



THE WORKING CLASS

MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE CITU

The President's Address

The address of Shree R. Venkataramanan, the President of India to the joint session of the Parliament on December 20, 1989, marked the policy matters of the newly installed National Front Government headed by Shree V.P. Singh, the Prime Minister. It was but natural that the policy guidelines would be based on the promises made by the National Front through its manifesto, on which it got the people's verdict. The policy enunciations, in general, on various issues confronting the people and the working class were of course a welcome departure from those being practised by the Congress (I) Government of Rajiv Gandhi, which proved its worthlessness in all spheres of activities and earned condemnation from all sections of the toiling people, who demanded its resignation. In this respect, the acknowledgement of the President that the people had given a clear verdict in favour of change and his pronouncement that the Government proposes to adopt an alternative model of government and development based on socialist ideas of economic equality and social justice, federalism and decentralisation, institutional accountability and human rights, etc, will be welcomed by all. The ideals of course are indisputable. But what the people want from the change in the Government are positive steps for implementation of the policy guidelines with a political will. It is therefore natural that while welcoming the pronouncements the people and the working class will remain vigilant to arrest any deviation from the same.

Apart from the ouster of the Rajiv Government, the other vital issue the people were most concerned of, was the question of isolating the communal, divisive and secessionist forces and see the emergence of an united India under a new Government. This was because the Rajiv Government of Congress (I) due to its anti-people policies got growingly isolated

from the people and stooped to its lowest to make compromises with the imperialist backed divisive forces of all sorts to cling to power and posed a great threat to the unity and integrity of the country. It became a Government of national disintegration.

It has to be recalled that the massive Bhrat Bandh organised by the left parties and their mass organisations on 15th March, 1988 and supported by the constituents of the National Front demanding resignation of the Rajiv Government made the No. 1 demand to strengthen national unity and taking firm steps against communalism and separatism. It was a welcome coincidence that the President's address began with a promise of no compromise with the divisive forces and to safeguard the country's unity and integrity and sovereignty. The working class has had the experience that the objective of its struggle can never be achieved unless the unity of the people and integrity of the country is maintained. The President mentioned all the areas of hot plate that are plaguing the country for the last several years, like Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab, North-East region and of course implicitly on the issue of Ramjanambhoomi-Babri Masjid when he spoke of communal roits. The promise to take action on the Ranganath Mishra Commission reports on Delhi riots, to reconstitute the National Integration Council, which the Congress (I) Government had made defunct, to repeal the 59th Constitutional Amendment, which the Rajiv Government had brought in the name of fighting the terrorists—all are welcome promises to mobilise public opinion and national consensus to restore national unity and instil confidence on the people on the principles of secularism.

Similarly, the commitment of the Government to the restoration of the democratic institutions and promote genuine devolution of powers, functions and resources of Panchayati Raj institutions enabling fullest participation of the people in the develop-

mental process will increase the credibility of the Government. While making such commitment, it is natural that the Government kept in mind the role of the Rajiv Government which tried to mislead the people by its fake Panchayati Raj Bill and there by undermining the powers of the States and the very basis of the federal structure of the country.

Likewise, the promise for a participative democracy, right to informations, withdrawal of the Postal Bill, autonomy to Doordarshan and AIR, amendment of the Official Secrets Act, withdrawal of the amendments to the Commissions of Enquiry Act which sought to withhold vital informations from the people and the Parliament and the amendment of the Constitution in this respect—all are befitting for a Government promising to restore democratic functioning.

The promises made on the economic front and unemployment are vital for the working class, the peasantry and the toiling people. Giving priority to the expansion of productive employment opportunities and striving to ensure appropriately to all citizens the right to work show that the Government has put its ears to the demands of the working class. Similarly, the promise of land reforms, equitable distribution of land and make the tiller of the land its owner, payment of remunerative prices, debt relief, etc will raise hopes of the peasantry and the agricultural labourers, who were the worst hit by the erstwhile Congress Government's economic policy. What is missing however, in this respect is the most urgent necessity for a central legislation and the question of minimum wage for the agricultural labourers. Not only the agricultural workers, but the teeming millions of the unorganised workers who constitute about 90 percent of the workforce, live like destitutes under poverty level wage and without any protection of the labour laws. The Congress Government remained totally insensitive to their plight throughout its long reign since independence. This vast section of the workforce naturally expects a better deal from the National Front Government which pledges to adopt an alternative model of governance and development based on socialist ideals of economic equality and social justice.

The steps promised to check the price rise and strengthen the public distribution system will give succour to the common people and the labouring class.

The Government has of course noted the disquieting trend on the economic front—the amassing of black money and budgetary deficit stoking the fire of inflation, precarious balance of payment position,

etc and promises to formulate action plans aimed at correcting the same. But what is expected from the Government promising an alternative model is a well defined blue print of an alternative economic policy of self reliance, on which the President's address was silent.

It has to be noted that the new economic policy of the Rajiv Government was tuned to the pressure of the World Bank. It had sacrificed the policy of self-reliance. In the name of modernisation and leaping into the 21st Century, it gave free access to the multinationals to cause the so-called "industrial revolution" in the country. The Industrial Policy Resolution of 1956 was subverted and the public sector was being systematically destabilised. The private monopoly sector and the multinationals have already made deep penetration into the Indian economy. Closures and industrial sickness have reached alarming proportions taking tens of thousands of jobs. This has been the result of the economic policy of the erstwhile Rajiv Government. Simultaneously, it declared its policy of no nationalisation. Obviously the working class experienced its impact on the labour policy of the Government also. The obnoxious Industrial Relations Bill sought to scuttle the right to strike, the right to secret ballot, the right to collective bargaining and the right to all elementary forms of trade union activities of all sections of workers and employees in its widest possible spectrum. Certainly the working class which is the back bone of the society, did not vote out the Rajiv Government and instal the National Front Government only to see a simple patch up of the same policies and perpetuation of its plight. Striving to ensure the right to work has to be accompanied by striving to revamp the economic and labour policy of the Government, free from the pressure of the World Bank and the Western agencies. Only streamlining the public sector is not sufficient. The working class expects it to restore the leading role of the public sector to ensure self-reliance and contain the thrust of imperialist penetration into Indian economy. The working class also expects the Government to define its policy on the question of nationalisation too.

Coming back to the question of restoration of democratic and trade union rights, mention has to be made of the particular situation in Tripura. The semi fascist terror unleashed by the Congress-TUJS Government has been taken into cognizance by the ILO, which has indicted the Government. A large number of CITU unions has been captured, union offices have been burnt, CITU and CPI(M) cadres

have been and are being killed. The ILO has stated that a situation free from violence and freedom of trade union activities is absent in Tripura. The President's address is silent on this issue. With the installation of the new Government however, the working class of Tripura and the country expects restoration of the democratic and trade union rights in the State and an end to the semi fascist terror.

While dealing with the question of restoration of trade union rights, it has also to be noted the Congress Government had consistently refused to ratify the ILO Conventions Nos. 87 and 98 on Freedom of Association and Right to Collective Bargaining. Ratification of these Conventions by the National Front Government will be a bold step towards formulating a positive labour policy.

Finally, the working class welcomes the foreign policy enunciations made by the President. Taking interest in the foreign policy of the Government, giving active support to the non-aligned foreign policy, extending full support to the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa and to the struggle of the Palestinians for their homeland, lending support to all national liberation movements and the struggle against colonialism, neo-colonialism and imperialism and the struggle for peace, democracy and socialism—all are integral parts of the working class struggles. The working class hails the policy enunciation in these respects and will remain vigilant to see the Government progress along the path.

