ensured and transitional consultation with the trade unions. Besides, justice should be ensured to powerloom and handloom workers.

Pressure of World Bank

But it is not only a question of jute and cotton textile industry. Lockout, sickness, closures affect thousands of engineering and other concerns. The drug industry in India is again faced with closures because of competition from multinationals. The policy regarding closures, lock outs, denotification, non-interference of the Government, is to an extent influenced by World Bank pressure and guidelines leading to victimisation of lakhs of Indian workers. This is accompanied by a terrific computerisation drive. According to estimates of Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, India's production of computers will be worth Rs. 950

crores in 1990, Rs. 3500 crores in 1995 and Rs. 14000 crores in 2000 A.D. In 1991 production of micro-computers will go up from 75,000 numbers in 1989 to 1,10,000 numbers and mini-computers would register a growth from 35,000 numbers to 45,000 numbers.

Rising Struggles

Despite the adverse conditions facing all industries and all sections of workers the trade unions have continued to fight against the growing attacks and old and new contingents of workers have again and again taken up the fight for their demands. The CITU in Kanpur secured an outstanding victory for the textile workers compelling the authorities to withdraw an adverse award which sought to impose heavy workload to workers. Rail Roko agitation organised by the CITU and other trade unions and which was addressed by Comrade E. Balanandan proved effective and the Government had to accept the demand of the workers. In this militant agitation our CITU had played a leading role decisively mobilising the workers for the fight against the award. The CITU has succeeded in rousing the unorganised workers in defence of their rights including minimum wage. The Delhi State CITU Committee, the Punjab and other state CITU Committees have done creditable work and achieved some minimum success which should help in further consolidating the organisation.

A number of our State Committees are already attending to the problem of working women. The conference of Anganwadi workers organised under the auspices of the CITU Working Women's Coordinating Committee was a big success. Following it several conferences and conventions are being held in many places. There is no doubt that the Conference provided a solid ground for building an all India organisation.

Sugar and Construction workers have shown further progress in the struggle for their rights. The sugar workers are now preparing for all India strike in support of their minimum demands. The electricity workers have made rapid progress and there is a joint call along with AITUC to organise an all India strike on 30th August in support of charter of demands. The Engineering and Transport workers are again preparing themselves to face new challenges. The workers of public sector industries, coal and steel and others have through strenuous negotiating efforts succeeded in securing substantial wage increases and other demands. This advance was the result of the united efforts of all concerned trade

union centres. The agreement entered into by IISCO comrades guaranteeing employment for all those working at present after the expansion and modernisation of the plant is a notable achievement of IISCO workers.

Fight for Right to Work

Comrades,

Many of the tasks that face us are being discharged but yet much remains to be done to meet the needs of the situation. Take the struggle of trade unions for the unemployed workers. It has not yet become an integral part of our trade union activities. It is taken spasmodically. Conferences are held, resolutions are passed, but a movement of the workers for the defence of the unemployed is not in sight. Even a permanent organisation backed by the mass following of the trade unions is yet to emerge. Without this our demand for right to work, to make it a fundamental right under the Constitution will not have the required sanction. In the present condition of massive unemployment it is absolutely essential to rally round this demand the mass of unemployed and employed workers. It is a matter of some satisfaction that apart from central trade unions, industrial federations like the steel workers' federation are taking initiative on this front and mobilising the workers in support of the unemployed.

Fraudulent Price Index

Comrades,

Let me now recall how we have failed on a very important issue, an issue of importance to the workers. I am referring to the fraudulent cost of living index number and its imposition, which has already led to a cut in the DA amount. Comrade Pandhe's pamphlet exposing the fraudulent character of the index are sold in thousands in almost all states by our CITU State Committees. The exception was the Maharashtra CITU State Committee. Thousands of workers know about this fraudulent character of this index and yet no direct action and strike were organised by the trade unions. Again the only exception was the Maharashtra CITU State Committee which despite their vacillations and sabotage by some elements, organised a successful protest strike. It seems here is an instance of relying too much on others and forgetting our independent activity our responsibility to the workers. Some of the trade union centres had already shown that they had no interest in fighting this battle. And we should have drawn a proper conclu-

sion and gone ahead.

Physical Attacks on CITU Cadres

Comrades,

We should not forget that in many places our CITU cadres and workers have to face physical attacks at the hands of the goondas hired by the managements, and police repression and terror. I have already referred to the repression in Tripura. Let me refer to the terror attacks in another Congress(I) ruled state, attacks connived at by the state police. The Barbil mining belt of Orissa witnessed unprecedented goonda terror and police repression in December last year. The target of the attack was the CITU union and its members, mostly Adivasis. On 22nd December 1988, Suka Patra, a CITU leader was attacked by the hired assassins. His hands and leg have been chopped off. In the months proceeding these attacks, seven CITU members were physically assaulted. Comrade Dharanidhar Mahto and Com. Ganeshwar Patra were physically assaulted and had to be removed to the hospital. The police response was no arrest of the culprits but a ban on CITU demonstration.

It is surprising that under the non-Congress(I) Government of Devi Lal in Haryana the workers are not free from repression. The sugar workers of Palwal, Palwal Co-operative Sugar Mills, who struck work on January 1st and were observing dharna at the mill gate were lathicharged on the night of 20th January. 25 workers were severely injured. Several workers were arrested. Earlier the General Secretary of the CITU union was dismissed.

This was not the only attack on workers in Haryana. Employees, workers, students all have been subjected to police assaults and assaults at the hands of the gangsters.

The same situation exists in many Congress(I) ruled states. The CITU has to forge ahead facing this repression. Every step forward of our organisation demands physical suffering and sacrifices of our workers and cadres. Without this militancy and spirit of self-sacrifice our organisation would not have developed.

Struggles Advancing in other Mass Organisations

Comrades,

Before I turn to other topic let me on behalf of you welcome the great strides made by the Kisan and Agricultural Workers' movement. This movement forms the basic strength of Indian people's struggle for democracy, struggle against Rajiv Gandhi and our march forward to a new social order, socialism. We should also

welcome the advance registered by the organisations of youth and students.

Comrades,

Outstanding is the progress registered in the women's movement in our country. The AIDWA is organising a massive rally on 8th of September and all our unions must render all help to make it a grand success. Participation of working women, CITU's women members must be ensured in large numbers. The success of this mobilisation with its demand will be a fitting reply to the Congress(I) claims to advance the cause of women.

Safeguard the Left Front Governments

Comrades

On behalf of all of you I convey my warm greetings to the Left Front Governments of West Bengal and Kerala, who have shown how to defend democracy, national unity and common man's interests despite the heavy limitations of the bourgeois landlord constitution. They have distinguished themselves by the refusal to use anti-people laws and have protected the democratic rights of the people. They have refused to bow down before the vested interests and lent their weight to the defence of the legitimate and urgent demands of the working class, peasantry, and the working people as a whole. They have thrown the weight of the administration to defend national unity and fight anti-national communal forces. The workers of West Bengal would have been in a far more critical plight had the Left Front not thrown its weight in their favour during these years of economic crisis. The discriminatory policy of the Rajiv Government towards the Left Front Ministry and the recent food policy have made the people rally behind the left parties all the more and given a rebuff to the slanders of the Congress(I) propaganda. In Kerala also there is continuous verification of the LDF Government by the Congress (I) in association with the RSS, BJP and the Muslim League. Here again the Rajiv Government has deliberately reduced the food quota allotted to the state forcing high prices on the people and distribution system. While the Rajiv Government forces high prices on the people the Kerala, Congress (I) holds the LDF Ministry responsible for it and starts the agitation. The two Governments by their performances have raised the prestige of Left force in national life leading to new correlation of forces among the opposition parties and democratic forces.

Forge Trade Union Unity

Comrades,

On the question of trade union unity we have shown persistance in maintaining and strengthening it. National Campaign Committee is not the only forum of trade union unity though it is the most important and effective. At various levels, at the level of unions, in the daily struggle at the level of industrial federations, at the level of coordination committees,in private and public sector, various forms of trade union unity and understanding are developing, increasing the resistance capacity of the workers. There are occasions on which the INTUC also is a partner in united actions and such actions are increasing. It is because of this persistent struggle and maintenance of unity that in the present period of perilous economic situation we have been able to strike some good bargain for the workers.

Comrades,

To maintain and strengthen this unity at various levels is the common task before all of us. No form of united front and unity should be neglected and all must contribute to strengthening the appeal of the NCC. In relation to the NCC also one should not be disappointed if sometimes a common agreement on a vital issue is not possible. You will be surprised, perhaps shocked to find that on the call for strike on 30th August in support of the Bandh for Rajiv's resignation, the NCC could not issue a joint statement. The BMS declined to join others. The rest of the trade unions have given a united call for the success of the bandh. Perhaps all of you must remember that on the question of world peace and important international developments very rarely there had been a common agreement on the NCC.

Finally, I have to state that in spite of all our efforts and sincerity for trade union unity, actual performance of the trade union centres lags far behind the urge of the workers to unite and fight together. May we be soon in a position to overcome lag.

Fight the Divisive Forces,
Safeguard the Unity and Integrity of the Country

Comrades,

The trade union and working class have to wage a united fight to protect their rights. Simultaneously they have to wage a fight on issue which affect the country and the people as a whole. They have to defeat the economic policies of the Rajiv Government and ward

off the danger of growing penetration in economy by American and other multinationals which is bound to affect our policy of self-reliance and erode our country's economic independence. The surrender of the Government of India before the Union Carbide cheating the Bhopal victims of their compensation clearly marks the danger arising from multinationals in our country.

To fight these dangers, created by the imperialist machinations what we require above all is the steeled unity of our people to defend the country's independence, its unity and its integrity. Unfortunately all kinds of reactionary forces are undermining our unity. The Hindu communalists and obscurantists, the Muslim fundamentalists, the Khalistani secessionists, the sponsors of Hindu Raj, the RSS, BJP, and those who raise Pakistani flags in Jammu and Kashmir and all those who fan communal riots, all are the worst disruptors of national unity and have to be fought relentlessly. To adopt soft attitude towards any one of these forces is to betray the country and objectively join hands with the foreign forces who seek to redivide the country.

Government of National Disintegration : Hoax of Jawahar Rojgar Yojana : Subjugating the Power of States

The Congress(I) under Rajiv has failed to meet this challenge of divisive forces. The Punjab situation shows no sign of improving and there are reports that the Rajiv Government and his agent S.S.Ray are conspiring to negotiate an agreement with one of the Bhindranwale groups. In Kashmir the pro-Pakistani challenge gets intensified everyday. In the Hindu heartland communal forces are planning a holocaust on the Ramjanambhoomi/Babri Majid dispute. The Congress(I) party panders to the communal element and seeks their help for maintaining itself in power. In Kerala it takes the help of the Muslim League while teaching secularism to others in the north. In Mizoram for winning election it openly made a communal appeal in the name of Christianity to secure Christian votes. In the communal riots the Muslim minority faces the worst under its rule. The disintegration of the country under its rule is the biggest crime of the Rajiv Government. But the Congress(I) is not repentant. It has no sense of loyalty to the people, otherwise it would have quit the stage to allow a new government to take over. After establishing a fascist like terror in Tripura and unleasing police repression against rural masses in several States, Rajiv and the Congress(I) now talk of transfer of power to the people under

the Panchayati Raj and Nagarpalika bills. It is a device to get the confidence of the innocent mass, the force which will decide the result of the election. The Jawahar Rozgar Yojana is intended to provide the job for each family in the rural areas. It is an old promise which has remained unredeemed for years and it is not likely to be fulfilled under the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana also. Under it each person is supposed to get a job for at least 50 to 100 days a year and for this a grant sum of Rs. 75,000/- to Rs. 1,00,000 will be provided. As a matter of fact perhaps no other major social welfare and rural relief has revealed such blantant corruption, false claims, appropriation of huge sums in the name of wages of non-existent workers and use of cheap labour for the rich and the landlords. Situation will not be different this time. The landowners and upper sections which dominate the Panchayat will put their own interpretation of Jawahar Rozgar Yojana and spend money accordingly. Besides it is an election year measure. Its main aim is to get the attention of the rural masses concentrated on the Central Government and the ruling party so that they vote for the Congress(I). The Jawahar Rozgar Yojana, the Panchayati Raj and Nagarpalika Bills have one feature in common. Politically they aim at attacking the power of State Governments in the name of decentralisation. To be able to achieve this purpose the bills are loaded with promises like 30 per cent reservation for women, 30 per cent expenditure for the benefit of Harijans and Adivasis, freedom from state control to spend the money as they like, as the Panchayat likes. But in the end the Panchayat is completely dependent for finances on the centre and must act according to its orders.

Whatever provision you make for the powers of the Panchayat will not benefit the people so long as landlords and rural money barons dominate them.

To makeitscontrol øver the Panchayat Raj complete, to keep away the States from having any relation with it, elections are to be ordered by the Election Commissioner, a central official, important decisions are to be taken by the Governor and new powers and finances are to be given at the expense of the state. Attacks on the State's powers constitute an act of criminality which will affect the unity and integrity of the country.

The Nagarpalika Bill also provides for new powers to the Municipal Corporations but makes them completely dependent on the Centre. For their success they will have to depend entirely on all-

India finance bodies controlled by the Centre.
While genuine decentralisation of power to the Panchayats and municipalities is welcomed and necessary, the proposed bills have little to do with decentralisation.

Dethrone the Congress(I) Government

Comrades,

The five year rule of Rajiv Gandhi is preparing a disaster for our country's unity integrity and independence and economic progress. Rajiv Gandhi shows no signs of repentence and responsibility. His August 15th speech not only marred the serenity of the occasion but showed that he has no regard for the people and their sufferings. He claimed great success in economic advance of the country when crores were living below the poverty line. He claimed that he had reduced the country form the threat of disintegration when his five years rule has accentuated the threat and revealed the bankruptcy of his Government to meet it. He talked about fighting the communal and divisive forces when he and his party go to any length to compromise with them for remaining in power. He has nothing to say about corruption scandals surrounding his Government and showed his utter disregard for democracy when he made light of the resignation of the opposition from the Lok Sabha. Betraying his election pledges and caught in corruption scandals, the Rajiv Government and the Congress(I) tried to work the Parliament as an instrument of one party authoritarian rule. They threw to winds all norms and conventions of parliamentary democracy treating the opposition as irrelevant. Of late the Ministers and Congress(I) members have assumed militant postures to launch intemperate attacks against the opposition uttering half truths and even lies.

But the arrogance butteressed by an overwhelming majority in the Lok Sabha got deflated when opposition parties resigned en block from the Houses demanding the resignation of Rajiv Gandhi after the CAG exposure. This sudden opposition action and seizure of political initiative by it electrified the situation and served to enthuse people and forces which were fighting the Congress(I) Government policies in mass actions, strikes and struggles. This unprecedented step created panic and confusion in the arrogant majority holders. In their confusion they are making statements full of ridicule. Like a thief calling thief they charge the opposition with violating democratic norms. If they have not understood that

the resignations constitute appeal from the Parliamentary majority to the sovereign people of India they have understood nothing of democracy.

The opposition parties in their separate statements have given a call for Bharat Bandh on August 30 to demand resignation of Rajiv Government. It is a timely call. The CITU, the AITUC, the HMS and several other constituents of the National Campaign Committee have called for industrial strike in support of the call. There is no doubt that our unions will make all efforts to make the call a grand success. The 30th August will be the opening shot in the coming battle of elections. The stronger the unity of left and secular forces, the wider the mass appeal, the greater the chance of electing the government of people's choice and dethroning the Congress(I) from power. The CITU and the working class must from now onwards get ready to fight the election battle and win it in favour of the democratic forces and the people of India.

The Working Class, Vol. 19, No. 1, September 1989)

42

Address to The Tamilnadu State Conference of CITU

Comrades,

Let me convey to you greeting on behalf of the CITU for your consistent work in advancing the cause of the CITU and the working class. I know, the CITU knows that our working class is passing through an unprecedented period of distress marked by clousures, lock-outs, industrial sickness and unemployment followed by attacks on wages. It should be a matter of pride for us that in the midst of this constant war against us we are in a position to keep our organisational strength and our mass following. In such conditions if the leadership is not skillful and the workers are not endowed with sufficient consciousness there is every danger of disintegration of the organisation and a serious set back to our movement. It takes a long time to rebuild a shattered organisation and overcome the despair and defeatism of the working class. I am glad that we have been spared of this fate, thanks to our consciousness.

Comrades, shall I tell you a secret. It seems that India is progressing very well. There is nothing to worry about. The economy is growing at a rapid speed. The lattest report of the Reserve Bank of India assures us that the national economy backed by a bountiful monsoon made a substantial recovery in macro-economic performance during 1989 with a growth rate of 10 per cent in real Gross Domestic Production (GDP). Over and above, average growth of the first four years of the Seventh Plan works out around

8.5 per cent against the planned target of 8 per cent. The agricultural production aided by excellent monsoon last year is expected to show a record increase of 23 per cent during the year under review in sharp contrast to the decline of 2.1 per cent in 1987-88.

All this is good. But what has it offered to us? Increased unemployment, high prices, increased lockouts and sickness in industry. This is the real face of capitalism. Along with production, the mass misery increase. The more you produce the less you seem to get. The capitalist class and their government are strictly following the teachings of Geeta. You know what the Geeta says. It says you have only the duty to work but not to expect any benefit or reward out of it. The capitalist says all benefit will be appropriated by them. There is no escape from increased misery under the capitalist path and the sooner this society is ended the better for the working class and the people of India.

Comrades, I offer my warm sympathies for the workers in textile industry who have been the worst sufferers of sickness and crisis. The total number of workers involved in the production of cotton textile goods exceed a crore. But this mass of workers have been thrown into indescribable misery by the Rajiv Government. The new cotton textile policy has turned out to be a hoax increasing further sufferings of the workers. The NTC mills more than 100 are also run inefficiently and are turning sick. The government seems to have no other policy except of denotifying them and throwing the workers to the roads. Its policy towards powerlooms has ruined the workers who have been getting starvation wage all along. As far as handloom workers are concerned the official policy notwithstanding tall talks is one of the continuous and forced starvation. Lakhs of handloom workers continue to ply their looms just because otherwise outright starvation awaits them. The CITU has held several conventions to voice the demands of this section.

Comrades, the worst affected section of the textile industry is of course the handloom section. The CITU last week held a convention of handloom workers in Delhi and passed resolution enumerating the grievances of the workers and their demands. The resolution said that the workers do not get minimum wages. The per capita wage of a weaver is much below the minimum daily wage prescribed for an agricultural worker, i.e. Rs. 11.00. The price of cotton yarn have doubled and even trebled during the last two to three years. Moreover the handlooms are denied the full quota of

yarn from the mills. Only 37 per cent is made available forcing down production targets. The resolution therefore demanded among things : (1) Statutory minimum wage to be guaranteed by the State and linking them with price index; (2) Strict implementation of handloom reserve orders for moving the 22 reserved articles under the handloom sector; (3) Strict implementation of the Hank yarn supply scheme assuring supply of sufficient yarn to handloom units by textile mills.

Comrades, I am glad that the Tamilnadu CITU Committee has taken up the question of organising the workers in unorganised industries for minimum wage and other demands. This is the most numerous section of the working class and the trade union movement will be representing only a part if this major mass is not included. It is this section which bears the most atrocious burden of capitalism, its ups and downs because it is defenceless having no protection of law or no social security even for wages. The trade union movement will increase its strength immensely if it mobilises this section and bring it into action.

Comrades, you are aware of the deteriorating employment situation with three crores already registered as unemployed. How is the Rajiv Government tackling this situation? By ordering more unemployment. This is the story from our railway comrades. At a seminar in Chittaranjan under the auspices of the Railway Supervisory Staff it was observed that employment potential in railway was only 0.9 per cent during the last financial year. Taking natural wastage into consideration and the number of employed workers, recruitment should have been more than 1 lakh. The Indian Railways according to the Seminar are preparing to reduce the work force from 17 lakhs at present to only 6 lakhs by the turn of the century. Immediately i.e. by 1989-92 the administration proposes to run the Railways with 9 lakh workers to meet the conditions of the World Bank.

The World Bank it seems is taking virtual charge of all sections of railway industry. Under its intervention the Chittaranjan workshop which produces Electric-Loco Engines is getting idle. Items which were being produced at the workshop are being imported from abroad at much higher prices. Locomotives which are prodcued at the cost of Rs. 1.66 crores each are being imported at Rs 6 to 10 crores per locomotive. When the indigenous cost of the Loco Bogies is Rs. 2.5 lakhs and tractor machine of Rs. 5 lakhs they are

imported from abroad at the cost of Rs. 20 lakhs and Rs. 23 lakhs respectively.

Comrades, on behalf of all of you I convey my warm greetings to our fighting Tripura comrades who are braving the semi-fascist terror with exemplary courage and heroism. I also send our warm greetings to our fighting comrades in Punjab who with defiant courage are fighting for national unity braving the murderous challenge of the Khalistanis. Only two days back two of our comrades, two brothers fell victims to the assassin's attacks. The sacrifice of these comrades fighting for national unity will not remain in vain. The entire country will remember these martyrs and will be inspired on to eliminate the secessionist challenge in Punjab.

Comrades, the great success of the 30th August Bandh was an expression of national discontent and anger against policies of the Rajiv Government with its corruption scandal, its contempt for democracy, its authoritarian functioning, its incompetence to defend national unity against secessionists and communal forces and its anti-national, anti-people economic policies which heap misery and destitution to the people and in the bargain endanger the independence and self-reliance of our economy. No wonder encouraged by our economic helplessness the U.S. imperialists are demanding the right to overrun our economy calling for opening of their invasion in all spheres of our economic activity under the threat of action against USA's Super 301 laws.