Victory of CITU led Refinery Workers

In order to uphold the policies of the working class as well as to protect the interests of the workers and their existing rights, the workers of Haldia Refinery of Indian Oil Corporation Ltd. opted for a new union under the red banner. This was the event one and half years back. Since then under the leadership of CITU the workers of Haldia Refinery foiled many conspiracies hatched by the management and the recognised union led by INTUC.

On 24.10.89 management of Haldia Refinery signed a minute of discussion with the nominated members of shop floor council of the INTUC led union in which it was agreed to withdraw 2 Sramiks in each shift in LPG filling station in order to run a newly installed compressor.

The CITU led employees and workers union raised a dispute in the office of the RLC and pointed out that the above minutes of discussion violated the provisions of a tripartite settlement signed on

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Com. Gurcharan Singh Randhawa

The Centre of Indian Trade Unions expresses deep sorrow at the demise of Com. Gurcharan Singh Randhawa, a member of the Central Committee of the CPI(M) and its Punjab State Secretary, at Jalandhar on December 19, 1989 at the age of 72. He died of cancer.

Com. Randhawa was a freedom fighter and was in the communist movement for the last 50 years. He joined the then Kirti Party (Workers' Party) which was later merged with the Communist Party of India in 1942. He devoted himself to the cause of workers and peasants and was imprisoned while guiding the peasants' movement in 1938-39, and several times thereafter. In 1950 he escaped from the Ludhiana jail by digging a tunnel alongwith other comrades and continued working underground when the party was under severe repression. He took a leading role in the historic Anti-Betterment Levy Struggle in 1959.

Com. Randhawa joined the CPI(M) when it was formed in 1964 and was imprisoned again when the Party had to face renewed repression from the ruling Congress Government. He devoted himself especially for the kisan movement and became a member of the Central Kisan Committee of the All India Kisan Sabha and Secretary of its Punjab unit.

With the beginning and the rise of the secessionists' depredation in Punjab, Com. Randhawa plunged himself against the movement at the risk of his life to mobilise the workers, peasants and the people against the demand for Khalistan. With an indomitable spirit to safeguard the unity and integrity of the country he worked untiringly to expose the imperialist game to destabilise the country and the unprincipled compromises made by the Congress Government at the Centre with the various groups in of the extremists. His indefatigable efforts brought success in mobilising the working class and the peasantry and uniting the communist movement in the State to stand as a bulwark against secessionism and imperialism and sacrificing their lives to save the country from destabilisation.

Com. Randhawa's life and activities as a true Marxist-Leninist will serve as a beacon light for the new generation to come. The CITU pays respectful homage to Com. Randhawa and dips its red banner in his honour.

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30.11.77 wherein the manpower of the LPG filling Stn. was decided by the study of National Productivity Council. Moreover, the nominated members of the shop floor council have no right to settle any issue on manpower. It is out of their sphere of activity. Being empowered by the support of the INTUC led union the management of Haldia Refinery ignored the obligation imposed by Sec 33 of ID Act, which was intimidated by RLC Calcutta in his letter dated 30.10.89.

Employees and workers union had no option left but to resist the unlawful and undemocratic attitude of the management. There was nearly a two month long agitational programme such as demonstration, dharna, badge wearing etc, inspite of various oppressive-measures adopted by the management including paycuts and issue of charge sheet. Even the management ignored the proposal of the Labour Minister, Government of West Bengal in order to reach an amicable settlement. However, on 20.12.89 a delegation comprising of Dipen Ghosh M.P., Satyagopal Mishra M.P., Anil Bose MP and S.K. Mitra, General Secretary and S.K. Mondal, Secretary of Haldia Refinery Employees and Workers Union met the Hon'ble Union Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas, M.S. Gurupadaswamy and pointed out the unlawful and undemocratic attitude of the management. The Minister heard the delegation patiently and directed the Joint Secretary to convey to Indian Oil Corporation Ltd. that six sramiks should be reinstated immediately and neogiations to be started.

Conference of Akhil Bharatiya Cha Mazdoor Sangh

The tenth conference of Akhil Bharatiya Cha Mazdoor Sangh (CITU) was held at Rangapara town on November 26 to 28. The flag hoisting was done by the veteran Vice President Pusha Goala of Nangaon T.E. Dhaniram Khosla, President of the Union placed wreathes on the martyrs memorial. The conference started with an inaugural song by the Rangapara branch of the IPTA. The conference was attended by 205 delegates and 19 fraternal delegates from 28 tea gardens from the Lakhimpur, Sonitpur and Darrang districts. Several invitees from Dibrugarh, Jorhat and Nowgong also attended the conference. 200 red volunteers worked round the clock to make the conference successful.

A presidium consisting of Dhaniram Khosla,

Pusha Goala and Anjelika Kerketta conducted the proceedings. The conference constituted several committees, viz. Managing Committee with Purnanand Sarma, Michael Iugun and Rampada Baraik; Credential Committee with Nurul Amin, Debu Majumdar and Ganga Parajuli; and Recording Committee with Gojen Bora and Jiten Sundi. After condolence resolutions, Amal Ghos Dastidar, the General Secretary of the State CITU delivered the inaugural address. Michael Iugun, the General Secretary placed the report, which was discussed by 34 delegates and adopted. The Treasurer's report placed by Gojen Bora was then adopted.

The conference adopted resolutions on price rise, on the demands of the tea garden workers including the demands of the union for representation in the newly formed Tripartite Wage Committee for plantation workers, on education of the children of the workers, on unemployment, against communalism, etc. On the demand for the inclusion of the union in the Wage Committee the Conference decided to serve strike notice to the State Labour Minister.

The conference elected a 35-member new District Committee with Dhaniram Khosla as the President; Purnanand Sarma and Pusha Goala as Vice Presidents; Michael Iugun as the General Secretary; Nurul Amin and Rampada Baraik as Secretaries; Robin Khosla as Assistant Secretary; Gojen Bora as the Treasurer and J. Sundi as the Advisor.

The open session was held on November 28, preceded by a colourful procession participated by over 3000 workers. The session was presided over by Dhaniram Khosla and addressed among others by Suren Hazarika, Amal Ghosh Dastidar, Michael Iugun, etc. The session concluded with Jhumur dances and other colourful programmes rendered by Dhekiajuli and Rangapar IPTA and workers from Budhapara and Orangajuli tea garden workers.

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CITU Welcomes Formation of National Front Government

The Secretariat of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions met on December 8 evening under the presidentship of Com. B.T. Ranadive. The meeting was attended by Com. Samar Mukherjee, M.P., General Secretary; Com. E. Balanandan, M.P., Treasurer and Com. M.K. Pandhe, Com. Vimal Ranadive, Com. Md. Amin, M.P, Com. Ranjit Basu and Com. P.K. Ganguly, Secretaries.

National Front Government : The Secretariat greeted the working class and the people for inflicting a decisive defeat to the Congress (I) leading to the formation of the National Front Government headed by Shree V.P. Singh. The CITU and the working class had called for not only dethroning the Congress Government, but also for isolating the communal forces and increasing the strength of the left in the Parliament. Although the objectives of stalling the re-emergence of Congress Government at the Centre and increasing the representation of the left forces in the Parliament have been achieved, the Secretariat noted with the concern the increased strength of the BJP. However, despite the increase in their number of seats the significant factor was that the BJP could get the bulk of the seats from the states where there was an adjustment with the Janata Dal, because of the anti-Congress votes. But in U.P. and Bihar where there was no such adjustments in the majority of the seats, the party lost. The most significant factor was that in the seat of communal trouble in Ayodhya-Faizabad where the Vishwa Hindu Parishad supported by the BJP laid the Ram Shilanyas, the people returned the CPI, CPI(M) and the Janata Dal candidates both from the Parliamentary and the Assembly constituencies indicating their left, democratic and secular outlook. The nefarious game of both the Congress (I) and the BJP to vitiate the secular mind of the people and divert their attention to the provocative communal issue of Ramjanam Bhoomi-Babri Maszid was thus defeated.

The Secretariat further noted that the election was marked by widespread violence, killings and riggings at various places by the Congress (I) including at Amethi, the constituency of the former Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, where repolling had to be ordered in a number of booths. In Tripura there was open mass rigging accompanied by killings and assault on the CPI(M) polling agents. But despite all such attempts and the reverses of the opposition in the South, the Congress (I) could not come to power.

The Secretariat especially congratulated the working class and the people of W. Bengal for the outright defeat of the Congress (I) and returning the CPI(M) and other left parties in the Parliament from the State. It congratulated the W. Bengal State Committee of the CITU for its relentless work to mobilise the working class to achieve this objective. The Secretariat further warmly congratulated the State Committee of U.P. and the working class of Kanpur for their untiring work which met with success in returning the CPI(M) candidate from this industrial city. This is for the first time since independence that the increased strength of the left parties with the additional seats secured by the CPI(M) and the CPI outside Bengal has put the left in an important and strategic position and the National Front Government could not be formed without its support.

Assurances of the NF Government : The Secretariat welcomed the assurances of the National Front Government to seek solutions through national consensus on the burning issues like the Ramjanam Bhoomi-BabriMaszid, on Punjab and on the Kashmir situation to safeguard the unity and integrity of the country. It welcomed the formation of the Cabinet Committees on Punjab and J & K, on price rise, Panchayati Raj, Right to Information and Right to Work, which will instil confidence on the people and the working class. The Secretariat further welcomed the announcement of the Prime Minister that the Government will uphold the non-aligned foreign policy and continue unstinted support to the struggle of the South African people and the inalienable rights of the Palestinians.

The Secretariat called upon the State Committees, the affiliated unions and appealed to all trade unions to carry forward united struggle to isolate the divisive forces to safeguard the unity and integrity of the country and to defend the interests of the working class and the people while extending support to the new Government.

Meeting with the Labour Minister : The Secretariat welcomed the assurance given by the new Labour Minister, Shri Ram Bilas Paswan to the CITU delcagation which me him on December 8, to positvely look into the question of unorganised labour, secret ballot for recognition of union, on closures and industrial sickness, on the new CPI Index, on the question of ratification of the ILO Conventions on Freedom of Association and Right to

Collective Bargaining, etc.

Attack on CPI M.P at Faizabad : The Secretariat condemned the dastardly attack on Mitrasen Yadav, the newly elected CPI M.P from Faizabad who was seriously injured due to firing by miscreants on 7th night at Faizabad. The Secretariat demanded judicial enquiry into the incident and stringent punishment to the culprits. It further condemned the killing of four CPI cadres in Punjab by the extremists.

Colliery Subsidence at Raniganj : The Secretariat condemned the long standing neglect and callous attitude of the ECL and CIL management towards the problem of subsidence which led to the serious accident at Raniganj on November 13. The meeting expressed serious concern over the fact that the CIL had even no drilling machinery and other safety equipments which had to be brought from other places which led to the delay in pressing the rescue operations. The pumps used were defective and for several hours the level of water inside the mine did not go down. All this led to the death of six persons, whose bodies could not be found out. The rescued persons also could be brought out only after three days of the accident. The meeting demanded immediate adoption of all safety measures by the CIL including on the constant danger of subsidence in the entire area.

India Meters : The Secretariat expressed grave concern at the funneling of money by the NRI owners of India Meters, Madras to their fictitious private company which has threatened the closure of India Meters throwing 600 workers out of job. The meeting demanded take over of the unit by the Government without any delay.

Unorganised Workers, Textiles, CPI Index : The Secretariat decided to submit memoranda to the concerned Union Ministers on the problems of unorganised workers, textile workers and on the defective new Series of Consumer Price Index which deprived the workers of huge amounts in the form of DA. It called upon the State Committees and the unions to carry forward campaigns on the issues.

Convention against Unemployment : The proposed Convention to be organised by the Steel Workers Federation of India at Durgapur will be taken up later after the ensuing State elections.

IDPL : The meeting discussed the attack launched by the management of IDPL and decided to take up the matter with the Government. A meeting of the workers would be convened to discuss the organisational and other matters.

Invitation from Cuban T.U. Council : The Secre-

tariat accepted the invitation from the Cuban T. U. Council to attend its Congress to be held at Havana from January 20-24, 1990. The delegation will be decided later on.

IMO Conference on Safety : The Secretariat nominated Com. Haradhan Roy and Com. S. Kumar to attend the Conference on Safety being organised by the International Miners' Organisation at Prague in May, 1990.

AUCCTU : The meeting discussed the proposal of the AUCCTU, USSR for a Soviet Indian Trade Unions mass meeting in India. Decisions will be taken after discussions on the details.

ESI Corporation : The Secretariat nominated Com. Kali Ghosh as the member of the ESI Corporation.

Working Class Writers' Meeting : The Secretariat decided to convene a meeting of the writers belonging to the working class at Dhanbad or Hazaribagh some time after the forthcoming State elections.

Solidarity with Palestinian Workers : The Secretariat greeted the heroic Palestinian workers and the people on the occasion of the anniversary of INTI FADA, the armed struggle against Israel for the achievement of statehood, which was observed on 8th December as the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian Workers.

CITU Delegate Meets Labour Minister

A delegation of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions led by Com. Samar Mukherjee, M.P, General Secretary met the new Union Labour Minister, Shri Ram Bilas Paswan at Shram Shakti Bhawan, New Delhi on December 8. The delegation included Coms. M.K. Pandhe, P. K. Ganguly and Ranjit Basu, Secretaries of CITU.

The delegation discussed various burning issues faced by the workers which received cold shoulder from the erstwhile Congress Government and accentuated the problems of the workers.

Among the issues raised by the CITU delegation were the question of recognition of unions through secret ballot which has been the long standing demand of all the non-INTUC trade unions. But the Congress (I) Government refused to concede this justified demand. The Labour Minister agreed to the justifiability of recognition through secret ballot. He assured to look into this question positively. He also responded positively to the application of

secret ballot for representation of workers in workers' participation in management.

The delegation pointed to the deplorable conditions of the unorganised workers and their minimum wage which was below the poverty line. The CITU representatives pointed out that the Congress (I) Government had refused to implement the need based minimum wage despite being a party to the unanimous decisions of the 15th Indian Labour Conference. It never fixed any criteria for minimum wage. The Central Minimum Wage Advisory Board had also become defunct. The delegation also demanded a Central legislation for the agricultural workers, which the Congress (I) Government had refused. The Labour Minister discussed the various points on this vital question and gave positive assurance to look into the matter.

The delegation raised the question of growing closures and industrial sickness and pointed out that about two lakh units had closed down due to the pro-monopolist policies of the former Government. The other points raised were about the

non-functioning of the Tripartite D. A. Committee for Public Sector workers, on raising the Bonus ceiling, on the non-ratification of the ILO Conventions No. 87 and 98 on Freedom of Association and Right to Trade Union activities and Right to Collective Bargaining, etc.

The delegation also drew the attention of the Labour minister to the arbitrary introduction of the new CPI Index based on 1982 and pointed out that because of the defective family budget compilation and non-rectification of the 1960 series, workers were losing heavily in DA. The former Government had rejected all the suggestions given by the trade unions.

The Labour Minister reacted positively to all the points and wanted a detailed note on them. The delegation also informed him that a delegation on behalf of the National Campaign Committee of Trade Unions would also meet him shortly. The Labour Minister informed the delegation that he would shortly call a meeting of the trade unions to discuss the various problems faced by the workers.