I congratulate our working class, all our CITU unions for their grand success in registering their participation and protest through a gigantic nationwide strike action. It is no doubt a matter of regret that all sections of workers and employees did not join the strike. The AIBEA, organisation of Bank employees did the biggest disservice to the common cause by refusing to go on strike. The Central Government employees in many states were intimidated into taking a shelter in the office on the night previous to the Bandh day. Some well-paid public sector workers also did not participate. But yet vast sections all over the country participated putting the stamp of the working class on the national protest. This was perhaps the biggest political action of the working class in recent times showing growing awareness in discharging its political responsibility to the country, the people, the democratic movement and the struggle for socialism. There is no doubt that if the

working class continues to sharpen its consciousness in this way, the struggle of Indian people will undergo a swift and qualitative change.

It is quite clear that the Bandh whose main manifestation was to be in the cities and towns could have remained ineffective without the direct participation of the working class. The call was given by several opposition parties and it was endorsed by the leading trade union centres, CITU, HMS, AITUC, UTUC, and other constituents of the National Campaign Committee. You will note however that the BMS, one of the constituents of the NCC and dominated by the RSS refused to sign the joint call for resignation of the Rajiv Gandhi Government. It is the same RSS that organises clashes and conspiracies against the LDF government in Kerala, to render service to the Rajiv Government. The INTUC of course took a forthright stand to dissociate itself from the Bandh. All this shows that much broader and wider unity is Still required to bring the entire weight of the working class into action without which a new correlation of political forces more favourable to the democratic movement cannot be brought about.

Comrades, the 30th August Bandh expressed the demand of the people to remove the Rajiv Government from power in the coming elections. The battle has to be carried forward in the coming months. The statement of Left Parties calling for the Bandh and the demands put forward by them constitute a correct basis to carry forward the struggle against the Rajiv Government, and safeguard the interest of the people and Indian democracy and unity. While urging the pressing demands of the masses including land reforms and calling for Rajiv's resignation, the statement calls for the isolation of communal and divisive forces so that unity of the country is protected and its independence is strengthened. Many opposition parties do not realise that you cannot advance the cause of Indian unity and democracy by opportunistically aligning with the reactionary organisations like the RSS, the BJP the Muslim League and others. But the working class movement with its slogan of "Workers of the World Unite", which unites all on the basis of class interest irrespective of caste, religion and creed cannot forget its duty to fight these forces when they are dividing the country on the Babri Masjid/Ramjanmabhoomi isue or raising the secessionist slogan of Khalistan which suits the interests of US imperialism to divide

the country. The working class and the trade union movement must throw their weight decisively in favour of the demands raised by the left parties.

Comrades, some people concentrate only on the corruption scandal of Rajiv Gandhi. These are serious enough no doubt especially when they are connected with defence security. But the incompetence and failure to keep the country together, the utter failure in Punjab to deal with the secessionist challenge, the failure in U.P. to take decisive steps to defuse the Babri Masjid/Ramjanmabhoomi issue and the refusal of the ruling party to throw its mass weight against the challenge constitute the greatest crime against the country. The working class must be seized of this fact and carry its forces accordingly to meet the danger and defeat the divisive forces.

In this great battle between the forces of authoritarianism and the forces of Indian democracy in the coming elections, battle between Congress(I) and the secular opposition and left parties, the left front governments of Kerala and West Bengal play an important and crucial role. They have shown how to defend democracy, national unity and common man's interests. Despite heavy limitations of the bourgeois-landlord Constitution, they have distinguished themselves by their refusal to use anti-people laws enacted by the Congress(I) Governments and have protected the democratic rights of the people. They have lent their weight to the defence of the peasantry and the working people as a whole. They have thrown the weight of the administration to defend national unity and fight anti-national forces. Because they constitute the advanced outpost of the democratic struggle, the Congress(I) and the Central Government concentrate all their fire and slanders against them. The Rajiv Government discriminates against them and of late has refused the food quota to these states to create economic difficulties and incite the people against them. In Kerala the Rajiv Government arbitrarily reduced the food quota allotted to the State forcing high prices on people and disturbing the public distribution system. When a complaint was lodged against this arbitrary reduction Rajiv had the effrontery to say that Kerala should not come with a "begging bowl" to the Centre. This was nothing but a repudiation of the national resposibility of the Centre to ensure proper distribution of country's food resources among all the states.

Comrades, you know that the Rajiv Government is also attacking all non-Congress(I) Governments and is creating difficulties for opposition ministries. The Tamil Nadu Government of DMK is also facing this trouble because of arbitrary reduction of food quota by the Centre. Food has become a political weapon for the Congress(I) in the fight against the opposition Governments. I am sure these efforts of the Rajiv Government to weaken the Tamil Nadu Ministry will be effectively resisted by all with the demonstration of the same unity that was seen during the elections and the Bandh. The CITU and its working class of course shall be in the forefront to frustrate the attacks of the Centre.

Of late both in West Bengal and Kerala, Congress(I) campaign against the two governments have reached a new crescendo. Slanderous charges on CPI(M) indulging in violence, murder, loot are made and a demand is raised for the dismissal of the two Governments. Clashes have been organised resulting in violence and the cry is raised that the law and order has broken down. In these clashes large number of CPI(M) cadres were killed in clashes with the Congress(I) and Muslim League in Kerala and in the recent month nearly 11 CPI(M) cadres have lost their lives. But the Congress(I) and its allies continue to charge CPI(M) with violence. All this is a preparation for the coming elections. The entire working class must be ready to combat this offensive, frustrate the Congress(I) game to incite public opinion against the Ministry. It must also warn against any adventurous step on the part of the Central Government.

Comrades, the coming months will be months of continuous struggle and unity for the democratic forces to fight the elections and oust the Rajiv Government. Our unions and working class must play their part in this great struggle to save democracy, national unity and integrity.

Comrades, let me finally refer to the recent developments in the international situation. In the final analysis our struggle for emancipation and socialism depends on how strong the world movement is and how we have succeeded in cornering world imperialism. Recent developments connected with China show that imperialism is very active in helping counter-revolutionary forces to defeat socialism whenever opportunity presents itself. The so-called student struggle in China was nothing but an attempt to organise counter-revolution and change the socialist system and

restore capitalism. The imperialist support to it shows that notwithstanding all talks of moderation of contradictions between imperialism and socialism, imperialism will never miss an opportunity to undermine the socialist system. Secondly, another important event was Comrade Gorbachev's visit to China announcing the first step of normalisation of relationship between the two great socialist countries which stood apart in estrangement and ill feeling for the last 30 years. The CITU ardently hopes that this initial normalisation within the framework of peaceful co-existence and non-interference will soon flower into earlier fraternal relations based on proletarian internationalism which secured mighty victories for socialism taking away one third of the world to socialist camp.

Comrades, let me now direct your attention, the attention of our entire working class to the question of our survival, our emancipation from exploitation and our emergence as a leading force in governmental society. Our election fight against Rajiv Gandhi, our efforts to replace the Rajiv Government are all important to register our advance one step further. But the aim of our movement is not just to experiment with one or the other political party of vested interests, to experiment to see who administers the capitalist society better or worse. Our aim is to abolish the entire political, economic, and social set up of present day India with its exploitation, closing of mills, its crisis, with its unemployment and poverty, with its caste distinctions, communal murders, Harijan and women atrocities and rape, and replace it by a new society. This we can easily achieve if we are able to achieve political power through a State of People's Democracy leading to socialism. Socialism is our watchward. Socialism is our banner, our aim and objective. Without it the working class will countinue to remain a low paid or better paid slave existing on the fallen crumbs from the tables of the capitalists. And socialism means power in the hands of the working class and the people. Socialism means end of privatisation, abolition of all private property in the means of production. Socialism is ushered in by a party based on Marxism Lenism. In this great battle you have to fight and replace the entire social system not just replace one capitalist party by another, keeping the existing system intact.

In recent times, because of our urgent problems of the day we are tending to forget this great objective of the working class given

to it by Karl Marx and Engels.

But today, comrades, all over the world including our country there is strong denunciation of socialism, orchestrated propaganda that socialism has failed, that capitlaism is more democratic and workers must continue to accept their slave status under the capitalist master. The excuse for this propaganda is the intemperate anti-Marx 'self criticism' coming from certain socialist countries for some of their past mistakes, ignoring the mighty achievements of socialism during the last seventy years, the great liberation struggle against Nazi invasion, the building of socialism ending exploitation of man by man in the Soviet Union, abolition of unemployment, guarantee of right to work for all, all these and the socialised means of production. Comrades, this last one is the acid test of equality and democracy. Can there be any real democracy if the means of production which produce the life of society and its existence countinue to remain in the hands of a few, if the rest of society is dependent for their livelihood. You see the example of our country where insipite of the Public Sector, means of production are in the hands of the capitalists and we are continuing to be full of misery and unemployment. Without the means of production in the hands of the people no real equality is possible. Equality in this regard, i.e. socialised ownership changes the basis and puts an end to all exploitation.

Comrades, it is hypocritical and misleading to talk about failure of socialism by closing your eyes to the monumental achievements of socialism and the superiority of the socialist system over capitalism. What does the experience of the USSR inspite of the difficulties of the present and certain mistakes of the past show? A backward country ridden by feudal land relations, absolute monarchy and capitalist exploitation was transformed into a socialist industrial country abolishing exploitation of man by man and placing all powers in the hands of the working class and the people. Economic policy and social ownership turned it into one of the major powers capable of defeating its enemies. From its first day it declared the right to work as a fundamental right and abolished unemployment. We should remember that only the socialist constitution guarantees this basic right to the working class. No bourgeois Constitution neither the American nor the British embody such a right and they carry tens of lakhs of unemployed without any relief.

And Comrades, the superiority of the socialist system is again proved when the vaunted might of imperialist Britain and France collapsed before Hitler and it was left to the Soviet Union single handed to fight the Nazis for months to save the world and humanity from being over - run by Hitler.

Such is the proud inheritage of soicalism and the working class movement. I think comrades, many who worked hard to defend and promote socialism are beginning to get weary, some of them demoralised by the difficulties facing them. Others have to carry forward the banner of proletarian internationalism and socialism.

The Working Class, Vol. 19, No. 2, October 1989

43

Forward to the Election Struggle

The elections to the Lok Sabha has been announced for 22nd November. The people of India and the working class of the country are called upon to decide who should rule the country on their behalf for the next five years. On their decision depends the future of our country, its unity, its democratic advance and justice to the toiling millions of our country.

The CITU calls upon all its office bearers and members of the General Council, its State and District Committees, its affiliated unions and the mass of workers behind them to plunge into this election battle and to ensure victory for the forces of democracy and national unity and ensure defeat of those who sow misery among the people and create divisions among them.

At the centre of the election struggle stands the discredited rule of the Congress(I) party which seeks fresh mandate from the people. The reply of the entire working class, the entire people must be a definite 'No'.

By organising 30th August Bandh for the resignation of the Rajiv Government the working class has already delivered its judgement on the Congress(I). It has to be implemented on 22nd November by mobilising millions of votes in all States, in all cities, in support of the candidates of left and secular opposition parties. A convincing and decisive and emphatic majority must be secured by these forces so that the people can have a Government of their choice, so that they are in a position to guide and determine the

course of policy in the post-election period.

While concentrating on the defeat of the Congress (I), the working class and the people cannot forget that there are other dangerous forces in the field dividing the country, undermining its unity and integrity and helping the destabilising efforts of India's enemies from abroad. The imperialists are working to divide and partition the country so that it can be enslaved again. The khalistani secessionist agitators in Punjab, the pro-Pakistani agitators in Kashmir are daily encouraged from abroad.

Internally the BJP, RSS and the VHP continue to divide the people, inflame people's passions in the Babri Masjid-Ramjanmabhoomi issue resulting in communal riots. The BJP openly talks about Hindu Raj and attacks the rights of Muslim minority. All these divisive and secessionist forces, Hindu and Muslim communal organisations undermine the unity of our country and disorganise the democratic struggle to defeat the Congress(I).

The election battle for advancing the cause of democracy, national unity and the interests of the toiling masses of all communities the battle for defeating the Cong(I) demands that the reactionary forces of communalism must be isolated and their game must be exposed during the election campaign. Only opportunists, people not serious about defending the cause of democracy and national unity will think of joining hands with this reactionary crowd.

The election battle of the Indian people has two objectives. It must end in the rout of the Congress(I) and the Rajiv Gandhi Government; it must ensure the isolation of the communal forces, defeat of their efforts to secure electoral approval and ensure emergence of an India firmly united to meet all the challenges of the coming period.

The five years of Rajiv Gandhi's rule provide a wide charge sheet of failures, criminal neglect, sacrifice of a national interest, against the Congress(I) rule. There have been constant attacks on the democratic rights of the people, a growing tendency towards authoritarianism, its most outrageous manifestation is to be found in the rigging of elections of Tripura and the launching of semi-fascist terror in that state against the CPI (M) and its mass following. The growing attacks on the rights of states, running of Parliament as an authoritarian instrument of the Parliamentary majority and growing concentration of power in the hands of the Centre to

buttress an authoritarian regime—these have been manifest in the last five years.

So far as the masses are concerned, hunger, starvation, unemployment, closed factories and mills, these have been the blessings of the Rajiv Government, the blessings of the capitalist path pursued by the Congress(I) since independence.

Three crores of unemployed in urban areas, 10 crores in rural areas, two lakh concerns closed or sick with no provision for unemployment relief, no right to work, this is the gift of the bourgeois-landlord government. Lakhs of industrial workers are on the streets. The cotton textile mills, handloom and powerloom workers and jute workers are getting ruined. The handloom and powerloom workers have never witnessed such a distressing period. The ruination of traditional industries like coir and others continues with accelerated speed, again throwing thousands out of work. And so far the vast mass of workers of unorganised industries are concerned, except provision of miserable minimum wage which is never enforced, there is nothing to protect them.

And over and above all this, the ESMA, MISA and the NSA continue to be used against striking workers accompanied by police repression and goonda attack.

The Rajiv Government and the Congress (I) accept no responsibility to check this anarchy and chaos in industry. The Government refuses to take over and run sick industries. The World Bank demands that Government money should not be spent on reviving such concerns. Rajiv Gandhi Government is therefore denotifying taken over concerns and adding to the chaos. Further Rajiv Government's policy of modernisation and computerisation of industries is again throwing thousands of workers and employees out of jobs. There can be no relief from this anarchy unless the Rajiv Government is thrown out and the policies are reversed.

For the mass of peasantry, for the landless, Rajiv has nothing to offer, the Congress(I) and Rajiv no longer talk about distribution of land. Agricultural workers are exploited like bonded labour by landlords who are allowed to organise armed bands in Bihar to attack them during wage struggles. The mass of poor peasants is saddled with enormous burdens of rural debt. There has been no relief for them in the last five years under the Congress(I) rule. The price of foodgrains increased for the common man but the peasant does not get a remunerative price. The continuous price rise of

necessities of life have led to tremendous deprivation of people throwing millions into abject poverty and starvation despite days of hard honest labour.

At the same time the Tatas and Birlas and the new patrons of the Congress(I), the Ambanis continue to gather huge wealth exploiting and robbing the people. And with Rajiv's policy of denigrating the public sector and privatisation they are having a free run of the economy during the last five years.

The growing reliance on foreign borrowings is making the country dependent on foreign aid and opening the economy to pressures from outside. The interference of the World Bank in internal policies has increased, threatening the independence and self-reliance of our country.

But these are not the only crimes of the ruling Congress(I) and the Rajiv Government. The last five years have witnessed growing disintegration of the unity of the country with the Government showing its bankruptcy and the Congress(I) party doing nothing to fight the divisive forces. Only the Left parties, the CPI(M) and other are waging a courageous fight for national unity in Punjab, their cadres sacrificing their lives. All over the country the CPI(M) and the left continues to wage a battle against the communal forces and the Left Front Governments led by the CPI(M) are taking decisive measures to checkmate the communal forces and protect the minorities. In contrast, the Congress(I) party and its government are playing an opportunist role making fight against divisive forces only a law and order question. It is known that the Congress(I) party has big following among the people even now in Punjab and also in other states, but it refuses to throw its mass strength in the fight against divisive forces. It is quite clear that neither the Congress(I), nor its Government can be trusted with defending the unity of the country.

Last five years have shown that the CPI(M) and the Left Front Governments led by it and left parties have waged a consistent battle for the defence of the interests of the people by innumerable strikes and peasant agitations, defending national unity. They have warned the people against U.S. imperialist designs against our country. They have upheld a non-aligned policy of our country and our friendship with socialist countries which have been now helpful in strengthening our independence. Only the CPI(M) and the Left parties lay stress on defence of policy of non-alignment,

while some opposition parties also forget its importance.

It will be realised by the working class, that the CPI(M) and the Left parties have got a consistent and cohesive policy of defending interests of the people and advancing democracy and protecting the nation against divisive forces.

The CITU therefore calls upon the entire working class to fully support the candidates of the left parties and secure for the people total victory in the election in West Bengal and Kerala. The CITU once more calls upon the entire working class and people to ensure that the combination of the left and secular opposition forces secures an overwhelming victory in the election struggle so that the people can have a government of their choice and move forward decisively to solve the urgent problems facing the country.

The Working Class, Vol. 19, No. 3, November 1989

44

The Ninth General Elections

The Ninth General elections have ended in a smashing defeat of the Congress(I) as called for by the CITU and the Left and secular forces. Rajiv Gandhi's Govt has resigned. The old Lok Sabha with its huge majority of the Congress(I) is dissolved and a Govt of the National Front has already taken office. This victory of the people against the Congress(I) and its rule is an outstanding political event and it removes from the scene a rotten regime which had totally failed to defend national unity, which was surrounded by scandals of corruption and which was inflicting mass misery and huge unemployment on the people and above all growingly surrendering the self-reliance of the economy to the dictates of the World Bank, the IMF and foreign capital.

These are questions of urgent national importance and unless the new Government devotes its energy to deal with them effectively people's will and verdict will not be realised in practice. It was not just for the pleasure of having a change in the Govt that the call to defeat Congress(I) was given by the working class organisations and Left and secular parties.

As expected the Congress-I which had realised that it had alienated the people, did everything arbitrary and illegal to take an electoral verdict in its favour. It was no doubt an unprecedented election. The Election Commissioner had to order repolling in some of the segments of the Amethi Constituency from where the Prime Minister was contesting. This was the first time since inde-

pendence that charges of rigging and unfair polling practices were made in connection with the Prime Minister's election. But this was not the only instance. There were attempts at massive rigging and booth capturing spread over serveral constituencies in the country and the Election Commissioner had to order repolling in more than a thousands polling stations. In Tripura there was open mass rigging accompanied by violence, beating, bomb attacks and assaults on CPI(M) polling agents. But despite protests and complaints the Election Commissioner was not disturbed and he did not take any step to stop these malpractices. So open and 'official' was the mass rigging in that state that it appeared as if the Cong(I) was not prepared to trust its own followers to vote in its favour; no wonder, because there was revulsion among the people against the ruling party after months of its gangster like methods of administration.

The Ninth General Elections will go down in history as an unprecedented election also because of the terror and violence unleashed. More than 100 people were killed in the pre-poll campaign and the polling day clashes. This excludes the mass killings in Bhagalpur in Bihar and the pre-election riots in Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh organised by communal parties and fanatics in the course of the Ramshila processions. Never before in India did the democratic process of elections claim such a heavy toll of human lives mostly from the minority community.

In no previous election, besides, was a communal issue projected in a blatant manner. The BJP had made the Ramjanambhoomi issue an election issue notwithstanding protestations to the contrary. The pre-election Shilanyas riots were calculated to polarise the electorate on a communal basis.

And what was this Babri Masjid-Ramjanambhoomi dispute? It was not just a question of building a new Ram temple near a mosque. The demand was that the temple must be allowed to be built at the site where the old Babri Masjid is standing. The demand was for the demolition of the Mosque as the site is claimed to be the birth place of Ram. One cannot imagine a more fanatical and explosive issue for projecting in the elections.

But it was not only the BJP which was seeking electoral fall out from the Babri Masjid-Ramjanmabhoomi dispute. The ruling party instead of taking a straight secular position and assuring both communities that it would stand by the verdict of the court, played

to the demands of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad hoping to gather the majority community's vote. It made a wrong assessment that the majority mass was won over by the cry of the Ramjanmabhoomi. The Rajiv Govt pretended to pursue a mediatory role, made contradictory statements every few days, but day by day tilted the balance in favour of the VHP. The climax came when the Allahabad Court gave a decision that the site chosen for the temple foundation ceremony was a disputed area. Trampling down the court verdict the Govt permitted the VHP to lay the foundation stone of the proposed temple at the disputed site.

In the meanwhile Rajiv Gandhi was campaigning throughout the country calling for defending and strengthening national unity, attacking the Left parties and especially the CPI(M) for joining hands with the communalists. The people were not taken in by this double dealing and double faced tactics. The Congress(I) could not carry conviction to the democratic mass by its hypocritical concern for national unity, nor could it exploit its Ramjanmabhoomi opportunism and Rajiv Gandhi's promise of 'Ram Rajya' to garner votes from the majority community. It also lost the confidence of the minority who had been its steady supporters for years. The Congress(I) appeasement of the VHP, the open flouting of the court decision to accommodate it, alienated the Muslim minority which in a large measure voted against the Congress(I) ensuring its rout in UP. The Congress(I) also failed to side-track the majority community vote which did not abandon its secular and democratic stand. The Rajiv Govt and the Congress(I) were rejected by the electorate. It constitutes a decisive assertion of people's will. But have the people secured a decisive democratic victory opening the way to firmly pursuing democratic policies to strengthen national unity and give a fair deal to the common citizen? Has the electorate succeeded in placing in power a Govt firmly based on secular and Left forces? It is clear, the answer is 'no'.

The elections have resulted in a hung Parliament, meaning a situation in which no single party has won a majority. The Congress(I) is still the biggest single party with 193 seats; National Front comes with 144; the BJP has 88 seats and the CPI(M) 32; Left forces together with the CPI(M) is 52.