New Public Sector Agreements

Four more agreements were signed during September and October '89 in Public sector units viz, in Heavy Engineering Corpn. Ltd., Pawan Hans Ltd., Bharat Havy Plate & Vessels and Andrew Yule & Co. Ltd.

Heavy Engg. Corporation Ltd.

The agreement signed between the management and the INTUC affiliated Hatia Project Workers Union on 28th September '89 sought to extend the earlier agreement signed by the parties on 14.5.87. The earlier agreement settled the scales and wages to cover a period between 1.1.86 and 31.12.89. The current settlement is made in deference to clause 2 (i) of the memorandum of understanding arrived on 24.7.89 which was signed between the management and all the registered unions to settle the 69 days HEC strike against April '87 agreement. In this context it is worth remembering that the HEC workers went on spontaneous strike demanding to scrap an agreement signed by the INTUC leadership behind the back of the workers to suit the BPE guidelines. It was only on the written assurance by the management, duly guaranteed by the Bihar State Govt., that the management will make good of the additional benefit which may accrue to other PSU, also to HEC workers, that the strike was withdrawn after 69 days.

The current settlement is a fraud to the memorandum of understanding signed on 24th July '87. Instead of notionally drawing the new scales w.e.f. 1.1.86 and advancing accrued consequential benefits, the agreement sought to settle the arrear claims through a paltry of lumpsum payment for the entire agreement period of 4 years. Payment ranges between Rs. 4,800/- and 17,280/-. Only in the way of extending the agreement period by 2 years the parity of scale has been brought about. The new scale is to take effect from 1.1.90.

According to the terms of settlement the monthly minimum wage is fixed at Rs 1,525.85 on 1.1.90 at 832 CPI (1960=100), comprising Rs. 1086.00 basic, Rs. 200.05 fixed DA and Rs 239.80 as VDA.

While settling 14 rates of pay with the rates of annual increments ranging between Rs. 20/- and Rs. 90-, the agreement introduced 5 slabs of DA rates within the range of Rs. 200.05 and Rs 460.05. Highest rate of basic is fixed at Rs 3076/-.

The agreement provides the payment of HRA, CCA on notional basic pay in pre-revised scale. The night shift allowance is fixed at Rs. 5/- per night while the rate for conveyance reimbursement is fixed at Rs. 50/- for Scooter/Motor Cycle and Rs. 35/- for Moped. Amount of Festival advance is enhanced to Rs. 750/- The rate of washing allowance is enhan-

ced from Rs. 5/- to Rs. 15/- and from Rs. 8/10 to Rs 20/-. Welding allowance is introduced to the tune of Rs 65/- in grade X5 (A5) and above possessing IBR certificate. LTA will be admissible to parents from the block year effective from 1990-91. The expert committee to be constituted by the management will recommend the modification of the existing bonus scheme.

The management has agreed to enhance the rate of Provident Fund Contribution from 8.33% to 10% and to consider the introduction of a suitable pension scheme. Both are of course, subject to Government approval.

The workers have however rejected the terms by a strike on 25th October 1989. They demanded that the agreement should not be extended and all consequential benefits or lumpsum be paid.

Bharat Heavy Plate & Vessels

The agreement was signed on 7th October '89 between the management and the BHPV National Employees' Union to cover a period of 4 years effective from 1.1.1987. The minimum wage is fixed at Rs. 1207/- comprising of Rs. 1107/- as basic and Rs. 100/- as fixed DA at 672 AICPI (taking 1960 as 100). Settled at six rates of pay scale with Rs. 1107/- as minimum and Rs. 2122 as the highest. The incremental rates range between Rs. 20/- and Rs. 55/-. Notional fitment w.e.f. 1.1.87 as arrear, but an amount of Rs. 3,300/- will be paid as lumpsum. Difference of incremental rates and fixational benefit will be paid in addition.

Seven slabs of DA rates ranging between Rs. 100 and Rs 420/- are fixed to which Rs. 100/- be added in every stage w.e.f. 1.10.89 House rent allowances are fixed for Delhi and Bombay @ 30%, and for other 'A' Class cities @ 25%. For 'B'1 class cities @ 15% and for 'C' class cities @ 7½%. HRA will be calculated on notional basic pay in the pre-revised scale till 30.6.89 and then on the revised scales of pay.

4 slabs of ceiling on house rent recovery between Rs. 40/- and Rs. 65/- are fixed. City Compensatory Allowances are fixed @ 6%, 4.5%, 3.5% respectively for 'A', 'B'1 and 'B'2 class cities. The allowance will be paid on pre-revised wage structure till 30.6.89 and then on revised rates of pay. The reimbursement of tuition fee to a maximum of 3 school going children upto 10 plus 2 standard not exceeding Rs. 15/- per month for each. Canteen subsidy @ Rs. 4/- per day to the employees in regional offices. Ceiling for LTC encashment is raised to 75% of rail fare of entitled class for 1500 K.Ms each way to 4 adults. Shift allowances will be paid @ Rs. 3/- for 'B' shift and @ Rs. 4/- for 'C' shift.

While the employees not availing the Company's transport will continue to get conveyance allowance @ Rs 40/- per month, reimbursement of conveyance will be made to those who are not getting allowance. For cycle it is @ Rs 15/- for Moped @ Rs 50/- and for Scooter @ Rs 75/-. Enhancement is made in the rate of washing allowance from Rs 15/- to Rs 25/-.

A pension scheme will be introduced alongwith other public sector undertakings. A Committee will be formed to finalise the Medical contribution and attendance rules.

Pawan Hans Limited:

The agreement was signed on 6.11.89 for a period of 5 years to be effected from 1.1.87. 9 rates of pay scales with 1110 as minimum and Rs 2705/- as maximum basic, and Rs 20/- as minimum rate of annual increment against Rs 85/- at the highest were settled. Minimum wage was fixed at Rs 1221/- comprising of Rs 1110/- as basic and 10% of the basic as additional pay.

HRA & CCA will be paid on revised pay in existing rates in case of CCA and @ 10% house rent allowance. Both the payments will be effected from 1.1.87. Transport allowance will be paid @ Rs 50/- per month. Three rates of allowances i.e. Rs 4/- Rs 5/- and Rs 6/- respectively for different categories of workers are fixed for each of the morning/afternoon shifts. For the night shift, rates are fixed at Rs 8/- Rs 10/- and Rs 12/- respectively. Flying allowance @ Rs 8/- per hour and Rs 25/- per month for hazardous jobs will be paid. Technical pay has been restructured.

Andrew Yule & Co. Ltd.

The agreement was signed between the management and the Andrew Yule & Co. Ltd. workmen's union (Belting Division) on 27th October 1989. It will be operative for four years from 1.4.89. Minimum wage is fixed at Rs 900/- at 492 AICPI(1960=100) comprising Rs 450/- basic and Rs 450/- fixed DA and Variable DA @ Rs 1.65 beyond 490 AICPI. Minimum guaranteed benefit Rs 175/-. 13 rates of pay scales are finalised with Rs 450/- as minimum and Rs 1225/- maximum basic, Rs 13/- as minimum rate of increment and Rs 27/- as maximum.

City compensatory allowance @ 6% subject to a maximum of Rs 100/-. L.T Assistance @ Rs 500/- per year. Workers who will be going beyond the purview of the ESI coverage would be paid upto Rs 90/- per year as medical benefit towards the reimbursement of actual expenses. Boiler mixing allowance @ Rs 5/- per day to the concerned workmen. Night shift allowance @ Rs 5/ per night. Leave encashment @ 50% of the annual entitlement. Canteen subsidy will be enhanced to cover 70% of the increased cost.

Unorganised Labour And The Question of Minimum Wage

—P.K. Ganguly

Rajiv Gandhi, the former Prime Minister, almost immediately after the installation of his Government, had made an impassionate speech at the Annual Conference of the ILO in 1985 calling upon the member countries to pay greater attention to the problems of the unorganised labour. He said, "... the living and working conditions of labour have improved significantly. But what about those who are unorganised, as the vast majority of workers in the developing countries are? Ninety percent of all Indians earn less than organised workers. These are the millions spread over our countryside who work as landless labour, or as contract labour on building sites, in quarrying, road construction and in service trades, all at low income levels."

The same Rajiv Government while shedding crocodile tears in the ILO for the low wages of the unorganised labour had like its predecessor, the Indira Government, refused to even ratify the ILO Convention No. 131 of 1970 on Minimum Wage. It is to be noted that the ILO Conventions relate to the minimum standards which the member countries are to follow. It is not only the Convention No. 131, but there is a series of other conventions on minimum wage or on working and service conditions of the various sections of workers in the unorganised sector like women, child labour, migrant workers, minorities, agricultural workers, contract workers, etc. which the Congress Government had either not ratified or refused to implement. These Conventions relate to fixation of standard minimum wage according to the needs in commensurate with the cost of living, fixation of criteria for minimum wage, social security measures, application of labour laws, etc. Over and above, the former Government refused to ratify the two basic Conventions Nos. 87 and 98 guaranteeing the freedom of association and the right to organise and collective bargaining. Therefore whenever these unorganised workers try to organise under trade unions and launch movements for amelioration of their conditions, brutal repression and gangster attacks are unleashed against them.

The speech of the former Prime Minister was therefore not merely a shameless attempt to camouflage the erstwhile Congress Government's anti-labour policy, but was also an attempt to pit the unorganised workers against those of the organised sector, who through their militant trade union actions forced the Government to revise their wages from

time to time.

Wages below Poverty Line

According to the documents placed by the Labour Ministry at the 30th Session of the Standing Labour Committee held in September, 1986, almost 90 percent of the Indian workforce is in the unorganised sector. These 90 percent workforce include the contract labour, building and construction workers, casual labour, labour employed in small scale industry, handloom and powerloom workers, beedi and cigar workers, employees in shops and commercial establishments, sweepers and scavengers, tannery workers, tribal labour, the vast multitude of agricultural workers and so on. The list is almost never ending even according to the enumerations of the report of the National Commission of Labour submitted in 1969. Even as per the Government data, according to the 1981 Census, 90 percent, i.e. about 220 millions of the total 244.61 million workers belong to the unorganised sector.

This entire lot earns wages much below the poverty line which, according to the definition of the Planning Commission used in the Seventh Five Year Plan, comes to an annual household income of Rs. 7300 for urban areas and Rs. 6,400 for rural areas.

The entire lot of unorganised workers has been recklessly left exposed to the ruthless exploitation by unscrupulous employers and landowners. With the pittance of earnings they get, they cannot even have two square meals a day for the family. For the vast multitude of the agricultural workers, the former Government had fixed a paltry wage of Rs. 11 per day. The other unorganised workers like handloom weavers, contract and sub-contract workers get even less than this. For them there is no protection of labour laws.

Apart from absence of protection from labour laws, there is no social security measure in the unorganised sector. The two major social security schemes like the Employees State Insurance Scheme and the Employees Provident Fund Scheme are almost unknown in the vast unorganised sector. The Welfare Funds for the beedi workers do not reach them. Same is the case with the brick-kiln workers, mining workers, etc. Tripartite Study Groups formed in other industries like building and construction industry and leather and footwear industry have not delivered the goods.

Due to the unabated price rise, which got further accentuated because of the new economic policy of the Rajiv Government, the real wages of the workers have either fallen or remained static at the level of 1970s. The worst hit have been the unorganised workers who have no protection worth its name against the price rise.

According to the Government's own Annual Survey of Industries, in 27 major groups of industries, the average earnings per man day of all employees is about Rs. 20.50 and the average earning per man hour (including overtime of all workers which includes the casual and contract workers) is about Rs. 2.20. The above daily or hourly earnings of workers in the unorganised sector come nowhere near the poverty line wage as defined by the Government itself.

Need Based Wage

So far as the need based wage is concerned, the Government is committed to it, being a party to the unanimous decision of the 15th Indian Labour Conference held in 1957. The Government accepted the calorie formula of Dr. Akroyed with the need for 2700 calories intake for an average Indian worker. The Government decided to consider this calorie requirement for a family consisting of the worker, his wife and two children, disregarding the earnings of the wife and children, if any. But the Government then violated its own commitment by saying that the formula is not "workable". Aligning itself with the employers' pleas, it raised the bogey of the "capacity to pay". Due to the persistent demands of the trade unions, the Government appointed a Committee on Fair Wages. The Committee also recommended need-based minimum wages for all employments and rejected the plea of "capacity to pay" and any other conditions. The Supreme Court also held that the "capacity to pay" cannot be a reason for non-payment of minimum wages.

The ILO Convention No. 131, apart from asking the member countries to decide a system or criteria for fixing minimum wages as per needs in commensurate with the cost of living, also calls for extension of the provisions of minimum wage in all employments. It further calls the member countries to submit a list of employments which cannot be covered for minimum wage with concrete reasons therefor. But not to speak of submission of any list, the Congress Government refused to even ratify this Convention. A large number of employments are not covered for minimum wage at all. Convention No. 26 calls for fixation of a machinery for determining minimum wages.

Defunct Minimum Wage Advisory Board

In the wake of the trade union struggles, the Government constituted a Central Minimum Wage Advisory Board to determine the criteria for fixing minimum wages. The CITU submitted several memoranda to the Government demanding fixation of criteria of need-based wages as decided by the 15th Indian Labour Conference. The CITU representative on the Board also repeatedly drew the Government's attention to this point. It was further pointed out that the minimum wages fixed by the Government were even lower than the per capita expenditure on convicts in jails. But the Government refused to accept the plea.

To arrive at a compromise formula, at the 26th Indian Labour Conference (1985), the National Campaign Committee even came down to demand that, pending the realisation of need based minimum wages, the national minimum wage must not be fixed below the poverty line.

Subsequently, the then Minister for Labour, P.A. Sangma, announced in the Standing Labour Committee meeting in 1986, that the minimum wages would be above the poverty line wage. Sangma also agreed that the Minimum Wage Act would be amended to include a clause for fixing the criteria, and therefore the matter was referred back to the Central Minimum Wage Advisory Board as it was constituted for fixing the criteria. Later the Board did meet in November 1987, but it was adjourned due to the employers' objections and the Government surrendered before them. Since then the Board has become defunct.

No Central Legislation

The minimum wages fixed by the Central Government have thus been totally unilateral and arbitrary, without any basis at all. There is a total anarchy with regard to minimum wages all over the country. They vary from State to State, industry to industry and even within the same state and same industry, and are far below the poverty level. Even the prescribed minimum wages are not even given by the employers.

The demand for a Central legislation for agricultural workers has been denied by the Government of India, even after an announcement in Parliament, under pressure from the landlord lobby. For the construction workers the Government had introduced a Central Bill, in the Parliament. But it was so retrograde in nature that all the trade unions demanded its withdrawal and introduction of a new Bill in consultation with the trade unions. On a petition submitted by the trade unions in the industry, the

Committee on Petitions also revealed the retrograde nature of the Bill. Because of the forthcoming elections, the Government did not dare to push forth the Bill. In the handloom sector also, the Committee on Petitions revealed the growing destitution of the handloom weavers due to the new textile policy which benefited only a few textile barons. The Congress Government did not implement the recommendations of the Committee on Petitions, nor those suggested by the Tripartite Study Group in the handloom and powerloom sectors.