The Congress(I) notwithstanding its virtual rout in the North has staged a spectacular come back in the South defeating the TDP and the Janata Dal in Andhra and Karnataka respectively in the

Assembly and Parliamentary elections. The TDP has secured only two seats out of 38 seats in the Andhra Pradesh Parliamentary elections and its Assembly seats are 74 compared to 180 of the Congress(I). In Karnataka Janata Dal has secured only one Parliamentary seat and 24 assembly seats as compared to 27 Parliamentary seats and 177 Assembly seats secured by the Congress(I). In both these States the Congress(I) will be forming a new ministry.

In Tamil Nadu again the Congress(I) with the aid of the AIADMK has swept all the seats in the Parliamentary elections except one. The NF constituent in the State has drawn a complete blank. In Kerala also the Left and secular parties have secured only three seats out of 20.

The electorate has not given the same verdict in all the States of India. However, it has effectively prevented the Congress(I) from coming to power. But it has not given a decisive verdict in favour of any party in the opposition to run the government.

The CITU and the working class were concerned not only in defeating the Congress(I) but also in isolating the communal forces and increasing the strength of the secular and left forces in the country and formation of a government by them. But the elections have failed to produce the desired result. It will be seen that the objective of isolating the communal forces has not been achieved. The BJP has won nearly 90 seats in the Parliamentary elections. Its numerical strength is more than 1 and 1/2 of the strength of the Left parties. This is the first time since independence that a communal party has more strength in the Lok Sabha than the Left. It is also clear that an opposition Government cannot be formed without the support of the BJP. In West Bengal, however, the Left Front headed by the CPI(M) has succeeded in routing the Congress(I). The Congress(I) could get only 5 out of the 41 seats for which elections were held. The BJP of course has drawn a blank. There was no room for communal forces in West Bengal. Beaten straight in a polling contest free from all violence, intimidation and rigging, the defeated crowd is bleating about election malpractice with hardly anyone to listen to them. The virtual rout of the Congress(I) in West Bengal with the Left parties capturing all seats except five is the main source of the increased strength of the Left in the Parliament. With the additional seats secured by the CPI(M) and CPI outside Bengal the Left has increased its strength to 51 in the Lok Sabha, putting the Left parties in an important and strategic position to

help forward the democratic aspirations of the people. It is also clear that a government of the opposition cannot be formed without the support of the Left forces. This is an important and strategic position secured by the Left through the electoral verdict.

This is a new situation. The new Govt. cannot be formed without the support of the BJP, without the support of the Left. It is obvious that in this situation the best way to carry out the verdict of the electorate is to allow the National Front, the biggest party in the opposition to form the Government and other two parties to support it from outside. The Left parties have already announced their support for National Front Government and it seems that the BJP also had done so though stressing on a number of issues and reservations which the Party considers as urgent and important. The Left parties have assured their support on condition that the National Front abide by its manifesto and does not contemplate coalition with any other party. This arrangement is absolutely essential considering the sharp differences among the opposition parties, to carry forward the will of the people to have an alternate Government of their choice. A heavy responsibility rests on the NF Government and Shri V P Singh, the new Prime Minister to carry out the mandate of the people and implement the promises made during the elections. The confidence which the Janata Dal and the National Front have earned among the Muslim minority constitutes a great asset for national unity. To strengthen and develop it is one of the important tasks to consolidate national unity.

The new Government headed by V.P. Singh will be faced with many urgent problems, problems pertaining to the immediate condition of the masses, high prices, unemployment and many other issues. It will be the responsibility of the new Government to maintain and strengthen the country's policy of non-alignment and its cooperation with democratic and socialist countries. The CITU and the working class send their best wishes to the National Front Government and its leader Mr. V.P. Singh. They are confident that called upon to serve the interests of the country at a critical period the National Front and its leaders will show complete one mindedness in carrying out the will of the people and assuring the masses that they were justified in putting the trust in the National Front.

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45

Right To Work And Unemployment Problem

(Despite his deteriorating health Com. BTR could find time to write the following article while lying in bed. At his initiative the All India Trade Unio Convention on Right to Work was held at Durgapur on 2-3 April 1990. He very much wanted to attend the convention but his health prevented him from doing so. This is perhaps the last writing of BTR before his passing away.)

The National Federations and Confederations of Workers and Employees who have called the convention on Right to Work at Durgapur deserve congratulations and the Steel Workers Federation of India deserves appreciation for taking initiative in this regard.

During the last four decades though right to work is included in the Directive Principles of the Constitution the unemployment problem has aggravated and it has now reached a colossal proportion. During these four decades neither the Congress Govt. nor the short lived Janata Govt. did anything to stop or curtail this growth of unemployment except sometimes saying about employment oriented schemes and plans. But the laws of the capitalist path could not be checked and unemployment except sometimes saying something about employment oriented schemes and plans. But the laws of the capitalist path could not be checked and unemployment continued to penetrate all walks of life.

The trade union movement of our country has also neglected

this problem mainly looking at it only as a question of industrial unemployment and that too confined to retrenched workers. This neglect has weakened the struggle for employment and the right to work. In these circumstances one must appreciate the initiative taken by the Steel Workers Federation to organise this Convention.

Not Just Job Security

The right to work is not just security of jobs, it is the most important fundamental right among all democratic rights. The other rights like freedom of speech and organisation, right to vote and form government of people's choice precious in themselves, become formal rights in the absence of right to work. These rights in themselves do not end the dependence of the workers and the common man's livelihood on the sweet will of the employers, those who own the means of production like factories, mines, railways and land. The toiling man is really free and suffers from no inferior status when the state recognises his right to work, that he need have no fear of unemployment, that no employer can play with his livelihood and job.

How can this right be ensured? Only by ensuring equality of all members of society, the working class and other toiling sections in relation to the means of production, i.e., factories etc. This is ensured by removing all means of production from the ownership and control of private owners, of a handful of capitalists and monopolists and putting them under social ownership. To effect this it is necessary for the masses to have political power, a govt. of the toiling people led by the working class.

Capitalism & Right to Work Cannot Go Together

It is therefore not accidental that only the Constitutions of socialist Countries assure the right to work as a fundamental right. The Constitutions of capitalist countries even the richest among them like the USA do not sanction this right to the working class or the working people. Because in these countries the means of production are owned by the private capitalists and the working class has no choice but to seek employment in their factories. The capitalists are the sole masters and they hire and fire the workers according to the needs of their profit making. Workers' livelihood and jobs become a plaything for their hunt for profits. Capitalism and right to work cannot go together.

But in socialist countries private capitalists and employers do not exist; the factories, mines, railways and land are no longer

under the monopolist possession of private employers. They are owned by the entire society and the objective is to bring prosperity to all. The society sees that economic planning is done in such a way that all are assured of their jobs. This shows the superiority of the socialist system over the capitalist system. It is necessary to remember this because there is now persistent propaganda in our country and elsewhere that socialism has failed and capitalism has shown its superiority over socialism.

While in the socialist countries in all these years there has been no unemployment, no economic crisis, what has been the record of these capitalist countries ? Today in these countries more than 30 millions are unemployed and the rate of unemployment rises higher with every technological advance. In the USA alone in 1985 the unemployed were 83 lakhs, in Japan 15 lakhs, in France 23 lakhs, in Germany (FRG) 23 lakhs, in Italy 24 lakhs and in the UK 32 lakhs. Between 1979 and 1985 the number of unemployed has more than doubled in the UK, in Germany it has nearly trebbled and in the USA it has increased nearly 25 per cent.

Unemployment Must Increase In Capitalism

Why is this so? It is the law of the capitalist society that unemployment must increase, that there must be an industrial reserved army at the disposal of the capitalists to keep down the wages of workers when the need for more labour arises. What is this law of capitalist society? Private capitalists carry on production not for social benefit but to earn and increase their profits. They compete with each other to capture the market by introducing new machinery and lowering the cost of production. Lowering the cost of production means using less number of workers with more effective machinery. In the competition all capitalists try to surpass their rivals to economise labour, use less labour and these lead to increased unemployment. The capitalist society cannot exist without this competition among private owners to decrease the number of workers at work. India is not fully a developed capitalist country. It has recently entered upon the path of capitalist development, but in India also so far as modern industries are concerned the law of capitalist accumulation leading to increased unemployment alongwith the growth of capitalist industry applies. This we already see in the cities and industrial towns. Statistics reveal that there is industrial growth sometimes at 8 to 9 per cent while the number of unemployed increases.

With each successive plan the number of unemployed has increased.

Registered Urban Unemployment In India

At the end of the First Five Year Plan —53 lakhs
At the end of the Second Five Year Plan —71 lakhs
At the end of the Third Five Year Plan—96 lakhs
At the end of the Fourth Five Year Plan —1 Cr. 71 lakhs
At the end of the Fifth Five Year Plan —2 Cr. 21 lakhs
At the end of the Sixth Five Year Plan —2 Cr. 49 lakhs
As on 30.6.89 —3 Cr. 10 lakhs

(Source : 1. Lok Sabha reply dated 4th Sept. 1989.
2. Indian Labour Journal October, 1989.
3. Ministry of Labour D.G.E.T.S.=1302517/1988-89

The competition of big industries with the smaller ones ruins the latter and releases thousands of workers, only a part of which is absorbed in big or new industries. Competition among the big ones for more profits leads to the introduction of new technology and machinery, which while absorbing enormous amount of capital, employs less number of workers. These are known as capital intensive industries which require a huge amount of capital but require only a small number of workers to run them.

Capitalist Anarchy in Production

Then there is a capitalist anarchy in production. To earn profits several capitalists start new industries but soon find that they are producing more than the demand of the market. They are unable to sell their products at profitable rates, close down their factories or declare lockouts throwing thousands of workers on the streets. Besides, the economic policy of the bourgeois-landlord government of the country leads to reduction in the purchasing power of the people, reducing their capacity to buy necessaries of life which again leads to closure and unemployment for millions. India's Cotton textile industry is a typical example of people's poverty and reduction of purchasing power leading to closure of factories. The rising price level in recent time has reduced the real earning of the people and the working class making them unable to purchase their needs from the market. The result is that when at least one-third of rural India is almost going semi-naked the textile mills have closed or gone sick for want of demand, increasing unemployment of thousands of workers. As many as two lakh big and small industrial concerns have been closed during the last few

years again throwing lakhs of workers out of jobs. According to Government only 20 percent of these can be revived leaving large number of unemployed to their fate. These concerns are being closed because of competition from new and big industries or reduction of purchasing power of large sections of people without which capitalist advance in a backward country cannot take place.

Capitalist Accumulation and Rural Unemployment

Generally, when considering the problem of unemployment in the country, trade unions pay attention only to the unemployment caused by the factors mentioned above. They confine their attention to the workers who were once employed but now they have lost their jobs. But these are not the only source of unemployment. There are two other sources which create far bigger unemployment than the factors operating in the industrial areas. The advanced capitalist countries have brought their entire economy under the control of capital long ago. But in a backward country like India the process of complete domination of capital over the economy is still going on. In the beginning of capitalism the persent day advanced countries had to go through the same process over a prolonged period. In India lakhs of people are employed in pre-capitalist industries, handicrafts and smaller concerns. These traditional industries like handloom, coir, cashewnut and various types of handicrafts are now being ruined throwing out lakhs of workers. The process has been going on since the inception of the British rule and continues today imposing prolonged misery and unemployment on those engaged in these traditional and village industries. The same process is taking place in agriculture with eviction of the small peasant from the land and the means of production. Capitalist development requires separation of mass of producers from the means of production so that it can have cheap labour power and expanding market for its products. In India inspite of several land-reform measures and some kind of land distribution there has been mass eviction of peasants from land, turning them into agricultural or industrial or bonded labour. The extreme concentration of land in India has not taken place without this mass eviction. Marx called this process of separation of producers from the means of production, the process of primary accumulation.

The needs of capitalist development, more food production for towns and the evicted mass of people has led to building of giant dams for purposes of irrigation and bringing new land under

cultivation. But this has led to lakhs of adivasis and others losing their land which is submerged under new dams. These lakhs of people are just evicted enmasse without any compensation or rehabilitation and are thrown into the mass of unemployed to starve or die. No wonder Marx observed "capital comes dripping from head to foot, from every pore, with blood and dirt." (P 712 capital Vol. 1).

The means of communication and transport required for the development of the capitalist path play further havoc with rural employment without offering any alternative or substitute. The development of lorry and truck transport have thrown out of employment lakhs of bullockcart owners which had the privilege of transporting from village to towns. The institution of electric pump for well irrigation has again deprived thousands of bullock owners who used bullock power to draw well water for irrigation purposes. These inevitable developments under capitalism have created enormous mass of rural unemployment far bigger in number than unemployed in the cities.

Unemployment to Stay till Causes are Eliminated

The total problem becomes a colossal problem which cannot be solved and the right to work cannot be ensured if this unemployment process is not checked and a different type of socio-economic system is not ensured. Such a system can be based only on socialised means of production and a socialist society. Under it the development of modern industry can be rapid and able to absorb all persons displaced by new industries. In the condition of capitalism the rate of industrial growth is too slow and it displaces far more persons than it absorbs in employment.

Another source of unemployment in the present society is its incapacity to employ all new entrants to the labour market. The youngman coming from a working class, middle class or peasant family, full of productive enthusiasm and wanting to serve society with his full productive power is told that society has no need of him and his labour capacity is frozen. Day by day the capacity of private capital to employ is getting less and less. The introduction of computer in service industries, in banking, insurance and other service sectors and automation in industries are bringing down the potential of future employment. In some cases those already employed are being retrenched. All these factors make it quite clear that in the coming days, the problem of unemployment is bound to be aggravated and those already employed will be threatened with

growing insecurity.

This is the colossal character of the problem. It will be with us so long as the causes that operate are allowed to go unchecked. And there is no way to end unemployment, and end the abject dependence of the livelihood of the people on the profit sharks except the right to work as the fundamental right under the Constitution. All fundamental rights become nominal unless the right to work is secured by the people.

Obligatory Class Task

It is obligatory therefore for the entire working class, employed and unemployed, for the destitute rural masses to join hands and throw the strength of millions in the struggle for right to work. Its acquisition means the real liberation of the people from bondage of a few capitalists. And for the first time they and their families will live in an atmosphere of freedom when no one could jeopardise their jobs.

While propagating the right to work the entire working class, unemployed and the rural mass must demand adequate changes in the present economic system, in the property relations without which the requisite sanctions for right to work cannot be created. There can be no right to work if the present land monopoly of the few continues and unless a new land reform overhauls the agrarian property relations with wide distribution of lands to the landless. Similarly there can be no right to work if means of production are allowed to be run by private owners with their inalienable right to hire and fire. Growing nationalisation of industries managed with workers' participation and growing elimination of private ownership are necessary to prepare the basis for the implemenation of the right to work. These have to be campaigned for while propagating the right to work.

Alongwith this there must be agitation for immediate measures to increase the number of jobs, to curtail the power of the employers regarding hiring and firing and schemes for employment expansion of jobs and unemployment relief for those who are unable to secure work.

The campaign for these immediate demands as well as the right to work must be the common campaign of employed and unemployed workers, urban and rural workers. The trade unions which represent the organised strength of the working class must take the lead in organising the campaign of the unemployed

workers, rural mass, youth, students and women and take steps to see that a permanent organisation of the unemployed enabling all sections from workers to middle class is created to carry on the battle. The present outlook does not go beyond taking up the cause of the retrenched factory workers. This will never unite the common mass of all job-seekers from all sections. Special attention should be paid to the youth from all sections—the most militant part of the movement. Their initiative and resourcefulness once aroused will work marvels in organisation. The DYFI and SFI have already done praiseworthy work in this direction. In some cases as in Kerala it was the DYFI that took the lead to raise the question of the unemployed with the trade unions lagging behind.

Land Reform and Rural Relief

The National Front Government has accepted the implementation of the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana for the rural areas and a modified Nehru Rozgar Yojana for the urban areas. Utmost benefit should be secured out of these schemes. But to be able to do this, a radical land reform has to be ushered in, otherwise the resources will be cornered by the vested interests. Mere decentralisation and involvement of Panchayats is not going to help unless the power of the vested interests in rural areas is broken.

Campaign for Immediate Measures

New Schemes to relieve the distress in rural areas should be undertaken besides radical Land reform.

In the cities in urban areas steps should be taken to open the closed mills and factories and where reorganisation is necessary it should be done in consultation with and approval of the workers. The Government departments and public sector institutions should lift the ban on new recruitment and the employees strength should be increased in proportion to the increased work.

The possibility of reduction of hours of work with a view to additional recruitment should be examined in modern concerns.

Traditional industries which are being ruined should be given protection in the transitional period.

Complete nationalisation of cotton textile and jute industries should be undertaken to increase employment potential and reorganise their production.

Employers' right to hire and fire, declare lockout should be taken up and responsibility should be placed on a competent authority with representation of workers on it.

The entry of multinationals and import liberalisation and expansion of multinationals to new areas should be stopped.
All discrimination between men and women in matters of jobs should end.

For helping educated unemployed a massive programme for eradication of illiteracy should be undertaken. The principle of unemployment relief has already been accepted in many states, it should be further extended. The fight against unemployment and for security of jobs is an all India problem with the main responsibility resting on the Central Govt. It requires all India remedies, all India legislations covering the many problems like Nationalisation of Industries, opening of close factories and widespread employment schemes in rural areas. It also requires many important changes in the economic structure which again can only be introduced by the Union Govt. These problems cannot be handled piece meal by states which not only lack economic resources but also legal power to interfere with the unrestricted power of managements and owners to deal with workers livelihood. It is a matter of some satisfaction that the National Front Govt. recognises the importance of the unemployment problem and one expects that unlike the previous Cong(I) regime, it will take practical steps to relieve the distress of the unemployed and embark upon a practical programme of increasing employment both in cities and rural areas.

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46

Unpublished Tape Recorded Memoirs

B.N. Datar, wellknown senior official of the Government of India and Secretary National Labour Commission took the following interview of B.T. Ranadive in which he had narrated his memoirs about his assocation in the trade union movement. This narration enables readers to acquaint themselves about some unknown facts about early trade union activities of Ranadive. The recorded cassete is available if any one is interested in having if for further use.

We are grateful to B.N. Datar and V.S. Gupta Secretary HMS for enabling us to publish this interview in this volume.

Editorial Board

B.N. Datar : Comrade, I have already explained to you, the object of this meeting. We have two Institutes in Bombay devoted to the study of Labour Problems as Trade Unions view them : One in the memory of Shri G.D. Ambekar and the other in the name of Maniben Kara. We work together on problems of common interest. We have decided to join hands to establish in Bombay what we call "Trade Union Archives." As a part of it we are recording oral history of senior trade union leadership as a first priority. We will approach the relatively younger leadership thereafter. We want to tape your personal history : How did you get interested in trade unionism as a starting point and then your experience in the

movement and of course, related issues.

B.T. RANADIVE : My entry in trade union movement came through politics. It has certain history; it is a long history. I actually became a Communist first and then entered t.u. movement. Joining the Communist Party itself has a history. I was a school student during the days of the first non-cooperation movement. My entire secondary education was completed in Pune in the school known as the Nutan Marathi Vidyalaya, a school with nationalist traditions. All my fellow students were politically oriented. Matriculation examination was approaching and that was a period of political activity with demonstrations and meetings all the year around. We attended meetings and participated in demonstrations. Then I went to college. The subsequent collapse of the non-cooperation movement lekt us dejected life many others. Then while going through college education, we temporarily lost interest in politics. But when I was studying in Junior BA. News came : Gandhiji was seriously ill and that he was taken out for an appendix operation. (BND : 1924-1925). That revived out interest in politics. After this revival all of us, students with like mind engaged ourselves in understanding what was happening. We could not reconcile ourselves with the things as they were. At this stage one of my cousins, younger brother of Dr. Adhikari was close to me in my thinking. Both of us had progressive ideas about social reforms. We had similar views on religion and several other problems of the country. We could not wholly agree with Gandhiji; there were differences in Congress leadership. We had some sympathy with the swarajist approach of Pandit Motilal Nehru, C.R. Das and others who believed in Parliamentary activities in addition to mass contact.

BND : Those were unsettled days in the nationalist movement and added to that were communal disturbances too. But, Comrade, tell us what attracted you to Communist ideology?

BTR : This was also a period of Hindu-Muslim riots, some of them engineered. This was around 1926-1927. Those were bad days. Those riots shattered the dream of Hindu-Muslim unity built up in 1920-21, through the khilafat movement of Gandhiji and Ali brothers. Then we thought that a more radical approach was needed about national problem; some ingenuity in thinking was necessary too. We were drifting away from Gandhian ideology which with all its short-comings was keeping our interest in poli-

tics alive. We could not find anything convincing. At that time Dr. Adhikari (senior) was in Germany. He regularly sent to us news letters on Communism. Added to this was mass agitation in India. This convinced us that common people can come together irrespective of their religious beliefs, caste rivalries and language barriers. That will be a step in the solution of country's problems, especially Hindu-Muslim divergences. A radical political slogan seemed extremely appropriate. On the labour front, in Bombay a bitter strike was going on where Hindu and Muslim workers were coming together and that turned us towards the working class movement. Then, when by 1928 I passed out of the university after my MA, there were persons like Dange and Adhikari who had already started working for labour. They convened Maharashtra Youth Conference in which I participated. By the end of 1928, the senior Adhikari had also returned from Germany and had become a member of the Communist Party. Soon thereafter all top leaders in the party were arrested on conspiracy charges. There was a void in leadership (trade union) and we filled the void and started taking greater interest in trade union movement. Our senior colleague at this time was comrade S.V. Deshpande (he died subsequently). He had links with workers. He was a man of integrity and had good following among workers because of his fighting spirit. He worked part time with the trade union and was working as a journalist for 'Navakal'. That is how we joined together and start work in the trade unions; in the process we activised the Bombay Girni Kamgar Union (GKU). To weaken the movement the authorities saw to it that on some trumped up charges we were put behind the bars; a Hindu-Muslim riot was organised too to weaken the GKU following.

BND : Could you tell us about some striking features of that work stoppage particularly because of the communal angle it acquired and about which you made a mention.

BTR : What happened at that time was broadly this. This riot was sought to be organised in a working class area and the acid test for riot organisers was one section of rioters did not join in the work stoppage (to connote division in working class). The riot was in a mixed working class area in an oil installation where there were Pathans as watchmen and workers belonged to both communities Hindus and Muslims. An ugly incident was engineered : some Pathans were stabbed allegedly by Hindu workers; and that cre-

ated an explosion. Now perhaps what happened was stabbing may have other reasons—irrespective of community—most probably for economic reasons. In those days Pathans were the main money lenders for workers and scuffles on this account could be natural. A retaliatory hunt for a Pathan may have started and to clever instigators this was a good opportunity to spread communal passions in the working class. None-the-less taking advantage of this ugly situation guns were placed around the office of the GKU to spread terror among workers. Some more arrests took place and simultaneously this kin of 'Bandobast' was established to coerce workers to go to work. And yet a protest strike took place; it did not subside for some time. All this was a deliberate game of the Government of India perhaps on the urging of employer interest to smash the trade union movement, particularly the GKU.

BND : Precisely in what respect you and your trade union colleagues were different from other union leadership in the Country?

BTR : The GKU was developed out of militant ideology. We could place before workers something different (ideologically different) from what other leaders of workers of those days used to offer. After all persons like N.M. Joshi and others of his kind were essentially humanitarian workers. But ours was the leadership which was making them aware of class struggle, their role in the fight for independence; we used to arouse in them anti-imperialist sentiment and so on. And all this made our approach to labour problems and work in pursuance of it an anathema to British rulers. Another point which disturbed the British was what happened during the course of an earlier strike i.e. the long textile strike of 1928, led by Dange and others. As a token of sympathy towards workers some financial help was sent by Soviet trade unions. It was called in India, derisively of course, 'red gold' because it came from Moscow. Propaganda was carried on, on that basis even though the help was received through N.M. Joshi whom none could have described as a Communist. It is very significant that during the course of that strike the tone of Government propaganda as also of the national press had changed. In the initial stages, the nationalistic press was saying that the communists organised the strike to help Lancashire interests; later when they realised that money was coming from Moscow, the Press as also Government was afraid of radical ideology being implanted among the working class. The second point was this the new leadership in consonnance with

communist principle made workers aware that they were the leaders; a strike committee was established and so was the idea of collective leadership. All this created tremendous enthusiasm among workers; it aroused a sense of self confidence among them. Establishment of elected mill committees in every mill widened leadership cadres Workers then started to get the feeling that they can manage their own struggle and they were leaders in the undertakings they worked.

BND : That is interesting. Can you recall some concrete instances to illustrate how this new awareness worked?

BTR : I know of one incident to show how workers ticked off their one time leader on the basis of the support they could muster from the rank and file. I was told later on that before I arrived on the scene, and that leader was arrested, that there was strike in Tata Mills during the period of settlement. The leader that time wanted to control workers but the strike did take place even after the leader negotiated a settlement because workers wanted to demonstrate their newly acquired strength. Older leadership warned workers that there should be no strike; it should not take place without his authority. Workers went on strike and invited the union nominee to negotiate. As expected this nominee told workers that "since you have stopped work against our instructions, we will not negotiate with the management." The workers in turn, told the leader : "If you want to stay away you can go; we are the leaders and we will negotiate". This created the spirit among workers that they could be their own leaders. Such a democratic ferver was never witnessed among workers, nor was witnessed such a confidence among them. We considered this to be a unique phenomenon in Indian working class, a phenomenon which if properly utilised could help class struggle. Later on however, a retreat set in but that is a different matter.

BND : What were the reactions to these developments outside the working class, particularly among employers and Government ?

BTR : It was difficult for individual Mill Owners to react (though some of them did). Strikes had become an everyday affair. According to Mill Owners Association eighty strikes of short or long duration took place in one month. This was the climate then prevailing. The mill committee or similar institutions, it was felt had to be curbed. The Government, in consultation with millown-

ers then decided that steps should be taken to isolate such worker-leadership, though by design the union was left alone. Consequently instances were reported of the whole mill committees being arrested. This happened in the three Wadia Mills and the Sassoon Mills. In all these cases, an understanding was there between the management and the union that the latter will not advise on strike action till such time as was required to negotiate on disputed issues and if there was failure in negotiations. This arrangement worked only partially since the rank and file of workers did not care about the arrangement; workers even went on strike but Wadia, a strong management and Sassoons too under the leadership of Sir Fredrick stone stood firm. They said unanimously: "This is our agreement with your union. You have violated it and you are responsible for your unwise action." Workers were equally determined and continued their work stoppage. And things went on in this style. So this was the main grudge of employers against mill committees. According to them the committee were at variance with the basic structure of unions and unreasonable assertion by the rank and file.

BND : Comrade, I see some resemblance between what you said just now and the later day criticism in the U.K. of the shop-stewerds system, i.e. shop stewards on occasions went against the arrangements agreed to between the union and management.

BTR : Yes, somewhat! Employers used these differences as a handle to pursue their own ends. They mounted propaganda against mill committees on the one hand and union on the other. Soviet assistance was also mentioned as an additional irritant. The situation, as we saw it, was simple. Workers were asserting their trade union rights in a democratic manner and not in the old pattern of non-workers leading them and educated union leadership imposing its say on the rank and file. However, because of the agreement on the basic objective within the working class employers were not able to get much mileage of what they viewed as union-workers right. As regards Government attitude let me recall another incident. In those days of struggle for independence, the authorities would react immediately in such situations by banning meetings and imposing section 144. At times such bans were imposed even on meetings held inside the chawl areas. One day we held one such meeting. I was speaking when police came. This was in Kumbharwada Chawl. The area had attracted a dozen police-

men armed with revolvers, lathis etc. Nothing untoward happened. Next day we had another meeting. The police force was much bigger. The Police Commissioner himself came accompanied by a Presidency Magistrate, I think his name was Dastoor; he was a gentleman though he was a Magistrate. They surrounded the place culminating in our arrest: myself and some of my colleagues-all done with due regard to formalities. On the positive side a Court of Enquiry was appointed; we cooperated by appearing before it and tendering evidence (We did that both when Fawcett Committee examined our demands and this other committee which investigated the strike activity. This latter was, I think, the Pearson Enquiry Committee. Person was a Judge of Calcutta High Court. He was President. Barrister Talyarkhan was a member and the other member was Mr. Haridas, Juidicial Commissioner from Sind. So these three honourable gentlemen decided against workers. But even before the Courts' findings were made public the strike activity was on the wane and there was an understandable despondence in the mill areas.

BND : Can you recall any other struggles of workers in those days, struggles in which you had involved yourself?

BTR : I was also the Secretary of Railway Workers Union. I had written an article in their journal on Hindu-Muslim riots and charging Government in promoting them. It is after that I was in jail for some time. During that period GIP railwaymen had gone on strike; it was one day strike initially but got extended from time to time. Coincidentally it was on the eve of the second non-cooperation movement and was instrumental in creating all kinds of complications in the sense that workers genuine demands got mixed up with politics of the day. Workers became despondent because the strike was not properly organised when it started and it ended in a disorganised manner. Mr. Ruikar as a senior leader wielded a lot of influence on Railway labour—he was a very powerful speaker—and the consequence was that he completely broke down. He was a good person, well meaning, I think his daughter looked after the father very well. Subsequently she became a Government Labour Officer. So, you see, these things started, and then what happened. Workers were again in search of leadership.

BND : You spoke about Hindu-Muslim riots and their effect on workers in Bombay particularly. In those days, in Maharashtra

part of the Bombay Presidency (and also in Karnatak part too) another development was taking root : the Brahmin-non Brahmin syndrome. How did it affect trade union movement in Western part of India?

BTR : I came out of jail by end of 1930. By that time labour scene had changed everywhere. The strike activity was not confined only to Bombay and surrounding areas. Hasty and unplanned work stoppages was disrupting the movement. Big strikes were started and these spread from Bengal to Bombay. However, everywhere workers were in retreat, partly because of the reasons mentioned and partly also because of the world wide depression. In Bombay thousands of workers were thrown on streets. This was a period when a new turn was seen in the political fight for independnece with Gandhiji attracting attention in urban and rural areas alike. M.N. Roy had apprared on the trade union scene. His appeal was mainly to the young and educated workers. New leadership was coming up in the GKU. Royists got hold of some young people in the textile industry, persons who were in good fighting spirit. Persons like Kandalkar with good intelligence and hold over workers were hoping to replace old leaders like Alve, Kalse and others. (some of these latter were involved in the Meerut Conspiracy case too)—Alve was the President of the GKU and Kalse the Vice President. Also some of the GKU membership was under non-Brahmin influence. On our return to trade union politics we had to curb the influence of such tendencies with our communist approach to workers problems. The non-Brahmin group did not like on that basis persons like Dange, Nimbkar and Joglekar (all Brahmins). And all this happened at that time because in Maharashtra of those days non-Brahmin feeling was very prominent. Since the mid-twenties, opponents of trade union wanted to capitalise on this environment. In the process they also thought that they would hit the Communists too. They thought that this would attract the Maharashtra peasantry too to their fold. But they totally failed. But they totally forgot that in the new situation, working class was gradually being drawn into the vortex of the nationalist movement. Thus the Brahmin-non-Brahmin phase in the Maharashtra trade union movement turned out to be short lived : other influences on workers were far more dominant. Throughout the earlier period especially the period of between say withdrawal of the first non-cooperation movement and around

1927-1928 the non-Brahmin movement was on the ascendence. Cynically enough attempts were made to turn it even against the national movement, because Brahmins exercised their dominance in that arena too. (For the same reason, they were against Communists also).

BND : Were there some other developments outside Bombay which had influence on workers in Bombay?

BTR : Some senior non-Brahmins in earlier years had influence on working class pockets of the city. They would respond to 'Swadeshi' call the call for burning foreign cloth and other politically motivated calls, i.e. the movement directed against the visit of the Prince of Wales. They participated in huge domonstrations and protests against the Prince of Wales' arrival in Bombay and elsewhere. And in this tense atmosphers, Maharaja of kolhapur organised a Welcome function for him in Pune. He was also invited to open the Shivaji Memorial in that city. All this was in the early phase of the movement. Six or Seven years later, things changed; workers were getting influenced by the call of nationalism and the non-Brahmin appeal considerably weakened. We want to fight, the other leaders used to say, but they were mistaking the cause. Eventually, even they were saying good things about Communists and Brahmine, mainly because workers were not listening to their 'anti' slogans. In the next two years the entire peasautry came under the sway of the Congress; some of the staunch non-Brahmins also joined the Congress. Persons like Bhaskarrao Jadhav, the Education Minister of those days because of their/non-Brahmin stance started losing their appeal. Workers began to have the feeling that there were more important causes to fight for. The Brahmin leadership, though shaken by the mass feeling against it, kept its cool; it had probably no alternative. Now therefore, by 1930, the working class was very strongly influenced by nationalist sentiment. Some Congress leaders at that time were inclined favourably to Communists; others who criticised our approach were heard in the Congress but did not carry enough weight. Gradually they tended to isolate themselves from the working class movement.

BND : Now that we have come upto 1930, could you tell us something bout the developments at the all-India level. There were differences within the AITUC as between 'moderates' and 'radicals'. A split took place in that organisation. A new Group, the

Royist Group got established and so on? Trade union historians have chronicled these events. But we would like to know your version.

BTR : To start with let me talk about the GKU—the Bombay affiliate of the AITUC. With its leadership engaged in a major political court battle. The meerut conspiracy case— new persons took over : V.B. Karnik, Kandalgonkar and others. At the middle level of the organisation, opportunism was rampant. Some Congressman were also wanting to fish in troubled waters. Agreements were arrived at but there was hardly any impementation on eihter side. All this meant that the working class movement in Bombay was going through a difficult phase. Employers were distracted because of a world wide depression. The general public was witnessing a resurgence of nationalist movement. Gate meetings or even bigger ones were poorly attended. Loyalty to organisation of any description was weakening but protests against the Simon Commission and Whitley Commission were voiced as appropriate. And in the midst of all this came the Jharia session of the AITUC. This session was attended by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru as an interested outsider. Communist and moderate (non-Communists) groups in the organisation fought on every issue and the former used to score. The moderates sensing this proposed the name of Pandit Nehru as President; the Communist nominee was on Comrade D.J. Kulkarni, an actual worker. In spite of the halo Panditji carried, he was elected by a narrow majority. And yet when the Congress gave a call for demonstration or boycott as happened in the case of the two Commissions, workers showed their solidarity for the national cause. The Bombay working class has a long history of rising in favour of national cause (BND : As in the case of Tilak's sentence 1908—an event applauded by Lenin). Yes. They protested, Textile, Muncipal, Railway and other workers all joined hands whenever workers' mind was to be made known to authorities. At that time Nimbkar comined two posts : he was Secretary of the Bombay Congress Committee and how was Vice President of GKU too. Dnage and Nimbkar were both in the Congress subcommittee which organised protests against the Simon Commission. We were all together then. We organised protests strike. The tremendous response to protest meetings in working class areas in Bombay, Calcutta and other industrial centres, made Government review its stance for labour. To create an impression

that British authorities cared for the working class, they appointed the Royal Commission on Labour. In a further effort to please labour the British appointed some Indians on the Commission. But this itself started a controversy in the 1929 AITUC Session. One group led by N.M. Joshi, who incidentally was a member of the Commission along with Chaman Lal, favoured cooperation with the Commission. These were moderates; supported the British (BND: They supported both the Simon Commission and the Whitley Commission). Yes. For the British support for Whitley Commission among labour groups as in the AITUC was important, to be in line with the sentiments at home i.e. the British Trade Unions sentiments. it is because of this a big tussle in the AITUC between the moderate and radical groups became inevitable. Because of the dominance of the radicals in the AITUC, nothing mcuh could be done through the AITUC (Possibly because of he situation then prevailing, the Simon Commission did not create such interenal controversides). That is why the moderate group took counsel together and decided to have alomost a conspiracy against communists denouncing all propositions (even simple ones) emanting from the Communist group. We also had our own strategy. We were moving resolution after resolution, some of these were merely for propoganda. At times we spoke in favour of resolutions which we wanted to be rejected. Any way it was great fun with strategies and counter strategies being discuassed in private. It is in the midst of this that Pandit Nehru left. He did not, however leave a deep impression of his personality on the AITUC (BND : Panditiji's autobiography has one references to this i.e. his association with the AITUC. He was, according to it in sympathy with the radical elements in the organisation). That may be perhaps because of his national preoccupations. Then came Subhash Bose as AITUC President but matters did not improve. However the radical group within the organisation had a somewhat better rapport with him during his presidency. Irrespective of who was the President, Nehru or Bose, the internal bickerings in the orranisation continued. Basically it was a struggle between a few in the leadership who wanted to conduct the trade union affairs in the old style confining themselves to some major demands, mostly of 'bread-butter' character and seeking some minor concessions for labour. On the political plane their stand was favourable to the British : in particular, the initiatives taken by the British Government for opening a

debate with Indian leadership about the country's political future. The other group aimed at supporting working class aspirations both economic and industrial. The trouble however was that the former had leadership but no powerful rank and file following. In a way therefore to call the then prevailing situation a split seemed to be a misnomer. However with the success and disappointments in the national struggle, the working class also had its ups and downs.

BND : I think, comrade, we have covered the period upto and including 1932 adequately. On the political side this was a period of Round Table Conferences (there was one which Gandhiji attended and his own, and the Country's disappointment with the results). All this had some effect on labour. Could you comment on subsequent events?

BTR : Between 1932 and 1933 there were many developments. We were losing ground in the GKU or such of it as had remained. The Royists were coming up; they shunned direct action. And yet short periods of work stoppages still continued to be the order of the day. The leadership would do some patchwork when matters came to head and become moribund. To overcome demoralisation among workers some of us started a new union (Red Girni Kamgar Union). The Red GKU was started also because there was a split in Communist ranks. Kandalkar and others of his persuasion were Royists as against those belonging to the Communist Party. The Red GKU enjoyed for some time adequate support among workers. And yet because of unsettled conditions in the industry all unions were lying low. Early in 1934 there was another turn of events. Strikes again came into vogue; strikes were taking place everywhere; we were interested. Our people were there either overtly or covertly in most of such work stoppages. At times we used to steal a march over Kandalkar and his people. Now what happened is this : some of the trade union leaders failed to realise that there was no work, i.e. shortage of work for one reason or other. As you know the most strike prone mill in Bombay is Marbag Mill. That is where most strikes had their origin. We used to take workers on short strikes (of two or three days duration) in that mill and then kandalkar and his people had to join hands with us. We had a better mass following among workers because by that time the Communist party got united. Subsequently some of the Meerut Comrades were released; Nimbkar came out. He automatically

became the Secretary of the GKU and at least for a time he joined hands with them. But Nimbkar had one great quality; he had good mass sense. He instinctively recognised that things were changing, workers were restive. He converted this feeling of unrest into another work stoppage. At about this time the Royists took the lead in convening the All India Textile Workers Conference in Bombay. This was sometime in 1934. Nimbkar advised his workers to participate in the event. Some leaders from outside the Presidency also attended; prominent among them were Hariharnath Shastri, Ruikar. They (organisers) had invited Ahmedabad textile leaders too, but they did not attend. So this became a fairly big mobilisation of textile workers in the country. The meeting was held near Damoder Thackersey Hall in Parel. The gathering of workers was not large but the meeting was significant because it demonstrated solidarity of all India textile workers. As expected it passed a resolution inviting textile workers all over India to stop work. But unfortunately this was at time when in Bombay alone out of 120,000 workers, 40,000 were unemployed. They were going from mill to mill daily in search of work. The situation was different as compared to that at the time of other major strikes. The fear of unemployment was there and so was the fear of total separation from industry if the employer chose to turn vindictive. One day workers would go with all enthusiasm for work but the management would make the poor fellows to go back home.

At this stage Government of India made a mistake. As the strike date approached and they knew that the main force behind the workers were communists and not the Royists. Bombay Government proposed that they will take the Communist leadership into custody. The India Government said that according to their information, no work stoppage will take place and the labour leadership will be discredited. The Bombay Government however stuck to its plan. Even so the strike materialised. On the first day the response of workers was obviously weak in spite of unrest. Direct action by workers was sporadic and dispersed over small pockets in different areas. The usual style of those days was for strikers to take a procession with slogan shouting and other devises to attract public attention. Following this practice, procession was taken out. What the police did was to see that mills where stoppage occurred, followed by the usual practice of a workers' procession, the procession was not allowed to enter peaceful areas, more or less isolating

workers who had gone on strike. We also took counsel and changed our strategy. We took our processions upto the cordoned off area and shouted slogns to spread our message. In this way complete stoppage of work became possible though for three or four days. We thus exposed the miscalculations of employers and some of those in authority who felt that with 40,000 workers on the street who will commit the folly of taking workers on strike. Even then the stoppage lasted long enough for workers to establish their point. We in the Communist ranks because of our direct touch with the masses knew how to face new situations. Actually at that time the main GKU leader Nimbkar was more close to Royists; We were separate. He did not oppose us but he was suspicious.

BND : Let us know what was happening at the all-India level : Workers in general and not to any one industry or one Centre?

BTR : That was the time when another split took place in the AITUC. The Calcutta Congress had completed its work, without giving any special message to workers. The new split was because the Royists within the organisation were wanting to assert themselves by throwing the communists out. The Royist engineered it because they saw that Subhash Bose was on their side. Being a Congressman he did not like our constant criticism of the Gandhi-Irwin pact and its disastrous aftermath. What was still more surprising was the attempt of Royists to oust us from Bombay. It did not affect us because we knew how weak the Royists were in that region. Anyway the Bombay part of the AITUC remained with us though in a truncated form. We will not go into it because as trade unionists we are used to these ups and downs. And still on the political plane i.e. in the Communist Party there was always an urge for trade union unity. This also waxed and waned till it had taken more seriously in 1936. We started telling them whatever has happened has happened; it should be forgotten. But all this reconcilition took time; by then the new Government of India Act was in position. Election has been held and (after much thought presumably) Congress came to power in some provinces. Mr. Giri who had by then taken charge of Labour portfolio in Madras used his good office to bring all of us together i.e. the Royists, the Congressmen working in the labour field persons like N.M. Joshi and us. (Ahmedabad group was still separate). This naturally led to depoliticisation of trade unions, a concession to N.M. Joshi and others. This happened though the radical nationalists and communists

were in clear majority. Thus to some extent we had to yield to N.M. Joshi, Giri and others in the 'moderate' group. Everyone hoped that this will lead to wider and wider unity (virtually every organisation will come under the AITUC umbrella and the organisation itself will eschew politics). This was partly necessary because the strike wave was receding because of interunion rivalries. We looked at this both as a time for consolidation of the movement and the period for formation of new unions. And these were coming up in the industrial belts of Bengal and Bihar.

BND : You referred to the Congress taking power in some provinces. How did the Communists react to this? What is your assessment of the short Congress rule (1937-39)?