Fake Propaganda by Congress Government

To rope in this vast section of unorganised workers as its vote bank, the Congress Government of course continued with its fake propaganda. With the failure of one, it came out with a new one. The issue of minimum wage was trumpeted by the Rajiv Government in its new 20-point programme in 1986. But all its propaganda only exposed the hollowness of its intentions and its bias in favour of the private employers and landlords. The IRDP, RLEGP, etc., having failed to deliver the goods, it came up with the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana, 30 per cent reservations for women, etc., desperately trying to hood-wink the most down-trodden sections.

But the 42 years of Congress rule and the five year rule of the Rajiv Government have brought these vast sections of the most downtrodden to the brink of destitution. Rajiv's new schemes and Yojanas in pursuance of his new economic policy pushed these down trodden multitude of unorganised workers to the brink of economic disaster while fattening the assets of the monopolists. With its path of privatisation, it threw more and more workers in the unorganised lot by off-loading the permanent and perennial nature of jobs in the public sector to private contractors and sub-contractors. With the millions of unorganised workers living below poverty line and with more being thrown into their rank, the erstwhile Government's data of progressive reduction in the number of people below poverty line was another fraud on the people. The Government then extended the plea that because of the vast multitude and lack of employer-employee relation and home stead nature of jobs in a wide section of the unorganised workers, it is not possible to fix any minimum wage. With this outlook and its refusal to ratify the ILO Conventions Nos. 87 and 98 on right to association and right to organise and collective bargaining, the Congress Government unleashed ruthless repression on these workers whenever they demanded minimum wage.

Getting growingly isolated from the workers and the toiling people, the Government increasingly com-

promised with the divisive and communal forces making the country vulnerable to the imperialists' destabilisation game. Several of its misdeeds have now come to surface. Corruption even in defence deals rocked the entire country. The only solution lay in dethroning the Government and electing a new Government of the people's choice representing the Left, democratic and secular forces, which can look into the lot of the vast population of unorganised workers.

Carry Forward Struggles

With this objective, the CITU had taken the initiative of bringing these vast and widespread sections of the unorganised workers out of the influence of the Rajiv Government's propaganda and organising them into militant trade union actions. From the early eighties the CITU had launched unionwise, statewise and sector-wise struggles on the issue of the unorganised workers, particularly on the question of minimum wage. The Rajiv Government wanted to drive a wedge between the unorganised workers and the organised ones. But the demand for minimum wage for the unorganised workers is qualitatively different from the economic demands of the workers in the organised sector.

The Rajiv Government has been ousted. A new Government has been installed and it has made some welcome pronouncements. But to organise the unorganised sector workers on the issue of minimum wage and other demands has to be carried forward as a political task. The independent activities of the CITU have to be stepped up again.

Assam CITU Demands Representation in Tripartite Wage Committee

Dhaniram Khosla, President and Amal Ghosh Dastidar, General Secretary, on behalf of the CITU, Assam State Committee submitted a memorandum to the Labour Minister, Assam, on November 30 through the Labour Commissioner, Guwahati, demanding CITU's representatives to the Tripartite wage Committee constituted recently by the State Govt. for the plantation workers of Assam. The Memorandum alleged that the CITU affiliated unions functioning in Tea Gardens have been left out of the Committee, though the unions are fighting for the same for last two decades. It is alleged further that there are representatives in the said committee who in fact have no union or having a negligible membership among the tea garden workers.

The memorandum adds, if the demand is not conceded the CITU unions will resort to one day token strike all over the state on 11th December, 1989. Similar memoranda and strike notices have also been submitted by the respective garden units.

“The Banners of Revolution and Socialism are not Surrendered Without a Fight : Only the Cowards and the Demoralised Surrender—Never the Communists and Revolutionaries”

[We are publishing hereunder the speech delivered by Com. Fidel Castro, the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba and President of the Council of State and Council of Ministers, Cuba, on the occasion of the Memorial Ceremony of the Cuban internationalists who fell while carrying out militant and civilian missions, held at El Cachual on December 7, 1989—Ed].

December 7, the date on which Antonio Maceo, the most illustrious of all our soldiers, and his young aide-de-camp were killed, has always been very meaningful for all Cubans and those whose remains lie here.

By choosing this day for laying to rest the remains of our heroic internationalist fighters who have died in different parts of the world—mainly in Africa, the land of birth of Maceo's ancestors and many of our forebears—we make it a day for honouring all Cubans who gave their lives while defending their country and all mankind. Thus, patriotism and internationalism—two of man's most beautiful values—will be forever joined in Cuba's history. Perhaps someday, a monument will be erected not far from this site to honour them.

The remains of all internationalists who died while carrying out their missions are being laid to rest in their home towns all over Cuba right now.

The imperialists thought we would conceal the number of our men killed in Angola during the complex 14 year-long mission, as if it were a dishonour or a discredit for the Revolution. For a long time they dreamed that the lives that were lost had been to no purpose, as if those who died for a just cause had died in vain. Even if victory were the only way to measure the value of men's sacrifices in their legitimate struggles, they also returned victorious.

The Spartans used to tell their fighters to return with their shields on them; our troops are returning with their shields. Still, it is not my intention, on this solemn occasion, to boast of our achievements or to humiliate any one—not even those who were our adversaries. Our country sought neither glory nor military prestige. We always applied the principle of achieving our goals with the lowest possible number of casualties. To do this, we had to be strong, unemotional and always willing to do our utmost.

All our soldiers knew that the whole country supported them and that all of us were concerned about their health and safety. When political and diplomatic efforts became feasible for attaining the final goals, we did not hesitate to use political and diplomatic channels, and while we always employed the necessary firmness, at no time during the negotiation process were we arrogant or boastful. We were flexible whenever flexibility was advisable and fair.

The final stage of the war in Angola was the most difficult. It demanded all our country's determination; tenacity and fighting spirit in support of our Angola brothers.

Support to African Cause

In fulfilling this duty of solidarity, not only to Angola but also to our own troops fighting under difficult conditions there, the Revolution did not hesitate to risk everything. When the imperialist threats against our own country became very serious we did not hesitate to send a large part of our most modern and sophisticated military equipment to the southern front of the People's Republic of Angola. Over 50,000 Cuban troops were in that sister nation, a truly impressive figure. In view of the distance and our country's size and resources, it was a veritable feat by our revolutionary armed forces and our people. Such chapters of altruism and international solidarity are very infrequent.

Therefore, we greatly appreciate the fact that Jose Eduardo Dos Santos (the President of Angola) is attending this ceremony. It was an entirely spontaneous gesture. “I want to be with you on this occasion,” he said. Also spontaneously, as soon as they learned of this ceremony, only a few days ago, the leaders of Ethiopia, SWAPO and other countries and revolutionary organisations stated that they wanted to send representatives to be here with us today, when we laid to rest all of our internationalists who died in Africa and in other lands.

There are historic events that nothing and no one can obliterate. There are revolutionary examples that the best men and women of future generations, both within and outside our country, will always remember. This is one of them. Yet we should not be the ones to judge it. History will do so.

We will never forget that soldiers of the Angolan

armed forces were our comrades-in-arms. Tens of thousands of the best sons and daughters of that nation lost their lives in the struggle. Our unity and close cooperation made victory possible. We also had the honour of fighting alongside the courageous sons and daughters of Namibia, the patriots of Guinea-Bissau, and during the difficult period immediately following Algeria's independence. Our internationalist fighters were at her side as later they helped defend Syria, another sister Arab nation that was a victim of foreign aggression and requested our cooperation.