BTR : Sometime in early thirties, the Congress had established a labour cell. It worked out a labour policy in some broad outline. This (at least a part of it) came to be included in the Congress election manifesto. It contained several unpalatable ideas about labour from our point of view. We in Bombay had thus to come in conflict with Congress almost immediately after its formation. This is because in line with its manifesto it introduced what all persons of our persuasion and even some sections of the public called the Black Bill (Bombay Industrial Disputes Act, 1938). But even before this, there were attempts made by Congress to develop institutions for educating labour. I forgot the name but there was one Maharashtrian who was in charge-he was even negotiating with Millowners-and all this to establish itself among workers. (BND : You are not referring to the Hindusthan Mazdoor Sevak Sangh. That was an organisation which was built up by the labour wing of the Congress to develop cadres. Under its auspices several persons from all over the country went to Ahmedabad for training in Majur Mahajan : Ramanujam, Dravid, Nair, Ambekar, post independence labour leaders were trained under that scheme). No. HMMS was a later development I am talking of the time before this. (BND : You are not referring to the labour cell?). No. The person was something like the Labour Officer of the Bombay Congress. Any way let us pass over this. Coming to the main point, that was the base being built up for weaning workers away from Communist influence. Then came the bill. This bill was very wrong even dangerous. It wanted to confine the trade unions to simply negotiations, arbitration and all docile ways of getting their grievances redressed, if at all only through the arrangements made for the

purpose in the bill. And even for getting access to these we had to go through Government— its political arm. Yet, unions were expected to keep politics at arms length. The Bill was vigourously opposed in the Bombay Assembly. Dange made a long speech tearing the bill to bits (BND : No that was in 1946. Dange was not a member of the Bombay Assembly in 1937). Yes, you are right Ambedkar and Parulekar were there to fight the Bill, though outside the Assembly we were all of us, attacking the legilsation. Jamnadas Mehta was with us. He was partly Royist partly everthing but he was an excellent parliamentarian. He was a product of the Swarajist Party of Pandit Motilal Nehru and C.R. Das. He assured us that he will create difficulties in the passage of the Bill. So when the Bill came for second reading, Jamnadas and his friends started moving amendments. They did not spare even the title of the Bill which said : "A Bill to prevent industrial disputes". By an amendment to the title, Jamnadas wanted to replace the word "prevent" by the word "promote". And such stonewalking tactics went on for some time. But the passage of the Bill could not be prevented. (BND : Perhaps as a sequel to that, when in 1946 they wanted to replace that legislation, the new Bill dropped the word "dispute" and replaced it by "relations"). You are right. You see when the Act was implemented some clashes took place. Some workers were killed; large processions were organised, and things went on. The Congress instead to understanding the democratic process indicated by protests etc appointed a Committee of Enquiry blaming the people for riots and peaceful demonstration. (BND : Basic approach as between the British Government and the Congress was the same). Yes. We had at that time a very vicious person; K.M. Mushi, as the Home Minister. His approach to labour was totally unsympathetic. Trouble arose in Bitia mill by workers and the manager was compelled to grant their demands under duress (BND : Mrs. Dange's Marathi book—autobiographical refers to this incident prominently. She led the women workers who surrounded the manager in what was later called "Gherao"). Yes. That was the incident. As a result of unification of the trade union congress, a big expansion of trade unionism took place and becuase our unions were already in position in several industrial centres we gained. In three or four years time we got absolute majority in the AITUC, though in the beginning the nationalist wing in AITUC led by Bangal group which included : Sures Chandra Banerji; Sibnath

Banerji and Deven Sen had a sizeable following, at least in that part of India. Soon after the moderate wing in the AITUC recognised this and so did the Royists. Moderate like N.M. Joshi fell in line but some Royist elements who did not like the new arrangements left the organisation. So things were working smoothly because after all trade unions were now to run virtually on a non-political basis. And yet criticism against the British rule did continue but as modified by N.M. Joshi. Criticism against provincial Governments, Congress or otherwise also continued. In purely labour matters our radical stand did not unduly disturb N.M. Joshi and so things went on till September 1939. British dragged us in the Second World War. We protested; workers showed their protest with their feet. No where in the world workers had gone on strike in protest against the war. We gave a call and succeeded in taking workers out. The strike was total. A meeting, was held for passing a resolution against the War and all these formalities were completed.

BTR : I think that will be enough for today.

PART II

TAPE TRANSCRIPT COMRADE B.T.RANDIVE

BND : Comrade, last time we came upto around 1940-41 in our discussions. That was, I think, about the time when within the CPI there were political differences : Mr. P.C. Joshi on the one side and you on the other. Comrade Joshi at that time was the General Secretary of the party. There was one policy orientation which is reported to have gone in your favour. Thereafter of course, the World War broke out. There was resistance in the country about participation in war effort. Days went by, struggle for independence was intensified and so on. Because of the reported general ambivalence of the CPI at that time, well, at least the people saw it that way, they probably did not know where the CPI stood what exactly their attitude towards war was. Thereafter in 1947 independence came our way. There were differences in your party as to whether you should cooperate with the new independent Government. You had already experience of Congress Government earlier. Thus these ten years or so seem to be important. We would like to have your version of these events and how generally these affected the trade union movement. It was during this period that trade union movement got formally divided. Other trade union centres got established : INTUC—1947, HMS—1948, UTUC—1949. We would like to have a record of your version of these developments.

BTR : Some of your dates may need correction. I will ignore that for the moment. I will tell you what happened in our party against the background of what was happening in the country. As you know the Second imperialist War started in September 1939. Congress took an ambivalent position towards the war; their grudge was that they were not consulted. Gandhiji did not want to embarrass the British and yet he sanctioned 'individual satyagraha'

and then asked the Government to declare its intentions about India's future. At that time the Communist party was the only party which took a firm position on total opposition to war, imperialist war. It asked people to fight against being dragged into an international conflict. It was the only party which led the struggle of the people against the war and the burden it would cast on them. As you know it started the first big struggle in cooperation with the textile workers in Bombay. For the first time in the whole world so far as that war was concerned anti-war strike took place in Bombay. Till then during those days no strike had taken place in protest against the war. So when the dearness allowance struggle was started, the principle of compensation was accepted but all of us who fought for that principle got arrested. The entire Communist party was declared illegal-some in the party were arrested; others went underground. Everywhere the radical trade union leaders were under close observation. Yet they were carrying on the party activity by asking people not to accept war burden. At that time we were the only force in opposition to what we called imperialist war. Thereafter strikes took place in many centres Kanpur, Calcutta etc. and into these we need not go. Side by side with us some nationalist leaders also started opposing war effort actively. I was sent to what they called 'detention camp' at Deoli. Jayprakash Narayan was also detained there. This continued for some time : people's struggle and the British Government's efforts to contain damage to the war effort through talks with leaders.

BND : You are referring to Ripps mission of 1942. What were your party's reactions to that missions proposals? There were extreme opinions voiced about it.

BTR : I will cover that point by and by. Let me mention an important development on the war front first. Germany attacked the Soviet Union in June 1941. Then we said, some of us from jail, that we should understand the change in the character of war. It will be in the interest of India, and the World as a whole, if Hitler is defeated and his defeat was at the hands of the Soviet Union. When that happens, the British Government will not be able to resist the demand for our independence. By that time the British had started saying that they were fighting for democracy. They were cooperating with the Soviets. These and other overtures were making an impression on workers. And this is when the 'Quit India' movement was announced by the Congress (August 1942)

and a wave of repression got inaugurated.

On the political plane, differences between the Congress and the Muslim League were widening. Political stalemate continued. We were saying that Congress did not represent Muslims. The Muslim League also was going strong with its demand for Pakistan. War went its own way in favour of Allies. Churchill who led the British during the war was thrown out in the 1945 British elections. Actually what we were saying was proved somewhat later. In 1945 when Labour Government took reins of office in Britain negotiations started afresh in India. We wanted British to hand over power to the Congress and the League. We noticed a change in the British attitude to handling law and order situations. Added to all this was another lesson for the British. Naval ratings were protesting against discrimination based on colour in their conditions of work and life. Bombay workers were in sympathy with them and organised demonstrations. Police in Bombay had the scent of what was coming. Our reading on the totality of all these developments was that the British will be unable to hold India in bondage any longer. The establishment of interim Government at the centre was thus a vindication of our stand. We were also vindicated on another point. In the elections that took place Congress was unable except in the NWFP to get the Muslim vote behind it. Also internationally balance of forces turned out to be totally against imperialism.

BND : What is your analysis of the gradual erosion of the Muslim faith in the Congress in the post Khilafat years?

BTR : I will come to that. In the immediate post war days there were attempts to isolate us. Some sections did not like our stance on the war effort after Russia was attacked. Our views about Congress not representing all Communities angered others. It was convenient for all to attack us because of our ideology; though none openly confessed that. They found it convenient to be ambiguous because of what they considered to be 'extra-territorial sympathies' (loyalties). Our indirect support to Pakistan did not give us friends in either community. Possibly these were all the issue on which they could rouse the public against us. Basically what these critics did not understand, or did not want to, is that there were more vital issues at stake vis-a vis the British. Our line could not have been different from the one embodied in the 'Quit India' movement. And yet our isolation from the main stream of events cannot be

denied. The real reason was economic and that explains the Muslim attitude too. They felt, and in later years they were made to feel, that Congress was a party of vested interests both in regard to agriculture and industry. And for this feeling the behaviour of Congressman was itself responsible. For instance in the agitation of peasantry against landlords the Congress never took an unequivocal stand against landlords. Also the Karachi resolution of the Congress said a good deal, but the Congress regime between 1937 and 1939 did not succeed in providing succour to peasantry. Not that the approach of the Muslim League was any different, but the reason why the people took note of Congress shortcomings was that the perception of the party in the public mind was different. Thus in areas where the peasantry was Muslim, the League found a fertile ground for its propganda against Congress. This was notably seen in univided Bengal where in the Eastern part the interests of Hindu landlords were in conflict with those of Muslim peasantry. In the Punjab also collusion between some leaders of vested interests like Sir Chotu Ram a Bania Jat, and the Congress proved inimical to the interests of the latter when the day of reckoning arrived. For entirely different reasons the Pathans of the NWFP were with the Congress and their support was misinterpreted as the support of Muslims, at least some sections of that community.

As you know, Muslims who were with the League observed what they called the 'Day of Deliverance' when the Congress rule ended with the declaration of war. The response to it on an All-India plane may have been lukewarm but the Leauge had made its points. Also after the 'Quit India' arrests Ahmedabad workers went on a long strike. Active TLA Workers were not on the scene. It was at the instance of some Muslim leaders that Government intervened to ask mill owners to provide advance to workers in the days they needed it most. There was no intention to wean away workers in the membership of the TLA but it did put the TLA following in the Muslim areas in two minds. And this happened even in the areas which were considered to be the heart of Gandhian influence. Elsewhere in the country, when Congress in some areas opposed the money lenders' legislation intension of which was to help the poor and needy, it exposed itself as the champion of vested interests. Most money lenders were Hindus. And when negotiations were going on in the 'forties regarding transfer of power, all

these matters were used cleverly by the Leauge to dub the Congress as representing a particular community. Movements like the 'Satyagraha' which at one time appealed to all irrespective of the community to which one belonged had no longer that interest for the Muslims. They had lost their shine for others too but that is a different matter; its detractors could easily be discredited as stooges of the British.

BND : How did all this affect trade unions? This widening of gulf between Hindus and Muslims at that time. I raise this point because we often heard that in the trade union movement they were all one : 'workers' whether Hindu or Muslim.

BTR : For some time that was the position. Fraternity existed among workers. Analysing it further, where Muslims were in majority, there was no problem, Hindus will keep out of any troubled situation or a situation likely to cause trouble. Our biggest leader in Railways (workshop section) was Ibrahim Mirza, a party member; everyone accepted him. Similarly many Muslims would come into the orgainsation without questioning the religion of the leader. Also generally where left influence was in evidence, secular sentiments also prevailed. But gradually in Bombay Muslims began to feel that there was conscious attempt on the part of employers to get rid of them. Employers at one time started discriminating against Muslims, irrespective of the employer's religious faith. All mills in the Satrasta area (Jacob Circle) at one time were full of Muslims; then these mills : Ghodapdeo, Dawood, mills owned by Manmohan Das Ramji started weeding out Muslims, particularly after Hindu-Muslim riots. This began to affect the employment interest of the minority community. Thereafter the new generation of workers in that comunity kept themselves away from seeking mill employment. At that time in the Mulsim mind we (Communists) also had a 'Hindu' tag. Distrust against 'Congress' was so much that when in 1940 we wanted to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the All India Trade Union Congress they said they (Muslims) will not join because it is 'Congress'. This was the state of bitterness (BND : The word 'Congress' itself had become a dirty word for them) Yes. We recognised by 1940 or soon thereafter that Pakistan was coming, But we were not understood, even ridiculed. Our reason was that the Congress failed to recogise that, in the Muslim minds, it was a Hindu dominated organisation. Whether the public at large got that point or not, the fact remained

that Muslim masses were not with Congress. The proof came in the 1937 election; the Congress lost in almost all Muslim constituencies except for Noori in Bombay; in UP it collected three or four seats. And mind you, Muslim seats did not all go to the League; a fair number went to independents without a political label. We had gauged the situation then but our conviction got stronger in 1940 when we began to put forward our thesis. Congress, in its complcence of having persons like Maulana Azad, Rafi Ahmad Kidwai, Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan in its midst, did not pay heed to what we were saying. And in that situation an intersting development took place. In order to win over peasant's vote in UP and at the same time have a dig at landlords (Muslims), the Congress in the legislature passed a resolution demanding abolition of landlordism. The next day the Muslim League members of the Assembly moved a resolution demanding abolition of capitalism. In this type of situation we thought that Congress will find itself cornered. In this atmosphere how could anyone think of forging a Hindu-Muslim unity? Our position initially was all areas should be given linguistic freedom, with a right of 'self determination'. This was subject to two provisos : i) if people in an area had been treated unfairly and ii) there was no thought of cessation. Virtually the same thing had been said in a Congress resolution but in a different way. Some what like this : We are prepared to show you special consideration in some areas. We do not want to enforce central authority everywhere. We are prepared to show special consideration for areas which want limited powers to rest with the Centre, but the other groups have also to be understanding. (BND : Does this mean that each group wanted the others to be on trial?). No. Not only that. If say for instance Bombay and UP agree to give more powers to the Centre, Sind, NWF or Bengal can as well plead for less powers to the Centre, i.e. confine the centre to defence, finance and communications apart from the unanimously agreed foreign affairs. Discussions on this basis were going on at senior levels of leadership but the rank and file was in the dark about these or about the possible consequences. They were only told that Pakistan means division on the basis of religion. According to us Punjab as a whole or Bengal as a whole should have a right of self determination and not the Muslim part of these provinces. This did not cut ice with any group. The Congress ridiculed the idea altogether.

BND : In all this when did the Muslim League slogan of

Muslims are a separate nation came in?

BTR: That slogan and its linking up with Pakistan came much later. It came because we totally failed (and consistently failed) to understand Jinnah. It is a falsification of history to paint that man as a communalist. He was in my view one of the most secular politicians. In Bombay he was very popular. His difficulty was that he could not reach the masses because of his religion nor could he tolerate the idea of the Congress going forward with its claim of being the sole spokesman of all communities. He was a liberal. He was the only one leader of high stature who refused to join the Khilafat movement. His stand was in no uncertain terms. According to him it was all humbug. He not only blamed Gandhiji of introducing religion in politics but also his own devout followers. That man at the same time could not gloss over the differences between Hindus and Muslims. Even when he put foward the theory of a separate nation he would say : "I am not talking in terms of religion at all. I am a nation." Much earlier he had pulled up the Raja of Mohamadabad in one of the Lahore meetings when the latter talked about Islam : "Don't talk about of religion; talk about the country." However, in the last ten years or so of his life he had only one theme : "the idea of being a nation." But there was one clever trick in all this. Nation connotes equal vote : that means he wanted to have a 'veto'. He wanted the best of both world—recognition as a separate national entity, as well as veto over matters which were considered as common. Therefore though he did not explain at any time what he meant, he knew that sheer obstruction will pay him dividends. Outwardly he did not want the Islamic slogans being raised but he silently supported what was going on in his community.

Then we must understand two things : apart from this phenomenon of Jinnah standing by his demands, he was at one time welcomed as an ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity. He was a staunch Congressman until the Nagpur Congress or actually till the mass agitation idea took hold of the Congress. (BND : Yes. Also he did not believe in all those 'Swadeshi' slogans; burning of foreign goods etc.) Yes. He did not want such action; it went against his liberal creed. And also, as I said, he did not believe in Khilafat and other activities of religious odour. In 1916, presiding over the Muslim League he said : "I am the most consistent Congressmen in all my life". Actually Jinnah was speaking in the Muslim League on

the basis of nationalism. And Tilak speaking about the same time in the Congress in terms of : "We Hindus should give them (Muslims) and accept their demands". A condescending tone!

BND : But, apart from this, comrade, in your way of analysing the situation as it developed, were there any economic reasons apart from the ones you already mentioned ??

BTR : I will mention one factor presently. But you see, the main point as to why he gradually moved away from the national movement was his disagreement on the manner in which the Congress mass approach was being built up, at times ignoring the sentiments of certain sections. One should understand the difference in his earlier role and what happened and why it happened. He was acclaimed as an ambassador of Hindu-Muslim Unity. That was the period in Indian life when Muslim capital was a very important part of Indian capital. The talk of nationalism was perhaps a product of that.

(BND : Is that so?). Yes. One third of Bombay mills were at one time owned by the Ismaili community (Khojas), like Rahimtulla's and Ibrahims. After the First World War around 1922 a Fiscal Commission was appointed. Indian industrialists were demanding protection to Indian industries. (BND : Sir Purushottamdas Thakurdas was their important spokesman). Yes. And Sir Ibrahim Rahimatulla was another. They and some others of their way of thinking were demanding protection; but they were in a minority. Sir Rajendranath Mukerji (BND : Sir Biren Mukerji's father), Yes, Manekji Dadabhai and others joined with Government saying that only limited protection may suffice. Though not directly the result of this, soon thereafter Muslims lost control over capital in a number of industrial centres. Factional fights between Rahimtullah and Ibrahim groups in Bombay worsened the situation in Bombay. Muslims could not get that position again. When we put forward this view, the ordinary Congressmen could not understand it, nor did they like our telling them 'self determination' was the only way of bringing the Muslims back into the national stream.

But I must admit that we also changed our views. Instead of Linguistic basis we said Muslim areas could be separated. By this later stand we were criticising ourselves. But then when a compact mass of people considered themselves to be a nation, no one can tell them that by some arbitrary definition that they are not a nation. When the Congress failed to see this inevitability they were in fact

refusing to recognise a reality. One of the charges against us, we were told, was that we supported Pakistan though we said that we did not support Pakistan of the Muslim League conception. We also did not support immediate cessation. At the same time we emphasised on them that unless we recognise the right of self determination, there can be no hope (BND : The same right you wanted from the British for all, the Muslims wanted for themselves from the Indian Community as a whole). Yes. why did it happen?

Congress felt we are all one in the nationalist struggles that were going on. But in reality unity had not taken place between the communities. For Khilafat, Gandiji was blamed in many sections but that was totally wrong. For the masses it was a good tactic—this 'support Khilafat' slogan, because, for a time, the entire Muslim community, at least a large section of it, felt itself involved in the anti-imperialist struggle. One had to see the fraternity between the communities in those days to believe it. Nothing like that was witnessed in India since. Something like bankruptcy had set in. It was unfortunate that Congress was not able to shake it off. This was mainly because neither side was able to overcome its inhibitions once these got into the body politic.

BND : When independence came, I again come back to the Communist attitude towards the Government in the immediate post-independence period.

BTR : Let me mention what happened a little earlier. At our party Congress we made certain criticism of ourselves that we should have changed our party line (in 1941) earlier, i.e. before the struggle for Stalingrad. By that time (BND : When Hitler tasted his first setback at the hands of Russians) the fate of war was almost decided. Secondly, by the end of war there was a mass agitation in early 1946; Congress wanted to control it. Perhaps they were also right because they hoped, by that time, they will almost get what they wanted. The Naval ratings struggle started; we jumped into it immediately. (BND : And that, at least some people considered, was really the turning point : the disaffection in the Navy. The British felt that it was time for them to leave India). Yes. During those days we used to have regular meetings in our party office with leaders of naval ratings. Aruna Asaf Ali and some of her colleagues attended these meetings. It is we who called a general strike in sympathy. It was a suprise for the public. I would say that was one of the reasons why Dange won the election against Nuri;

ordinarily it should have been easy for Congress to win it because it was election confined to a few trade union members as voters. But these workers (trade union constituency) were very angry with Congress and they wnated to show their anger by their lorries to the mill gates and bring the night shift workers straight to the polling stations. But workers refused to come; till 9.00am nobody showed up for Congress and by that time we had almost finished our work at the polls. (BND : For that election, I happened to be one of the Presiding Officers. I distinctly recollect the early morning crowd at the polling stations). I see, we were initially doubtful about our success because of the vicious propoganda against us and the halo round the Congress bacause of impending independence but workers were very angry. (BND : Their anger was also because Nuri had never worked in labour areas). And yet the mass of people were still with Congress hoping for the new Ministers to settle down and work for public welfare in line with their election manifesto. In terms of public acceptability it was left to us to improve our image and make up for lost time by championing public causes. For us the situation was bad because even after Congress perpetrated some evil things like the Amalner firing, a horrible thing, we were unable to get adequate mileage out of it. Then there was the Bill to replace the 1938—Black Act—The Bombay Industrial Relations Bill. Dange waged a spirited struggle against it in the Legislature and our party outside the Legislature but we could not succeed. There was repression in rural areas of Andhra portion of Madras Province. This was the result of the Congress dislike of some political parties and also because the Congress men themselves acted as if drunk with power. At the time the Government would go hammer and tongs against any mass protest, And especially that organised by our party.

As things were developing the Mountbatten award came to clarify the position regarding princely States. If that award had been implemented in its spirit, India would never have been independent. But fortunately forces against the award (spirit) were getting stronger. National leadership itself was planning to turn it around. Then our Commander-in Chief in those days was an old British Army General and these were the very persons who were responsible for all the mischief during partition. Again fortunately, actual forces were such that the award was going to take its own time before it was implemented. It was virtually a confederation

plan. With partition a chunk of India was gone. And we asked : 'If Princely States were also lost to us then, what remained of India'. But there we failed to take into account the fact that popular forces existed and the national leadership will be making full use of them. Shrewdly they strictly followed the letter of the award. So one by one the States were brought into India's Mainstream; some of them after considerable resistance. The only thing that our leaders did, because the British Government had said 'no coersion' was to incite the state subjects to rise against their Princely rulers. If in the process there was any law and order problem, no central protection was made available to the rulers. The States fell in line. This was possible because the national leadership had measured its strangth and was confident that nothing untoward would happen. As you know, by 1950 the integration of Princely States was complete.

Though not strictly a consequence of aforesaid, differences in the Communist Party were getting intensfied. In interpreting 'mass upsurge' we ignored two things : i) though mass upsurge was expressing itself into militant action at times, the majority of people had not formally parted with the Congress. What they did in Bombay on Netaji's birthday was to express protest against older leadership but not going beyond; the ideology remained the same, it was static. Secondly people were waiting to see how things shaped after independence. Basing our line of action on visible upsurge we took some hasty decisions. Even with these hasty decisions we succeeded at some places i.e. Telangana. Of course we knew that in Telangana we succeeded because we were operating in an erstwhile feudal area. Any way all this led to a re-assessment of the situation.

BND : Safder Hashmi refers to this in his book which has come out recently. I was going through it only yesterday. He gives an account of developments in the party around 1950 : how the Communists started splitting and how differences developed about the approach to the party in power, and so on. Telangana developments of those days have also come in for comments. Sorry for interuption but please go on.

BTR : Then around 1951-52 we drafted a resolution. This again was not exactly correct. It referred virtually to independence being used in a half hearted manner or some thing like that. We now know by hind-sight that some of what happened during the 1940s could have been avoided if things had been done in time. I have

already referred to change in the character of war. We should have come out with it in June 1941. A lot of controversy developed inside the party at that time Then attuning the party and its cadres for consequential action meant further delay. Any way, subsequently individual attitudes approaches developed. Ideas about socialism and how to achieve; even its content was a matter of debate. In a party where there is complete freedom of thought and expression this was bound to happen. But all this inevitably led to split. It has nothing to do with international influences on leadership. It took place because we lived through our differences for years. (BND : The period should be broadly between 1950-1964?). No. Up to 1957-58 there was common understanding; all earlier controversies were settled between 1954-58. Then came the twentieth Congress of CPSU. Here again difference started building up. In 1964 there was the final parting of ways.

BND : But during all this period between 1950-1964, in the Trade Union Movement you were together. Is it not?

BTR : Yes. Even before that. In 1946-47 difference were developing in the party; in 1948-50 a sectarian line was taken and there was a split in the AITUC. (BND : We have covered the prior splits and the unity of 1937 already : let us not go into that). But in the earlier split another element was involved. And this point needs reemphasis. It was a clever trick on the party of the British to announce the appoinment of Whitley Commission when the Simon Commission was concluding its work. Some AITUC leaders (Diwan Chaman Lal and N.M. Joshi) were made members of the Labour Commission, obviously with a view to getting support from AITUC (equating it with support from the Indian Working Class.) If the AITUC had welcomed the Whitley Commission then they would have bothered less about the resolution opposing the Simon Commission. Now after that the nationalists in the AITUC had their own differences; Royists came in AITUC became well knit in 1937. As the country saw the dawn of independence, even a bigger unity effort was made in attempting to bring the Majoor Mahajan within the AITUC fold (BND : Actually in 1946 there was correspondence between N.M. Joshi and Nandaji regarding this but nothing concrete came out.) You are right. We were told by N.M. Joshi that one of the conditions put forward by Nandaji was that there should be no 'red flag'. We said alright we can accept if the Majoor Mahajan Joins. In the meanwhile something else hap-

pened. In spite of internal difficulties AITUC was still a powerful trade union centre. Congress leadership did not like this. They thought of establishing a separate trade union centre—INTUC (established in 1947) by convincing themselves, wrongly in our view, that the AITUC i.e. the Communists were not to be trusted. Sarder Patel and Kripalani took the lead. After that the AITUC went through some internal changes. The party split in 1964 and the CITU was established six years later. Even then (i.e. in 1970) to avoid the split we were urging on our opponents that the trade union movment should be run with due regard to democracy. There should be no manipulation of membership and all bogus membership should be weeded out. And this became the main point of difference.

BND : Let us go back one step but on the political side. According to Safdar, after about 1954-1955, communist Party of India meant Communist Party of India (Marxist). That was your dominant position. Kerala elections of 1957 showed that the other group recognised this position. Any Comments? Was it different in the trade union movement?

BTR : You are right. In the combined party, politically we had the upper hand. The same could be said about the trade union movement. But international patronage completely remained with them. In the international circles we were outcastes—untouchables so to say! This has been there since long. At the international level they refer to us as the splitters' group. But when they want to be more charitable we are a paralled AITUC.

BND : You referred to manipulation of membership figures. This will have effect on representation at the Federation level. Were there any problems at the unit level?

BTR : Undemocratic approach has its repercussions at the unit level too. Union leaders enter into agreement with the management but the rank and file had no knowledge about details, how it will affect them, their responsibilities etc. Entitlements are made known but nothing else. Our unions when they enter into agreement with management explain the agreement and its implications to workers. I suggest even before taking direct action workers are informed but their consent for action is not sought. Also once an agreement is reached, it should be the unions responsibility to get the workers' part of it implemented. (BND : That is one plus point which every employer used to mention about AITUC unions. They

are difficult to get agreement with but once there is an agreement the union' follow it). That is good. Let us now pass on to the establishment of CITU.

BND : I have read a fair account of the establishment of CITU in Dr. Sukomal Sen's book. He refers to the inaugural address of the founding ceremony of CITU by Shri Jyoti Basu who was then the Deputy Chief Minister of West Bengal. he said : "We do not want multiplicity of trade union centres but there are certain compelling reasons for establishing CITU. What were these compelling reasons?

BTR : The AITUC working then, apart from our differences in approach, was not democratic. Their unions would send membership claims but none was supposed to scrutinise them. Our suggestion that when membership is challenged secret ballot should decide the issue was not acceptable to them. Of course there were differcnces in the working of a union for six seven years, since 1964. These surfaced in a big way in 1970-71.

BND : Does that mean that the AITUC while campaigning against BTR and later legislative proposals which emphasised recognition on the basis of verified membership, did not want 'secret ballot' arrangement when it came to the internal arrangements in their own Federation?

BTR : Within AITUC they did not want secret ballot for establishing the ascendency or one group or the other. Their aim on many occasions was to maintain ascendency in the AITUC whether it was on the basis of actual membership of otherwise. They did not want their position to be disturbed either within the country or in the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU). Internally the differences arose about cooperation with Government and their stand against mass action. The last AITUC session (1966-67) in which we found to get our points accepted was the one at Alwaye. After that we did not bother to attend their meetings. What surprised us about their opposition to mass action was that all of us had seen how Congress Government handled labour problems(It was not to our liking at all). But a section of AITUC was impressed by the Second Five Year Plan—The two piller approach. It wanted the AITUC to recommend to the working class to cooperate with authorities in the planning process. They felt that country was developing on proper lines and it will take time for the benefits to reach the masses. It is not good to quote respected trade union

leaders against them but on one occasion Dange said something on these lines : "You only talk about firing in Jamshedpur, repressing workers at another place but never refer to what the Government has given to workers". They were all the time talking about some good things happening in the country and advising patience to the working class.

BND : In this approach of their did you see any external influence on them? We, in the Planning Commission, were then being told that the Second Plan was influenced by Russians.

BTR : Yes. That was our impression too. But let me tell you another thing. Whether it was one influence or other, in many countries which became independent in the post war period, the Communists' urge for mass action has diminished. This was because, they felt they had to fight against their own people (and not against imperialism). In characterising their attitude, I am fond of quoting what happened to Arjuna in the Mahabharat war, when he saw his kith and kin in the opposite camp (BND : The first Adhyaya of Bhagwadgita) Yes. In those days I recall our sending one of our comrades to Bangalore to attend a Bhoodan meeting sponsored by Acharya Vinoba Bhave. The meeting was also attended by the then Prime Minister Pandit Nehru. Our representative, Dr. J.K. Ahmed also signed the declaration on Bhoodan.

BND : How does the CITU view the future of trade union movement in the Country? In the light of current political developments what will be the line of CITU in future?

BTR : You mean the general trend in the trade union movement and CITU role in it! In spite of diferences within the movement I think through sheer experience there is a possibility of developing of common understanding on several issues. That will lead, hopefully to common action. There will be other issues on which there will be honest difference of opinion. That is why for some years in the past we have given a slogan: "Confederation of all central trade union federations." Confederation will be the main forum of discussion. This will help in developing a consenus on all controversial issues. Some understanding will certainly come about but our line of action can be different. One need not insist that there should be joint action always. Such a broad understanding will bring all fedrations together. (BND : Around 1973-74 three trade union centres had come together—INTUC, HMS and AITUC One of the INTUC periodic report for its general

conference mentions this coming together. Thereafter CITU gave a call of the type you described.) I feel some thing on those lines will be beneitcial to all. Democratic consciousness is growing in the working class. It is therefore not desireable to rake up old issues and respect rigidities of older leadership. People want trade unionsim to grow. We in the CITU are working for it. In the last three years there has been cooperation between INTUC and CITU on several issues; in some cases there is agreement on need for mass action too. We sit together in negotiations for Public Sector undertakings. I am sure such getting together will result in Joint research on workers' problems. I am hopeful. (BND : I think this has been going for the last ten years or so, it is a healthy sign. The National Commission on Labour (1969) had expressed a similar hope in its report.) I think the new generation of workers because of improvement in its background will take these matters futher.

BND : Something about international trends in the trade union movement : Recent literature shows that in industrialised countries: Britian, USA, Western Europe trade union membership is going down and consequently their influence in the respective countries. How do you view the future of the World trade union movement?

BTR : I will attribute it to two factors : unemployment is on the increase in those countries especially among younger age groups who are expected to feed the movement. Secondly, workers as a whole are purchasing whatever policies (even against their ideology) are dished out to them : de-nationalisation of steel industry in England. Privatisation wave in that country (and for some time in France too) surprisingly in the last British election for instance, the Labour Party leader, I forget his name (Ashwini : Neil Kinnock), Kinnock carried on his propoganda without using the word 'socialism'. You can see how certain other infuences are working on trade unions. For instance, Labour Party said : "If it came to power it will work for nuclear disarmament unilaterally. In the Third World Countries, trade union situation is different. The unions did not have much influence in any case.

BND : Is it because what we used to call labour— the blue collar workers—and still refer to as labour—in other countries is joining the ranks of the affluent and they feel that trade unionism is no longer necessary.

BTR : Here again we should recognise that the level of educa-

tion and technical knowledge required of a worker is going up (one of the reasons for emoluments going up). Secondly high technogly as its immediate effect reduces employment. Both these factors have affected trade union membership. (BND : The reports that we see show that even among persons who are employed there is disinterest for coming together—sort of growing individualism). I think you are partly right. When a person has security of employment and good emoluments too, why should he think about others? They may still be interested in trade unions but not in the same way as workers of the older generation (BND : Which means that political influence of trade unions will go down and that is what is happening in UK and USA). In America they never had a Labour Party—In UK things are different.

(BND : Democrats in the USA usually attract trade union vote).

BTR : Do you have any other question?

BND : There will be always some but I think you have covered the subject adequately. Thank you for your cooperation. Thank you for your patience.

47

Inaugural Speech in The 5th Conference of the All India Plantation Workers' Federation

(Held at Kalpetta Waynad Distt. Kerala on 17, 18, 19h April 1986)

Comrades,

Let me at the outset express my profound sorrow at the passing away of Comrade Parimal Mitra, the valiant President of our Federation. His death is a grievous loss to our organisation for he was a dynamic leader who had successfully built the massive trade union movement of plantation workers in West Bengal. He was the Minister of Forestry in the left front Ministry of West Bengal and it is known that he discharged his responsibilities with rare efficiency and devotion of purpose. While paying tributes to his memory all our organises should show the same determination for building the plantation workers federation which he showed in the life time.

Comrades, before, I proceed to any other subject, on behalf of all of you and our CITU I denounce the dastardly aggression of the US government against Libya. This is the second cowardly aggression following the attack on Grenada. The entire world condemns this unashamed aggression against a small country by a big power which has accumulated enough nuclear weapons to destroy the whole world. Never was there a more hypocritical and deceitful

excuse for this invasion of small country by a big power. The charge that Libya was organising international terrorism was only the invention of the US imperialists. It could not be proved before public opinion. But it seems whatever the Pentagon leaders feel to be the truth it must be accepted by others and so far as the US military are concerned, they do not recognise the restrictions of international law or the norms and resolutions of UNO. It is the same Regan who is telling the world that he wants peace while in reality he prepares war aggression against one country or another. The US imperialists in their arrogance have taken up upon themselves the task of punishing others in the name of protecting the security of USA and its citizens. This is a resurrection of the 19th Century gun boat diplomacy practiced by imperialist powers against smaller countries.

It is a matter of shame and matter for denunciation that the UK Government led by Mrs. Thatcher fully supported this American massacre of Libya's civil population. It has allowed the US Aggressor to use US planes based on Britain to carry on this murderous job. The Thatcher Government acts as a mercenary tool of the US imperialists. One expects the democratic and labour movement in Britain to launch indignant protests against this treachery and throw out the Thatcher Ministry before it completely surrenders Britain's Sovereignty to the Pentagon.

The other European Government and NATO allies have expressed verbal disagreement with the USA but have not been taken a firm stand to oppose this policy. Many of them have allowed US missiles to be deployed on their soils and indebted to the USA and are guided by its reading of world security. Notwithstanding certain differences among the imperialist powers their alliance still stands and is unable to check the aggressive polices of the USA. The only two countries who have flatly opposed this American attack are France and Spain. The rest have proposed alternative line for chastising Gaddafi and his country.

It is a matter of great satisfaction that all parties in India, the left parties, secular bourgeois-opposition parties and the ruling party and its government have with one voice denounced this act of international piracy in unmistakable terms. Only the communalist and other parties which virtually act as instruments of imperialist have not joined in this condemnation. The working class movement however cannot be satisfied with only outburst of de-

nunciation. It is necessary in the interest of the country to carry on a continuous campaign exposing US imperialist aggression in all parts of world and its machinations and conspiracies against our own country. It is now openly admitted by the ruling party that the Khalistanis in Punjab are being trained and supported by the Pakistan Government. But these sources still hesitate to tell the people that behind this mischief of Pakistani military regime stands the hands of US imperialism which is out for destabilisation of our country.

Comrades, I congratulate all of you, plantation workers from several parts of India, their leaders and unions on the courageous struggle you have been waging during the course of last three years. These were years of deep economic crisis, years which saw closure of hundreds of big and thousands of small factories and concerns. In these years the workers had to wage long battles to maintain their jobs, to maintain their livelihood and protect their earnings against the eroding influence of high prices, high taxation and inflation. The plantation industry being dependent to a large extent on exports had to face deteriorating conditions because of recession in western countries. It is in these background that workers had to wage a very difficult struggle and their unity was but to a severe test. Especially difficult was the situation for our Comrades in Assam where the problem was complicated by the challenge of secessionist force. Fighting against wage levels which are low by even Indian Standard, fighting against the disruptive activities of a recognised rival organisations and the physical attacks of the seccessionist elements, our unions and our comrades had to wage an exceptionally hard battle and we must all congratulate them for their success in fighting it and expanding the influence of our union. In Kerala also our comrades had to fight many battles in the midst of falling prices and falling exports and wrest many concessions from the employers. Only in West Bengal our plantation workers and their organisations were protected by the left front Ministry headed by the CITU Vice President, Comrade Jyoti Basu, committed to defend the interest of the workers and the common people.

The workers were spared of the ordeal of prolonged strikes and aided by the left front Ministry, they were able to secure many of their demands through collective bargaining.

The Plantation industry and the workers are subject to the

vageries of the international market and its manipulation by foreign vested interests. Apart from this there is systematic attempt to impose unfavourable terms of trade on under-developed countries which depreciate the value of exported commodities and the earnings of labour.

The year 1985 proved to be a good year for Tea Industry, while the new year saw some reverses. In the preceeding year also there were uncertainties. By the third quarter of year the outlook for tea was bleak and there was slag in exports. But by November, thanks to increased Soviet buying and partly increased demand from the UK, exports picked up and the year turned out to be good year.

In fact it appears that but for the increased buying from the USSR the tea industry would have been in a precarious situation. In 1985, out of the exports of 222 million Kg. the USSR accounted for 103.94 million Kg. This was an increase of more than 33 per cent over the 1984 figures which was 74.5 million Kg. The stable economy of the Socialist country has given a helping hand to the Indian tea industry.

But by the beginning of the new year, the uncertainty started again. Cardamom prices slumped by half in two months. In South India tea prices crashed to Rs. 11 per Kg. in Cochin and Rs. 16 per Kg. in Coimbatore, while the retail price of tea remained as high as Rs. 35 or Rs. 40 per Kg.

World production figure of Coffee also indicate new uncertainties. World production is expected to cross 100 million Kg. level and it is estimated that stock at the end of the next year could be more than half the world consumption. This may lead to fall in prices, break up of international agreements and affect India very badly. The cardamom production recovered after the last drought but now the problem is how to dispose off the 4000 tonnes estimated production during the ensuing 1985-86 season.

Obviously, there is anxiety about exports and how the world market will receive the Indian product. But now it seems at least so for as tea is concerned exports do not constitute the only concern. Last year was a record production of 645 million Kg. out of which 215 million Kg. was exported. Domestic consumption was only 400 million Kg. leaving 30 million Kg. as carry over. It is now realised that domestic consumption is not increasing along with increased production. It is feared that there may be a bigger quantity to be carried over to 1986. What should one expect when there is enormous

difference between the auction price of tea and the retail prices at which the common man has to purchase it. It is seen that the retail prices are often 3 to 4 times higher the auction price. The trading monopolists, the agents of multinationals are fleecing the common man and killing the domestic markets. This will lead to unnecessary hardship for the plantation workers and the federation must unitedly fight against this manipulation of price by the vested interests so that the Indian market continues to expand and the tea industry gets stability notwithstanding the vagaries of the foreign market. The nationalistation of big tea estates owned by these foreign companies will go a long way in checking their malpractices and assuring stability to the industry and workers.

Notwithstanding a good year the condition of plantation workers continues to move from bad to worse. While the attack of high prices and high taxes continues to erode their earnings notwithstanding provision of dearness allowance, every addition to the existing earnings demands tremendous struggle and sacrifices. Besides, the legal rights and amenities earned by the working class are being constantly eroded. Labour legislation has virtually collapsed and labour inspectorate has become an unending farce. Purchased by the management, officials of labour inspectorate hardly see any encroachment of labour act or labour rights. Management is never charged with breach of legislation or punished. Housing schemes of the Government have completely collapsed because the Government expects that decent housing quarters can be built by spending a paltry sum of five thousands rupees. The employers therefore refuse to take advantage of the so-called scheme and tens of thousands of workers are left houseless. The houses built by the managements in a fit of generocity are worst than the pigsties. The workers are not supposed to need any toilet or bathroom. Neither the employer nor the Government guarantee provision of non polluted water. Consequently, large section of workers contract all kinds of diseases. Medical facilities are hardly provided and the plantation workers are not protected against health hazards due to use of pesticides. The workers' contribution to provident fund is often not acknowledged and appropriated by the management. Equal pay for equal work for women is being avoided by resorting to all kinds of subterfuse. One such subterfuge is to lower the pay scale of work allowed to women and generally ascribe low grade of work to women workers.

It will be seen that after 40 years of independence, so far as plantation workers are concerned very little has been done to remove the old colonial conditions of labour. It seems that many international organisations are totally unaware of this monstrous plight of India's plantation workers and they tend to believe in the claim of welfare state made by the official publication. It is high time that our federation took concrete steps to enlighten the international organisations about the real state of affairs and rouse international labour opinion against the injustice done to the workers.

Comrades, before I turn to other subject, I would ask this conference to express its full support to the two left front governments of West Bengal and Tripura who constitute the advanced outpost of democracy and are continuously defending the interest of the common man. Further these two governments by their activities, by rallying the people have revealed themselves as consistant defenders of national unity. While everywhere in India communal and divisive forces are active, only in these two states, they are checkmated with the help of the people and the administration.

The Trade Union movement cannot ignore the challenge of divisive forces backed by imperialism. Punjab and Assam display the rise of secessionist forces backed by imperialism the communal riots constitute another devise to divide the unity of Indian people.

The ruling party and its government because of their compromising and opportunist policies are unable to meet this challenge. The bourgeois opposition parties themselves are unwilling to combat them because of electoral consideration. Unless the working class and its organised trade union movement take up the challenge the country cannot be saved and the process of disintegration cannot be stopped.

It is a matter of satisfaction that in Kerala the working class and the CPI(M) and others have taken a principled position of opposing obscurantism and communalism and decided to gather the working class from all communities on the basis of democratic and class programme. There are some elements who out of sheer electoral opportunism and to enjoy petty ministerial advantages, forget the anti-national role of communal elements and are prepared to join hands with them. Whatever may be their subjective intention, they play into the hands of anti-national elements.

In Kerala which has seen increased influence of communal or-

ganisations in the recent years, it is necessary for the working class movement to fight these agencies and unite the working class and the common people on the basis of secularism, democratic advance and socialism.

The working class today has to fight the new economic policy of Rajiv Government which by introducing computers and automation kills thousands of jobs and in the name of modernisation opens the Indian economy to the invasion of multinationals. This will endanger the independence of our economy and undermine the political independence of our country and its independent foreign policy of non-alignment. All this should make it clear to the working class that the present bourgeois-landlord government cannot defend the unity of the country and will compromise its economic independence. Simultaneously it should be realised that to maintain its rule the ruling party is resorting to authoritarian measures to curb the working class and the democratic movement and establish one party dictatorship. The working class and the people must at the earliest mobilise full strength to defeat authoritarianism and prepare the ground for replacing the present government, a government responsible to the people, in fact prepare to oust the bourgeois-landlord government and replace it by a government of People's Democracy.

In Kerala the plantation workers can see how the Cong(I) Government is helplessly dependent on communal organisations and is unable to shake off their grip. The Muslim league and the Kerala Congress dominate the government to implement their reactionary politics and are creating a secessionist atmosphere extremely dangerous to our country. The Kerala Working Class must accept this challenge and rally all secular forces to meet it.