Every legitimate African cause received our people's support. Che Guevara and a large group of Cuban revolutionaries fought against white mercenaries in the eastern part of what is now Zaire, and doctors and teachers are working in the Saharawi Republic now, helping its people, who are fighting for their freedom. All of these countries were then, or are now independent, and those that have not yet won their independence will do so sooner or later.

Fighting For Cuba

In just a few years our fighters wrote an outstanding chapter of solidarity of which our people can be proud. Men from other countries also fought at our side in our own struggle for independence. Maximo Gomez, who was born in the Dominican Republic, was the most outstanding of all, and due to his extraordinary merits, became the Chief of our Liberation Army. In the years prior to our Revolution, a thousand Cubans organised by the first Communist Party, fought in Spain to defend the Republic. They wrote memorable chapters for heroism which Pablo De La Torriente Brau recorded for history, until death put an early end to the life of that brilliant revolutionary journalist. That was how our internationalist spirit was forged. It reached its zenith with the Socialist Revolution.

Wherever Cuban internationalists have gone, they have set examples of respect for the dignity and sovereignty of those countries. The trust that those peoples have placed in them is the result of their irreproachable behaviour. Their exemplary selflessness and altruism is remembered everywhere.

A prominent African statesman once said in a meeting of leaders of the region: “Cuban fighters

are ready to give their lives for the liberation of our countries. The only thing they will take back with them, in exchange for that assistance to our freedom and our people's progress, are the bodies of those who died fighting for freedom.” That continent, that has experienced centuries of exploitation and plunder, has recognised the full extent of the unselfish nature of our internationalist contribution.

Now, our battle seasoned troops are returning victoriously. The joyful, happy proud faces of mothers, wives, brothers, sisters, sons and daughters—of all our people—welcome them with affection and love. Peace has been achieved with honour, and their sacrifices and efforts have been amply rewarded. Our sleep is no longer disturbed by constant concern over the fate of our troops fighting thousands of kilometers from their land.

Immediate Rehabilitation

The enemy thought that our troops' return would cause social problems, since it would be impossible to provide jobs for them all. Most of those men—aside from those who have made the military a career—had jobs here in Cuba and will go back to their old jobs or be given better ones. None of them has been forgotten, many of them already knew where they would be working even before returning home.

Of all the young men in military service who shortly after graduating from High School, volunteered for the honour of going to Angola on an internationalist mission, none has had to wait before going back to school or joining the ranks of our working people.

Our country is working hard, implementing ambitious socio-economic development programmes. The irrational laws of capitalism do not guide our actions, and every man and woman in our country has a place in education, production or services. No close relatives of those who died while fulfilling their missions, or who suffered serious injuries, have been forgotten. They have received, are receiving, and will continue to receive all the care and consideration due to them for the sacrifices made by their loved ones, and for their own devoted, selfless, generous, even heroic behaviour.

The hundreds of thousands of Cubans who carried out military or civilian internationalist missions have earned the respect of present and

future generations. They have honourably upheld our people's glorious fighting and internationalist traditions.

On their return, they have found their country engaged in a tremendous struggle for development, while continuing to confront the criminal imperialist blockade with exemplary dignity. This is in addition to the current crisis in the socialist camp from which we can only expect negative economic consequences for our country.

Reviving Law of the Jungle

People in most of those countries aren't talking about the anti-imperialist struggle or the principles of internationalism. Those words aren't even mentioned in their Press. Such concepts have been virtually removed from their political dictionaries. Meanwhile capitalist values are gaining unheard of strength in those societies.

Capitalism means unequal terms of trade with the peoples of the Third World, the exacerbation of individual selfishness and national chauvinism, the reign of irrationality and chaos in investment and production, the ruthless sacrifice of the peoples on behalf of blind economic laws, the survival of the fittest, the exploitation of man by man, a situation of everybody for himself in the social sphere. Capitalism implies many more things—prostitution, drugs, gambling, begging, unemployment, abysmal inequalities among citizens, the depletion of natural resources, the poisoning of the air, seas, rivers and forests and especially the plundering of the underdeveloped nations by the industrialised capitalist countries. In the past, it meant colonialism, now it means neo-colonising billions of human beings, using the most sophisticated and cheapest, most effective and most ruthless economic and political methods.

Capitalism, its market economy, its values, its coteries and its methods can never pull socialism out of its present difficulties or rectify whatever mistakes have been made. Most of those difficulties are the result not just of errors but also the mighty blockade and isolation imposed on the socialist countries by imperialism and the major capitalist powers which have monopolised most of the world's wealth. And because of the most advanced technologies by plundering their colonies, exploiting the working class and promoting a large-scale brain drain from countries that have not yet developed.

Devastating wars were unleashed against the first socialist State taking a toll of millions of lives and destroying most of the means of production. Like a phoenix, the first Socialist State had to rise more than once from its ashes. It has performed

great services to mankind by defeating Fascism and decisively supporting the liberation movements in countries still under colonial rule. Now all this is being forgotten.

It is disgusting to see how many people, even in the USSR itself, are engaged in denying and destroying the history-making feats and extraordinary merits of that heroic people. That is not the way to rectify and overcome the undeniable errors made by a Revolution that emerged from Czarist authoritarianism in an enormous, backward, poor country. We should not blame Lenin now for having chosen Czarist Russia as the place for the biggest revolution in history.

Thus we did not hesitate to stop the circulation of certain Soviet publications that are full of poison against the USSR itself, and Socialism. You can see that imperialism, reactionary forces and the counter-revolution are responsible for that tone. Some of those publications have already started calling for an end to the fair and equitable trade relations that we established between the USSR and Cuba during the Cuban revolutionary process. They want the USSR to begin practising unequal trade with Cuba by selling its products to us at ever higher prices, and buying our agricultural produce and raw materials at ever lower prices, just as the United States does with the Third World countries. In short they want the USSR to join the US blockade against Cuba.

U.S Undermining of Socialism

Imperialism's undermining actions and the systematic destruction of the values of Socialism, combined with the mistakes that have been made, have accelerated the destabilising process in the Eastern European socialist countries. The United States designed and implemented a long-term policy of treating each country differently and undermining Socialism from within.

Imperialism and capitalist powers cannot hide their glee over the way things are turning out. They are convinced—not without reason—that, at this point, the Socialist bloc has virtually ceased to exist. Groups of US citizens, including US Presidential Advisers, are programming capitalist development in some of those Eastern European countries right now. A recent news despatch reported that they were fascinated by that "exciting experience". One of them a US Government official, favoured the application in Poland of a programme similar to the New Deal, with which Roosevelt tried to alleviate capitalism's severe crisis. This would be to help the 600,000 Polish workers who will lose their jobs in 1990, and

half of the country's 17.3 million workers who will have to be retrained and change jobs as a result of the implementation of a market economy. Imperialism and the NATO capitalist powers are persuaded—not without reason—that, at this point, the WARSAW Pact no longer exists and that societies that are corroded and undermined from within will not be able to resist.

Why This US Backing?

It has been stated that Socialism must be improved. No one can deny this principle, which is inherent and permanently applicable to every human endeavour. But, can Socialism be improved by forsaking Marxism-Leninism's most basic principles? Why must the so-called reforms be along capitalist lines? If those ideas are truly revolutionary, as some claim, why do they receive the imperialist leader's unanimous enthusiastic support?

In an amazing statement, the President of the United States described himself as the number-one advocate of the doctrines currently being applied in many countries in the Socialist camp.

History has never recorded an instance of truly revolutionary ideas receiving the enthusiastic support of the leader of the most powerful, aggressive and greedy empire known to mankind.

During Comrade Gorbachev's visit to Cuba in April this year, a visit during which we had a frank indepth exchange of views, I publicly expressed my opinion to the National Assembly that if any Socialist country wants to build capitalism, its right to do so should be respected, just as we demand complete respect for any capitalist country's right to build Socialism.