Growing Unemployment

Comrades, there is nothing more heartending, nothing which makes us more indignant than the mounting increase in both urban and rural unemployment. The figure of registered unemployed has now reached 3 crores and this does not reflect the real number, as thousands does not bother to get registered. Not one really knows the number of rural unemployed. The figure may vary between four and five crores and even more.

Year by year young men and women full of vigour youths hope and a robust outlook on life enter the labour market from schools, colleges, peasants, and working class families only to meet

the denial of opportunities to contribute to social wealth. Unable to earn a living they undergo the humiliation of living at the expense of relatives and others or from a chance job which may come in their way. Crores of India's young citizens see no prospect before them except this degraded existence. Forty years of Congress rule is resulting in the social killing of a whole generation.

The trade union of our country, the CITU and its unions must be severely indicted for neglecting this young section of the working class and confining itself to defending the emolument of those on permanent jobs. In this way, the trade union movement becomes a partner of the capitalist class to make the younger generation the scape goat of the crisis of the capitalist path.

In the May Day centenary celebration a special Day should be assigned for raising the demands of the unemployment and calling for right to work to be embodied in the constitution as a fundamental right. The workers must be told that the right to work is not just a dream but is concretely embodied in the Constitutions of all socialist countries. To secure it, political power must be in the hands of working class and the people.

Use Strength of United Movement

Comrades, while we certainly appreciate the unity built round the National Campaign Committee, it is necessary to remark that the momentum it earlier gave to united mass action is losing its force. In the midst of a grave economic situation if united activity is unable to go beyond symbolic protests their is something radically wrong with our ways of functioning and it must be located. Trade Union unity cannot be reduced to some kind of routine affair with no increase in the weight of mass action on the quality of mass protest.

In reality the power of united trade union movement if it is effectively used is a mighty power, which was seen in the anti price hike bandhs organised in a large number of states. The participation of working class was most enthusiastic in many states and set the pace for mass response. I congratulate our working class and our CITU unions on the massive expression of protest against the price rise.

There is no doubt that inspite of our weakness the net of trade union unity is widening and a larger and larger section of working class is responding to its call. The participation of INTUC union in West Bengal and Kerala in joint calls on some important issues

constitute an important advance for our struggle for unity.

Uphold Revolutionary Tradition of May Day

Comrades, the May Day centenary will be observed within a few days all over the world. This great day of international solidarity must be observed fittingly by all our trade unions honouring the memory of those who fell victims to the Chicago massacre, those who were sent to the gallows by an enraged capitalist class because they dared to demand 8 hour day and called for a curb on the unbridled exploitation of the working class. The day must recall the great advances the international working class movement has made during the last hundred years with one third of the world going socialist with the old colonial system smashed and the enslaved countries of Asia and Africa emerging as free countries, free from foreign domination.

On this day our unions must remember the revolutionary traditions of May Day following which one third of the world marched to socialism and neglect of which kept the workers of advanced countries enchained to capitalist slavery.

The revolutionary content of May Day consists of raising such partial demands on the day as have (I) revolutionary consequences; (2) expressing firm determination to end the capitalist system, establish working class power and socialism and discharging immediate political tasks (3) defence of proletarian internationalism and international unity of the working class. Confining May Day activities only to raising some partial demands and neglecting the other two aspects takes away the revolutionary content of this historic day. The working class on this day cannot neglect the immediate political tasks facing it, if it wants to achieve socialism. It also cannot forget its international unity and must foil all efforts of the capitalist class to split it.

On all occasions the danger to international unity arises from the wars organised by ruling capitalist classes. It has been tradition of May Day to oppose all such wars and proclaim the unity of the international movement in the battle to end the world capitalist system.

International Solidarity Against War

Today protection of international solidarity and unity of the working class, has assumed supreme importance. The international situation is marked by US Imperialist drive for nuclear war against Soviet Union. The war that is being planned is the war of

imperialism against the socialism, against the working class conquests and achievements over the last hundred years. It is also a war for establishing the global domination of US imperialism over the newly liberated countries. The ideological and the military strength of the Socialist camp stands as a deterrent to the imperialist plans of domination and therefore US imperialism is attempting to secure military superiority over the Soviet Union to launch a war against it. The Star War Project of Regan is part of the offensive preparations.

In contrast to these war plans of the USA, the Soviet Union and Comrade Gorbachev have made several proposals to stop the progress towards the war and gradually eliminate all nuclear weapons. But the US imperialists refuse to respond.

In these circumstances, international unity of the working class demands constant opposition to war and full support to Gorbachev's proposals for peace. On May Day it must be our endeavour to carry the message of peace to the workers and expose US plans for war. The defence of the socialist camp against imperialist war plans constitutes the essence of internationalism.

Respond to AUCCTU Appeal

Comrades, the situation is serious as can be seen from the appeal of the AUCCTU to the working people and the trade unions of the world. The appeal which was sent to our organisation also calls for support to the proposals made by Comrade M.S. Gorbachev for advancing a programme of complete and world wide elimination of nuclear arms before the year 2000. It says "on behalf of one hundred thirty seven (137) million soviet trade union members, the AUCCTU appeals to the working people of all countries, to all trade union organisations to give their all round support to the Soviet Union's large scale programme for the complete elimination of nuclear arms."

It says "it is only through concerted efforts that the edifice of lasting peace can be erected. Further development depends to a considerable extent on how much united the battle front will be in fighting against the danger of war. Extensive opportunities for working people to take joint action in defence of peace are offered by the campaign "Trade Unions and working people for Peace and Jobs" launched at the initiative of the World Federation of Trade Unions.

The appeal further adds 'we are sure that the trade unions

must put aside all differences and reject all that divides them when it comes to the struggle for safeguarding peace, against the threat of a new war. In this we must be united just in matters relating to common vital interests of those whom the trade unions are called upon to protect. The Soviet Trade Unions adhere exactly to these view points.

"Any delay is intolerable. In order to enter the third millennuim without the weapon of mass annihilation it is necessary to act today. The year 1986 is designated by the UNO as an international year of peace become a turning point in resolving the most pressing issue of our times, that of preventing a nuclear holocaust."

Comrades, we all must fully respond to this appeal for international unity from the people and the working class which only four decades back sacrificed 20 million lives to save humanity from fascist domination. The appeal should spur us to overcome our weakness in regard to the peace movement and urge us forward to move the working class and the people against the danger of nuclear war created by the US imperialism and for maintenance of world peace.

48

Impact of Religion On Our Present Day Society

Friends,

I do not know how far I shall be able to cover the canvas set for me by our President. It is a big canvas. But the main point—the impact of religion on our people today in our country—I shall try to cover.

Today what we find in our country is that the religions, at least in our country, instead of bringing people together are keeping them apart. This is perhaps not the situation in all the countries over the world. But in our country there are specific reasons for this. You see, inspite of the fact that all religion preach universal brotherhood and all that kind of things, during last forty years after Independence, instead of people being wedded together as human beings, as equals, are in fact torn apart on many excesses.

In fact we began our national life, free national life on the basis of religion, through partition of our country. Therefore the role of religion in moulding our present life, the effect it has got, and the dangerous aspect with which we are now face to face—the upsurge of new revivalist traditions of all religion—this has to be understood. We may not need to expand our canvas beyond that in the specific condition of India, what is happening here.

First, is it really a question of fundamentals of Hindu religion, fundamentals of Muslim religion or the fundamentals of Christian religion. Take as example, the Christianity. Anybody can ask any Christian from Bishop to Clergyman—are you really a christian?

Because in the Bible, it is often being said, the main message is "In as much as you have done upto the least of thy brethren you have done upto me."

But more wars have been raised by Christian nations than anybody else. This is how religion works.

Therefore, we must go to the bottom of the problem. What happens really ? Religion is supposed to be an affair between god and man. Very good. But then don't interfere in affairs between man and man, but god claims that we will interfere both in heavenly affairs as well as earthly affairs—at least that is what religions are claiming.

So it is not a simple question of some spiritual awareness. All religions, specially the more important religions in the world have really had a revolutionary beginning. They are not simple fantasy of somebody or other. They actually arose out of the need for social change. Christianity. Islam, Buddhism, you see all religions, had this basis. They were the expression, a religious expression, a spiritual expression, or what-ever you may call it, of a social revolt which was developing inside the society to get over the old religion, the old society and erect a new society. The rise of christianity was definitely connected with the fight against slavery in the Roman Empire. But later on all the religions turned into some weapon against the people themselves. In the new society, later on, the ruling class themselves appropriated the teaching of religion and religion became, in later period, a weapon of the ruling class to express their domination over the people.

Leave aside all these things. We need not go into the history. But it is perhaps true, what the president just now referred to is correct about protestantism. Protestantism is not simply a question of discussion between a doctrine of substantiation and others. Protestantism was now a new religion with which a rising capitalist class of Europe wanted to fight against the old catholic religion which expressed the interest of old feudal nobility.

This also happens in the course of struggle, in the course of a new society. A new society came into life, the sponsor of new society did not always express their conception of new society in material terms A, B or C but sometime in terms of spiritual doctrine, a doctrine which definitely meant to help forward the new society. In Europe, Puritanism, Calvinism, Protestantism, all were part of the same thing.

Now, you see, we should confine ourselves to India first, we need not go into base of religious truth etc. Why should religion play such a role in Indian life than anywhere else? Now in Asian countries, specially in India, it has become a problem for advance of social development, in the way of social development. Hinduism is there, Islam is there, Christianity is there, Zoroastrianism is there—so many things are there. But dominantly, when we come to think in terms of people's conflict, policies, disintegration of our country, dominant question comes between Muslim fundamentalism, Hindu revivalism—they are the dominant features. Recently Sikh revivalism is there. And they are tearing apart a country, which after hundred years of struggle, won its independence. It is a very serious menace. Is it simply distortion of religion? Is it something inherent in religion? What is it finally? How much truth is there? How much validity is there in considering religion to be the sole tie of our people in building the country? On the basis of religion that Hindus and Muslims are two different nations, Pakistan was created. In ten years time it was disintegrated.

The Bangladeshi muslims are muslims. But the modern question of nationality arose. Then nationality had to take precedence over religion. The same question came after the first world war. The preckish theoratic empire, the Turkish Empire Khilaphat, broke down.. Everywhere, in many places, arose the new nationalities. All muslim nationalities. The theoratic empire are an entity which had in one time some validity because, a new society, a capitalist society had no religion, where the new tendency to form nation on the basis of language as unit, and economy as unit and not religion as one—those empires last. But when capitalism began to develop, when people began to cluster round language than round religion, because economic unity was there, combined economic affairs was there, combined economic unity was there. Then, Iran, Iraq, so many, you see, all are Islamic Religion had become useless. They all go to namaz, go for Id, yet they are fighting. What was the religious sanction? For eight years, two sections of muslims, Iran and Iraq, the Shias and Shunnis, are fighting. Who welds them? Who keeps them together? Is it a convenient way of utilising religion wherever you want and not utilise it wherever you don't? In India also same is the line. What happens?

So, therefore, we have to understand that whatever be the principles of religion, today the mischief is done. Firstly because

old religious ideology which is the important part of consciousness of our people, is being utilised by the present day class interest to defend their own privileges. They work upon the mind which is already full of religious prejudices or religious conceptions. Marxism says that role of consciousness is very great. Immediately consciousness does not disappear. Some new things have come. What is India today ? Rajiv Gandhi says "India is going to 21st century". Anyway we are in 20th century. A large number of workers from Durgapur or employees from Durgapur are working in a modern factory which is nearing 21st century or are already in 20th century, but their minds and their hearts are in 16th century, their ways of thinking about (are in 16th century).

This contradiction between an old consciousness, whether a religious or social consciousness, and a modern consciousness will require something else. This is the conflict which is going on in our country and sometimes old revivalist consciousness gets upperhand and cause a lot of disruption.

When you talk about conscioüsness take India. You have got perhaps a most modern constitution. No country, no third world country which has been recently liberated and which has not gone over to socialism, no other country can boast of such a constitution. Fundamental rights, right of freedom of worship. What more do tou want? In fact people are very much satisfied. But this great constitution of India also had the impression of an old ideological outlook upon it. The modern declaration on modern fundamental rights is accompanied by special attention to the protection of COW: From where does the cow come? That is why it is always said that Indians are great. What is the constitution of China, People's Republic of China? It is socialist constitution. What is the constitution of Soviet Union? It also is a socialist constitution. Can they match us? Because, after all we are great people? They deal only with human being. We deal also with cows in our constitution! This is the hangover of the past. Even the best elements, who fought for national independence could not resist temptations of putting some old Hindu revivalist thing in the constitution itself.

And this is something which is said today by all people, the majority of our people and a very minority is trying to fight against it. It is not simply the religious thing. We talk of muslim fundamentalism, the muslim communalism. Over a greater part of India, you see how religion completely blocks the minds of the people. You

may say, "This is not religion". God does not say so, whatever be the thing, people consider this to be religion. Over greater part of India, ordinary Hindu will not touch water or food from the hands of the Muslims. And they say this is the religion. After all these things, if you go any further and say, that those who observe these things, practise Ostracism of Muslim, are in the main stream of national life and who are ostracised are not in mainstream of national life and you taunt them and you ridicule them it is an embarrassing thing. Whatever be the original proclamation. In actual life religion divides the toilers and the common people on the basis of their faith.

Actually the national movement, the movement of the class, is to see that all the toilers, all the human beings, irrespective of their faith etc. are treated as common people in their common fight, so that they may go ahead.

What is the first thing that religion does? Actually simply does not preach universal brotherhood. It says you are the man of a special faith. You are a god's own chosen man. But they are not your equals. All talk that all religions say that all are equal, is nonsense. Actually religion is vested and say "we are god's own chosen men." Whatever it is Geeta, or Veda, or Koran or any other thing, that is the final word. This consciousness has been driven into the mass over the years. It has been handed down from generation to generation, from century to century. It has become a very strong consciousness. It cannot be argued out. Lot of sentiments, lot of traditions are there. So many things are there, so many customs. So to start with it, it becomes a very serious obstacle in the way of uniting the people. In Europe to some extent, it became different. But even there it was not so simple, not so easy. When nationalist consciousness of the capitalist period began to rise, it also came from a new religion like Prostestantism. And actually, there was massacres. In England also there was persecution. Catholics were persecuted, Puritans were persecuted and in France there was huge massacres and only after massacre, things were settled. But don't think that it does not operate there today. Two things you will find in most advanced countries. In America after more than 150 years, Kennedy was the first Catholic President. And in another 50 years, there is no chance of a Jew becoming a president in America. And America is an advanced capitalist country. Not only that, in last election to get elected, Reagan called for the services of

Mother Teressa from Calcutta. For what? To tell the people that abortion is against Catholic religion. Because women concealed in Democrats were seeking that the right to abortion should be there. Religion is being used.

We are not concerned of the past. The original proclamations are there. It is one part. It is also because the earlier religions that were founded were not simply spiritual expressions. They expressed the desire for some new society. But now society with its satisfaction, when became a society out of date, then what was supposed to be religious preaching at that time which was progressive, but became out of date and becomes absolutely reactionary. You saw two things in India. Both communities are really wonderful. One community, the Muslims—in Shah Banu case, there was terrible row. The Hindus said "Oh, you are doing such things." And then came Sati. Now other fellow raised the row. Now the question comes, how is it that all such things, such obscurantism are still there. Even today they are preaching all these things in the name of religion—untouchability, caste, denial of rights of women, equality of women? Again whenever there is something in the old religion, when it is roused, why do they get tremendous response? Among one section of the people, even after 40 years of independence, there is a tremendous revivalist urge, revivalist expression. It is not confined among Muslims alone, it is there among peoples of all sections. It is because, the old and earlier trends of all such elements which was necessary during the days of national struggle had stopped. After the constitution was adopted everybody now says, "you practise your own religion. We are all good people and we will be equal before long. Nothing to be worried about." So actually instead of diffusing the mind of the people from wrong conception both about origin of the earth and so many other things, people were encouraged to go back to old thing and now a problem has been created. So people are sticking to their traditions and many people do not want to go beyond that. And now this religion is being used to tear up the unity of the people.

Now from where the things came? Here the real question of what is called communalism in India, what is known as partition of the country comes. You have to analyse this why did it take place. Muslim were not always of the British. They did not feel. Muslim mass also began to hate British as never before. In the last election, later on, all those who were supposed to be toadies of the British

were thrown out by the Muslim mass. But none the less, the anti-British hatred was diverted into fight also against the national movement for what they thought the Hindu domination. How was it possible ? Actually it was not. At that time, the question also of fundamentalism was not raised. Modern slogan had been given. Jinnah was very particular in saying "I am not calling for an Islamic nation, not calling for Islamic thing. I am calling for a Muslim nation. Muslims are a nation. This is nothing to do with Islamic civilization and Islamic state. I am for a democratic state but we are a nation." The slogan was very much modern. But the Muslims were susceptible. What happened. In India there was a time when both Hindu and Muslim communities were moving together as big national forces unitedly. Even before Khilafat movement and Congress joined Khilafat. That was of course the biggest national outburst of anti-British, anti-imperialism.

What is the secret? At that time Jinnah was considered to be the ambassador of Hindu-Muslim Unity. Why and what was the secret? The secret was that till 1925, '26, '27, Muslim industrial capital was a very important part of Indian national capital. Some of the biggest Indian industrialists in Bombay were Muslims. The common interest of the new rising class, the bourgeois class which wanted to capture the market, which wanted to get gradually the power, their common interests were coincided and they together were marching in opposition to the British. Jinnah was the expression of this bourgeois tendency. Till 1927-28, they marched together. They represented and boycotted the Simmon's Commission together. A growing influence of the Muslim League, of the bourgeois leadership which was developing, was rationalist leadership. By 1930, something happened. The economic crisis that took place, caused complete collapse of Muslim capital. Karim Bhai, Ibrahim Bhai group which controlled at least 30% of the big textile industry of Bombay, completely collapsed. Within a few years, the common interest of the Muslim bourgeois disappeared, and the Muslim League and its politics day by day fell under the control of the conservative landlords, for whom to keep the masses away, from this direct action-even the anti-imperialist action of the congress, the only appeal was of religion.

The point I am making is that the present day situation comes because of two things. It is not simply because somebody is interested in fundamentalism. Certain vested reactionary forces

want to exploit religion against democratic movement. Otherwise religion cannot be exploited like that. They exactly stress on these points of religion which divide you from rest of the mass. This exploitation of religion by certain vested interest, which took place earlier, is now also taking place.

Certain points that comes now, why is it that large number of masses, whether Hindu, or Muslim—are influenced by it ? Take Muslim masses. Huge number are influenced by this appeal of fundamentalists. All right, it may be that somebody want to exploit religion, but why should mass fall victim to it? Indian democratic movement, the working class movement have to understood what is happening. The muslim fundamentalists are able to get the ear of the Muslim masses, just because, in actual life also there is unequal treatment for the Muslim minority. This basic fact is totally neglected. Those who talk of simply denouncing Muslim fundamentalism is talking nonsense. Who will go after Muslim fundamentalism? Are people fools? But when appeal on the basis of religion combine with unequal treatment which is manifest in every space of life, every step of life, then it becomes a serious force. Take these riots. What happens in riots? Does the minority get justice? May be sometime minority also trigger riots. But do they get justice? They are beaten to the pulp.

A few months back there was riot in Ahmedabad. We sent our two M.P. to find out the truth. We told them "Go and see those who were shifted from their homes and kept in refugee camps. Go and meet them". They went there. 5000 refugees were there. They were all Muslims! They all had to be shifted because their life and property were in danger. This is the law and order situation in bourgeois-landlord rule.

Therefore point of this thing that when you talk about minority communalism, like Muslim Communalism, the other side must be seen that the appeal of religion is not simply because of fundamentalism. It is being used, no doubt. But it finds this base because the major mass of the people think and they justifiably think, that they are being ill treated. They are treated not as equal citizen. In fact, if anyone thinks of Hindus in Pakistan or Bangladesh and nobody would take water from their hand, and then somebody asked "Why don't you feel yourself as part of the nation?" They will say "What nation? Am I a part of it?"

On the one side, there are large section of people who follow

Hindu religion actually have this attitude towards Muslim mass, as if they are different type of people—inferior type or whatever it is. On the other side, there is bourgeois-landlord government which is unable to grant equal treatment and treatment of equality to minority. This is the first secret of religious appeal, religious division. On that basis, fundamentalist or non-fundamentalist, anybody can divide. Because, different religious appeal means division of people, unless the whole basis of this consciousness is smashed by social development, it can't be changed.

We, therefore, now see this appeal of Hindu religion (and Hindu) revivalism. What do we say about this Ram Janam Bhumi? Has it got any basis or justice? If minority communalism, as such, is based on justified grievances, then majority religious revivalism is just wanton revivalism. It is not based on any justification, any genuine grievances. It is just an open and an avowed exploitation on the old religious feelings of the backward community to fight the other community. Similarly Sikh communalism is of that type. It has not the justified grievances of minority, absolutely no justification. Nevertheless, see how this has been done. Anybody who says religion can't do anything, is not correct. So long that consciousness is there, and that separatist consciousness is something different, it is bound to happen. So long as the democratic consciousness of the common people that I am first a democratic citizen of the newly liberated country, does not replace the religious consciousness, there is no hope.

But day by day during last 40 years the situation has deteriorated because everybody is being made to feel that you are either a Muslim or Hindu or a Christian. Because the idea of bourgeois landlord government under this constitution is, to be secular means the worship of all kinds of religion. Not satisfied with one God, worship all gods. To be secular means that state has nothing to do with religion. You don't know to out cast. So all religious reservations in the name of minority goes on.

But often our propaganda is very weak. It need not be immediately anti-religious as such, not challenging somebody's conception of God, but the other propaganda, the scientific propaganda even about origin of the world, how it happened, materialist propaganda that should go to younger generation. Now people of 2nd or 3rd generation have come who have not seen the fight of the national liberation days, who have not seen how people have

fought together irrespective of their faith in religion or caste. They have no tradition to go by. Therefore their entire consciousness is getting saturated with old religious consciousness. Not that people have become devout, very devout. They violate all the tenets of religion in their ordinary life. But when it comes to dealing with somebody else, they again go back to that.

Take a simple question. Almost all over India, except in Bengal and Kerala, beef-eating is virtually banned. Due to the great triumph of Hindu consciousness, every municipality, every corporations, under one law or another has made it impossible. What is it due to? Is it not due to influence of religion. And you pride yourself! So when you talk of religion, it is not simply Muslim, or this or that, but the general influence of religion on Indian politics. We need not go to the dissection of the principle etc. What happens then? Even today the main mass of the Indian people, is a very sober mass. He does not easily join in the hunts of other community. But it gets paralysed, the moment riots start. The Hindu consciousness, the Muslim consciousness asserts itself, and neither will try to intervene, to beat down the rioters except in Bengal and few other places. That is why riot won't take place in Bengal. Because earlier also, we had to fight this thing openly coming out on the streets during the riots. In 1951-52 riots here in Calcutta, our comrades went out and fought very courageously that created a tremendous feeling among minority that democratic movement, communist movement is their protector. That is the best anti-dote to any kind of fundamentalist preaching. Defend the basic rights of the common people, defend it for years and you find that minority or any mass are not ungrateful. It happened in Bengal, it happened in Kerala to turn the tide. But what we found when Indira Gandhi was killed? Immediately a hunt of the Sikhs started. It was an organised hunt. The sober mass stayed still where it was. It did not intervene, it did not come forward and say "we are the citizen of India, why are you killing these people". Hoodlum people, all kind of people going, ganging up, choosing the houses of Sikhs. Several hundreds of Hindus were there! They would not come out and say "Why!" This is what religion does. This is what religious consciousness does. Paralyses your democratic consciousness.

Vice-Chancellor of Delhi University was very correct when he said "Only minority in India, are Indians. Otherwise there is Hindu majority, Muslim minority, but complete minorities are Indians".

That is correct. Today therefore you find such a thing. It has become such a menace, that common democratic movement, common class movement will become day by day difficult. Because all the obscurantist forces are trying to go round and gather people.

But why is it capable to leave aside the role of the government—they are bound to do it. But what is the democratic and working class movement been doing all these years? In the fight against obscurantism, not only Muslim obscurantism, the Hindu, the dominant community, there is a record of silence. Because some advanced people think "we have settled this problem", they are not fighting. A fight which used to go during nationalist movement, some kind of anaemic fight, none the less it was fight. The challenge that was being done, was not exactly as religious assignment, but at least as social reform. That fight is also not there, because many people are satisfied that the constitution guarantees everything—the secular state and all that. This is partly due to the weakness of Indian struggle itself.

Speech in the Seminar organised by Institute of Social Science in December 1987 at Durgapur.

49

Fight Unitedly For The cause Of The Indian Working Women

The CITU at its Ernakulam Session in 1973 drew attention to the question of working women. At its Bombay Session in 1975 it decided to call a Conference of Working Women to consider the disabilities from which they suffered. The Emergency intervened rendering impossible conduct of progressive trade union activities.

The CITU working committee meeting at Kota in June 1978 took a firm decision to convene a Conference of Working Women in Madras. That conference was held in Madras on 9-10 April, 1979. All unions and all committees should see to it that its decisions are properly implemented.

The CITU had to take the decision to call a special conference because it was found that the grievances of working women were unattended: the government was indifferent : the employers were hostile; and even the trade unions were not very enthusiastic about their demands. In the many strikes that the working class fought there were very few instances when special demands of the working women were given prominence.

It was also found that women, even in industries and occupations where they formed a sizeable section were hardly represented in the leading bodies of the union.

This state of affairs was partly due to the disabilities which women suffer from in a society like the Indian society. The inferior status assigned to women in both Hindu and Muslim communities

is known to all. The discrimination doggedly pursues the working women and it is the elementary duty of the trade unions to fight against it. We cannot say that our workers and some of our trade union leaders are free from this outlook.

It has been noted that the employers resort to retrenchment of women workers to avoid giving maternity benefit, and provision of other facilities prescribed by law. In many industries the number of women employees is decreasing. The axe of retrenchment falls first on the women workers.

The notorious Baveja Committee on coal industry has suggested retrenchment of 50,000 coal miners. The committee says, "A large number of those are female workers who cannot be sent underground. The redeployment in other projects in the vicinity is possible through a programme of training and "replacement of female workers." This means women will be retrenched in large numbers. And the Janata Government's Energy Minister is intent on implementing this recommendation.

Under the Congress regime, women membership of trade unions went down. In 1961-62 it was 370,000; in 1968, it reached 421 thousands, by 1974, it had fallen to 262,000. Perhaps the indifference and neglect of trade unions has also contributed to this fall.

Regarding the question of equal wages for equal work also there is discrimination. The tea Planters, the bidi employers find diverse means to cheat the women workers and the trade unions have not always shown the same zeal that they would have if men were affected. The plantation women, the bidi and coir women and the sweeper women have been the worst sufferers of this unequal treatment.

Nor are the conditions easy for women employees in private and government services. Apart from sharing the denial of creches and other facilities with the women in factories, they are discriminated in matters of promotion and transfers under a male administration and are often the objects of lust of superior officers. The employers besides retrench women or refuse them employment to avoid giving them maternity benefit.

The latest official survey dealing with the socio economic conditions of women workers in mines says, according to press reports, that no women worker engaged in production process in any sampled mine was found to be skilled while only 29 per cent of them were found to be unskilled workers. As many as 71 per cent

of the workers were classified as unskilled. The proportion of women engaged in supervisory work was found to be negligible. No woman was found to be holding administrative, executive or managerial post in the mining. A large number of women continued to be temporary hands even after putting five years of service.

The study showed that prospects of women graduating from unskilled to semi-skilled and supervisory jobs were practically non existent. In none of the mines was there a regular channel for their promotion. The cost of providing extra welfare amenities like creche, maternity benefits, toilets and other facilities to women workers was found to be very low—0. 20 to 1. 80 per cent of the total wage bill. However, most of the employers were reluctant to incure even this small expenditure.

In a few occupations, wage rates of women workers for identical work were found to be significantly lower than those of their male counterparts, even after the promulgation of the Equal Remuneration Act.

The Charter of Demands prepared by the working Women's Convention in Madras should offer a rallying point for unifying working women from industries, services and occupations. It has been prepared after thorough discussion among the delegates, who exposed the neglect by the Government and uncovered the wholesale cheating practiced by the employers. It is a charter which should be popularised among all sections of working women and should be supported by all organisations of women.

The Madras Convention gave a call to observe 30th May as Working Women's Day. The day was a remarkable success with hundreds of women demonstrating in support of the charter. The coordination committee of Working Women, the CITU Union, women's organisations and other unions joined hands to make the day a big success. Kerala, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, U.P., Delhi organised demonstrations to focus attention on the charter of demands. The participation of women organisations in observance of the day is an important development.

In all capitalist countries, there is discrimination against women. Women have to fight for equal pay for equal work in many of the advanced countries.

It is no wonder that India with one foot in the capitalist age and another in the preceding age should deny equal treatment to

women at every stage. The trade union movement has to fight it as part of the working class struggle. Our leaders and cadres besides must see that the union leadership does not become a male preserve, that women are trained and quickly promoted to leading positions. The trade union movement cannot attain its full stature unless the women's contingent plays its role in organising and leading the unions. Thousands of women participate in strike struggle, face jail and repressions, go through privations along with men workers and employees. But they are far from occupying the position in the unions that is their due. The fight for working women's demands—for the demands of factory workers, teachers, employees, etc., should not be the exclusive concern of the trade unions. All women's organisations should lend their support and actively help the trade union movement in this struggle.

The CITU calls upon all affiliated trade unions to strengthen the working women's movement. Let our trade unions and Coordination committees get ready to organise in cooperation with other central trade unions and women's organisations a mighty all-India demonstration of working women in New Delhi.

"Foreword" to the booklet Report of the National Convention of Working Women Madras, April 9-10, 1979

50

Message On Publication Of Working Women Bulletin

I greet the publication of the working women bulletin. It should help to focus attention on the problems facing the working women.

These are in part of the common problems faced by the working class and the employees—the struggle for better wages and salaries, better living conditions and more trade union rights, more freedom and civil liberties. The working women along with the rest of the working class fight against capitalist exploitation, low wages and take a prominent part in trade union activities.

But there are certain disabilities from which the working woman suffering under the present social dispensation in India. Forced to enter the labour market to support herself and her family, and in spite of acquisition of required skill, merit and competence, she is treated as an intruder and accepted on sufferance.

She is discriminated against when recruitment takes place. She is discriminated against in the matter of wages and promotion to responsible and strategic positions. Her inferior status in Indian society dogs her at every step despite the constitutional guarantee against discrimination on the basis of sex.

The result is that women generally crowd the most illpaid professions. This makes a farce of the Equal Remuneration Act (equal pay for equal work). In July the Labour Minister told the Rajya Sabha, quoting from the Third occupational Survey of Plantation Industry, that the average daily earnings of men were higher

than those of women in the Plantation Industry. The differences he said were mainly due to proportionately larger employment of women in comparatively less remunerative occupations. This is how the Equal Remuneration Act functions. The trade union movement on the whole has failed to take notice of this discrimination and wage a common struggle on behalf of the women workers. This weakness can be cured only by the women workers taking the initiative on their pressing problems and urging the trade union leaders to pay attention to them. This demands their more active participation in trade union activities.

The bulletin should help the working women in their struggle against discrimination and other disabilities. It will also act as a constant reminder to our unions not to neglect the problems of women members.

The Working Woman,
July 29, 1980

51

May Day Greetings

On the occasion of the May Day Centenary, the CITU send its greetings to the Working Women of India. The year that has passed has seen greater awakening in relation to the rights of working women. More trade unions are now taking up the questions affecting women workers. More women are coming forward to participate in their union's activities. The year has also seen a big awakening among Indian women who are now determined to end their unequal status. The great protest lodged by women's organisations against the reactionary Muslim Women's Bill constitute a sign of women's urge to fight against injustice. The CITU welcomes this awakening.

The Centenary year will be a year of struggle against plans of Nuclear war against the USSR hatched by US imperialists. Women from all countries will raise their voice of protest against this act of insanity and destruction. The working women in India should join in this protest to save the world from nuclear destruction.

President CITU
10.5.1986
The Voice of Working Women, May 1986, Vol VI, No. 3

52

President CITU Greets Women on May Day

On behalf of the CITU, I offer my warm May Day greetings to "The Voice of Working Woman" and its readers. I am glad to know that the Voice of the Working Woman is expanding its circles of readers. This reflects the growing consciousness among working women who have registered significant advances in the past year. Their awakening is seen in the fact that the CITU unions are now seriously engaged in taking the problems facing the women workers. The convention of working women held on April 17th will no doubt give a further impetus to the movement. In several places, the women have secured successes against unfair and unequal wage, against denial of minimum amenities. Many are coming to the forefront in the struggle of their trade unions. Yet much remains to be done.

I am sure, this year will see further advance with women participating in the leadership of the unions, waging a relentless fight against discrimination joining hands with all progressive forces and defend democracy at home and peace abroad.

The Voice of Working Woman, May 1984, Vol IV, No. 3

53

On Working Women

Neglect of Working Women, and their problems, failure to fight discriminatory practices against them and defend their interest, indifference towards recruiting them as members of Trade Unions and virtual resistance to promote them to responsible positions in the organisation these indicate the feudal male outlook prevalent inside the Indian trade union movement and especially inside the established leadership of the trade unions. This is nothing but a projection of the neglect of woman and her inferior status in Indian society.

The development of modern industry since independence, the spread of capitalist relations, the constitutional guarantee of equality irrespective of sex and religion and the increased strength of the trade union movement all these have not proved powerful enough to affect the old outlook regarding women.

In passing, it may be noted that the disease of neglecting the women workers is an old disease of the trade union movement against which the revolutionary trade unions have waged an irreconcilable struggle. Marx criticised the narrow mindedness of the British and French leaders in this connection and praised the American labour movement for taking the question of working women. Writing to Kugelman in December 1868 Marx wrote : "Joking aside, great progress was evident in the last Congress of the American Labour Union in that, among other things it treated working women with complete equality. While in this respect the English and still more the gallant French are burdened with spirit of narrow mindedness." It cannot be said that all trade unions in Western countries have even now given up this narrowness.

In the last decade the working women in India have been under constant attack. Every kind of discrimination is practised against them. Equal pay for equal work have remained a paper promise notwithstanding acts of the Parliament for specific industries. In the plantations where large number of women work, sometimes outnumbering men workers, there is no sign of equal pay for equal work. Large number of women have been thrown out of their jobs to escape maternity payments. introduction of machines in traditional industries is throwing thousands of women out of work. More than 50 thousand women coal miners lost their jobs without the union's raising even a murmur. The authorities in their hunt for muscle power in coal industry are asking old workers to retire—men and women—promising jobs to the young relatives. The condition is that the substitute must be a male member. The authorities refuse to recognise the mother of a working woman as a member of her family. That privilege is conceded to the mother of a male worker for purpose of entitilement to certain benefits. In all industries women are given the lowest paid job. There is discrimination in promotion. Women find it difficult to get promotion even if they are senior in service and capable of discharging the job. And over and above this there is sexual harrassment.

The Government and the employers refused to provide minimum facilities under the law like creches etc. The Fourth Pay Commission has callously recommended that maternity benefits to women who have two children should be stopped.

The trade unions and their leaders have been silent spectators of this discrimination against working women. It seems their vociferous cry "workers of world unite" does not include women workers. In this respect all are guilty—the leaders of the union of industrial workers as well as the leaders of the middle class employees, highly educated and some times highly remunerated. Ancient 'culture' is ancient 'culture' notwithstanding modern education.

In its Madras session CITU called upon its unions to give up its neglect of working women and fight against the discriminatory practices and attacks. A coordination committee was elected to ensure that working women's interests are protected. State Committees and unions were also asked to form such committees so that there is a constant watch on the practices and activities of the union. But progress was extremely slow. Though some state

committees like the Tamilnadu State Committee did take significant steps in this direction the major part of the CITU Committees either ignored the problems or made some cosmetic changes in their practices. It was therefore decided by the working Committee to involve the entire conference of the CITU in this discussion. A special report on working women and their problems was presented to the Sixth Session of the CITU and one whole day was devoted to the discussion of the problem. Apart from enumerating the discriminatory policies of the employers and the Government towards working women the report also revealed the step motherly treatment given by the trade union leadership to working women and their problems. It also showed how this attitude led to ineffective participation of women in the activities of the trade unions and their failure to occupy important positions in the unions.

Earlier the CITU Secretariat had asked all state committees to increase the strength of working women in their delegations so that they can effectively participate in the discussion and focus attention on their urgent problems. At this session therefore the number of women delegates was much higher than its earlier session. 19 women took part in the discussion. It is necessary to note that except from the state of Tamilnadu men delegates did not participate in the discussion. It was thought to be concern only of working women delegates. The speeches of women delegates also were not always upto the mark. Some talked about women's problem in general, some gave account of work among women. There were enough delegates among the women who could have spoken on the working women's conditions in their industries and also about the attitude of the trade unions. It seems that the state leaders did not give much attention while choosing the speakers. Another thing to be noted was that on the discussion on General Secretary's report not one state thought it necessary to put up a working woman though some of the state had four or five speakers. All this shows that the attitude towards the working women requires a drastic change. Nonetheless the one day discussion, the informations and points raised in the special report and the speeches of women comrades all should activise our trade unions to move in the proper direction. The fact that a large number of working women have been elected to the General Council, the Working Committee should offer further assurance that the problems of

working women will get proper attention from the CITU unions.

Lastly, all should note that the problem of working women is a part of the struggle of the working class against capitalist society and not just a question which concern women alone. The lack of active interest shown by men workers towards this question and the outlook it represents was once sharply criticised by Lenin when he found the same attitude among members of the Communist Party. "Agitations and propaganda work among women their awakening and revolutionisation is regarded as an incidental matter, as an affair which only concerns women communists. They alone are reproached because the work in the districts does not proceed more quickly and more vigoroulsy. That is wrong, quite wrong, real, separatism and in the French Say Femenism Ala Rebours, feminism upside down. What is the basis of this incorret attitude of our national sections? In the final analysis it is nothing but underestimation of woman and her work. Yes , indeed. Unfortunately it is all true to say of many of our comrades, "scratch communist and find a Philistine. Of course you must scratch on the senstitive spot of their mentality as regards women."

Address to the Delegates of the
6th Conference of CITU in Bombay '1987.

54

Last Message to Durgapur Steel Plant workers Conference

Dear Comrade,

I warmly greet the conference of the union and wish success to its deliberations. The union and the steel workers with a rich tradition of militant struggle and sacrifice have played an important role in the political struggle of the people against the Congress(I) rule and installing the Left Front Ministry headed by the CPI(M). It has played an important part in fighting the Congress(I) conspiracies against the ministry and is now embarking upon another election fight to oust Rajiv Government.

This is an important task. But I wish to draw your attention to a basic question which you as advanced guard of modern working class in India can ignore at your own peril. I am referring to defence of socialism, the defence of Marxist-Leninist scientific socialism now being attacked all over the world. You will realise that the daily struggles, the parliamentary elections, the Rajiv Hatao campaign have not much meaning if we forget the basic objective of socialism and fail to defend it. Lenin correctly described the daily struggle, parliamentary struggles as a small change of daily politics. The neglect of popularising basic concepts of scientific socialism, has led to confusion today when it is being attacked from all sides. The confusion has arisen from the fact that repudiation of socialism seems to emanate from socialist countries themselves. Confusion arises because those who are magnifying the past mis-

takes are deliberately ignoring the monumental achievements of socialism. We have no reason to be on the defensive. In what conditions the world would have found itself if the Soviet Union had not defeated Nazi power almost single handed? What gave the Soviet people this mighty strength? But for socialism a backward country could not have been transformed into a strong industrial and military power. And who can teach us about democracy? It was the first socialist state founded by Lenin that embodied the right to work and education in the constitution of the working class state. It is the socialist achievements of the last 70 years that have transformed the world, establishing socialist camp in one-third of the world. If some people in some countries repudiate these achievements, we should uphold them with revolutionary pride. They are the heritage of the world working class and we must guard them and carry forward the struggle for socialism and proletarian internationalism, should we waver in our duty?

A message sent to the Conference of Durgapur Steel Plant Workers Union held at Durgapur in 1990.

55

"A Youth Has To Be A Rebel In Every Sense"

(Extracts from Com. B.T. Ranadive's Address to 3rd DYFI-All-India Conference at Madras in December 1987)

YOU are meeting at a critical time in the life of the nation. As shown by the part played by the youth in the freedom movement of our country—the youth leagues of the 1930s—and the role of the youth in the Russian and Chinese Revolutions, we see that it was the youth who could lay aside the old traditions of bondage, and march to a new future.

Today I recall your martyrs who fell in the struggle for national unity. I recall the tremendous success of your *Human chain* programme in Kerala, and your massive youth-student rally in Delhi on September 23, 1987 in which you raised major political demands, apart from the fight for education and jobs. This is all good work done, but the challenges of the future are immense, and the orgnisation has to be so moulded as to face them.

Take the question of the divisive forces. Why do they succeed? Why can Muslim fundamentalism appeal so strongly to the Muslim mass? Darjeeling, Assam, Punjab—Why did they occur, in the first place? We must realise that divisive forces play on some genuine grievances of the people, and this must not be underestimated. It is in this context that the fight against feudal oppression and all its forms is all-important. Your organisation must consciously take up the problems of the minorities, the scheduled

castes and tribes, and they must be brought within our fold in a big way. Your membership of five million is a good thing, but for a country of the size of India, it is only a beginning.

Why can imperialism intervene to try and break up the country? Because we have not yet settled accounts with our past. A youth, if he wants to change society in our country today, has to be a rebel in every sense. Half-way rebellions will not do. Ours has to be a thoroughgoing rebellion against all obscurantism and feudal values, and against the present social order itself.

You are not the only force active amongst the youth. Divisive and communal forces are also active, so that the real youth power is not unitedly brought into play. You have to now emerge as the leading force that can genuinely represent the Indian youth.

In this task, mere organisation is not enough. It has to have a goal, a vision, a correct ideology. You must know where to take society. You must identify with the struggle of the working class, the peasantry and agricultural workers. That is an important task before the youth.

It is in this entire context that the December 9, 1987 Delhi Rally assumes significance. All the have-nots from various generations and various classes came together as one, as never before, under the leadership of the Left. Similarly, in Assam, Punjab, and Darjeeling do you see any other force but the Left fighting and dying in the struggle against divisive forces? Where is the Congress? Where are the other bourgeois opposition parties? This is the triumph of ideology. Ideology, organisation and sacrifice are our three main pillars in this struggle.

You have to guard against the danger of parliamentary illusions. The ballot box will not solve the fundamental problems of our society. It is like giving homoeophathic pills, where radical surgery is the need of the hour. And therefore the youth must steer clear of these illusions. The motive force of all social transformation is the class struggle.

It is in the larger context of the terrible conditions of the Indian people—poverty, ignorance, illiteracy, oppression—that we demand the resignation of Rajiv Gandhi's Government. The stinking corruption symbolised by the Bofors and other scandals is one of the many issues. But we have to fight against all the evils of class society, against the policies of the ruling classes and their Government. By removing the Congress Government and replacing it

with a communal alternative, we shall achieve nothing. Hence our insistence on Left democratic and secular opposition unity; hence the struggle of two lines that is today being waged across the country.

Finally, you have a great ideal to defend. There is no higher goal than defending the interests of the Indian people by building a massive organisation with the correct orientation and ideology. I call upon you all to be worthy of that great goal!"