I believe that revolution cannot be imported or exported. A socialist state cannot be founded through artificial insemination or by means of an embryo transplant. A revolution requires certain conditions within society, and the people in each individual nation are the only ones who can create it. These ideas do not run counter to the solidarity that all revolutionaries can, and extend to one another.

Moreover a revolution is a process that may advance or regress. A process that may even be frustrated. But above all, Communists must be courageous and revolutionary. Communists are duty bound to struggle under all circumstances, no matter how adverse they may be. The Paris Commune struggled and died in the defence of their ideas. The banners of the Revolution and of Socialism are not surrendered without a fight. Only cowards and the demoralised surrender—never Communists and other revolutionaries.

Call To Join In Plunder

Now imperialism is urging the European Socialist countries to become recipients of its surplus capital, to develop capitalism and to join in plundering the Third World countries. It is a well-known fact that a large part of the developed capitalist world's wealth comes from the unequal terms of trade it maintains with the Third World countries. For centuries, those were plundered as colonies, millions of their sons and daughters were enslaved. Their gold, silver and other mineral resources were exhausted. They were pitilessly exploited and underdevelopment was the most direct and clearest consequence of colonialism.

Now those nations are being squeezed dry by means of interest payments on an endless unpayable debt, while ridiculously low prices are paid for their commodities and they are forced to pay ever higher prices for the industrial goods they import. Financial and human resources are constantly being drawn away from those nations through the flight of capital and the brain drain. Their trade is blocked by dumping, high tariffs, import quotas, synthetic substitutes produced through advanced technological process and subsidies for the developed capitalist countries' products when they are not competitive.

Now imperialism is inviting the European Socialist countries to join it in this colossal plunder, an invitation which seem not to displease the theoreticians of capitalist reforms. Thus in many of those countries, no one speaks about the tragedy of the Third World, and their discontented multitudes are guided towards capitalism and anti-communism and in one country toward Pan-Germanism such developments may even lead to fascist trends. The prize promised by imperialism is a share of the plunder wrested from our peoples, the only way of building capitalist consumer societies.

Right now the United States and the other capitalist powers are much more interested in investing in Eastern Europe than in any other part of the world. What resources can the Third World—in which billions of people live in sub-human conditions—expect from such developments?

The 'Peace' of Neo-Colonialism

They speak to us peace. But what kind of peace? Of peace between the major powers, while imperialism reserves the right to intervene in and attack the Third World countries. There are many examples of this.

The imperialist Government of the United States demands that no one help the Salvadoran revolutionaries, and tries to blackmail the USSR into

Orissa Bamboo Cutters on Struggle

The Orissa Forest Mazdoor Union (CITU) has issued the following statement on the condition of the Bamboo cutters, demanding better wages:

Despite nationalisation of Bamboo forests, the Forest Corporation management has perpetrated exploitation of labourers engaged in the Bamboo forests, often unscrupulously. The Corporation defies all labour laws and denies minimum incentives and wages to the labourers as applicable by law. The officials of the Corporation are busy looting national property worth several lakhs of rupees by producing false vouchers, stealing subsidised food articles and looting valuable forest property by favouring the forest contractors dishonestly and shamelessly.

The Corporation authorities are indulging in activities for their own benefits and selfish ends exploiting the poor Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe forest workers ruthlessly. The working of the Corporation clearly exposes the negative attitude of the management towards the labourers as they have denied work to 75 mates of Surada area, who had been working for more than eight years in the forests. The Corporation has retrenched them from last June, while appropriating huge amounts, by making unlawful pacts with some corrupt officials and local politicians of vested interests. The Corporation authorities are still defying the labour laws even after they were found guilty and penalised in two cases in the Surada Court.

In support of the justified cause of the labourers and to strengthen the movement against the dishonest and corrupt officials the CITU came forward on 7.11.89 and organised a demonstration before the Tahasil office, Surada. The CITU demanded immediate fulfilment of the following eleven point charter of demands :

1. Payment of Rs 1.50 per bamboo bundle, Rs. 25/- for dragging upto 100 mtrs, Rs 12/- to rebundle 100 bundle.
2. To reinstate all the mates immediately.
3. Introduction of attendance register for all labourers.
4. Wage in fifteen days and passing in seven days.
5. Payment for the Burnt Bamboos.
6. Supply of subsidised food and end to all corruptions in the process.
7. E.S.I medical facilities to all.
8. Payment of gratuity.
9. A minimum of 8.33 percent bonus.
10. Wages on all Govt sanctioned holidays.
11. Seasonal benefits to all labourers who completed 240 days.

More than two thousand workers participated in the demonstration. The Orissa Forest Mazdoor Union has decided to step up the struggle till the demands are conceded.

Executive Committee Meeting Of The Fertilizer Workers' Federation Of India

The Executive Committee meeting of FWWI was held on 18th and 19th December '89 at New Delhi. The meeting welcomed the defeat of the Cong (I) in the parliamentary elections and formation of V.P. Singh ministry at the centre.

The FWWI submitted a memorandum to the Deputy Prime Minister who is incharge of Agriculture ministry. The memorandum dealt in details as to how the previous Cong (I) govt. neglected the public sector fertilizer industry and allowed inroad of private sector in big way and did nothing for rehabilitation/revamping/expansion of the old but potential pioneer public sector plants. Not only dependence on import was the policy of the previous govt, it took a decision to set up fertilizer factories in the Gulf countries jointly with the multinational companies operating in those countries. In pointing out the importance of the fertilizer industry the memorandum mentioned that as per Planning Commission's estimate the fertilizer consumption in our country will have to be increased from its present quantum of about 100 lakh tonnes to about 200 lakh tonnes by 2000 A.D. to achieve a projected foodgrain production of 235 million M.T. to feed an estimated population of about 100 crores.

The FWWI has urged the govt. to reverse the wrong policies of the previous govt. and demanded (a) Setting up of more public sector fertilizer factories under the 8th Plan reversing the policy of the earlier Govt. to promote private sector in fertilizer industry and increasing dependence on import. (b) Immediate accordance of approval and release of funds for the revamping of HFCL plants as per the recommendations of the expert committee for which due detailed proposals are already lying with the Ministry (c) Expansion of the existing public sector plants particularly at Gorakhpur and immediate positive decision on the proposals submitted on Sindri by the FCI management.

The meeting expressed strong resentment over the inordinate delay in according approval of the draft wage agreement signed about six months back and adopted a resolution to the effect that if the wage agreement is not cleared by 10th January '90 then the Federation would go for agitation at all India level.

The meeting decided to hold the next conference of the Federation at Sindri (Bihar) in the third week of April '90.

Railwaymen Hail New Govt; Hope Fair Deal

Doubtless a sizeable number of railwaymen refused to give electoral support to the Cong(I) in the last Parliamentary elections, voted for the opposition forces, and thus contributed to the process of dislodgement of Cong(I) Government led by Rajiv Gandhi. It is only natural that they will be happy at the political change and welcome the new Govt, hoping a fair deal from it.

The major railway trade unions, in fact all organisations other than those under the influence of the erstwhile ruling party, overtly or covertly expressed themselves in favour of a change. The All India Railwaymen's Federation (AIRF) for one, meeting in its annual convention at Calcutta in the 3rd week of October adopted a resolution in which it was stated "Convention resolves that public opinion should be created and the workers should be educated to the various excesses and faulty policies of the Govt. which are responsible for creating a chaotic economic situation...and also to act collectively and decisively to cause a change in the system so that people do not have to suffer from the same maladies, deprivations and inequalities continuously and perpetually". Although to an outsider the real intention of the organisation as sought to be expressed will not be perfectly clear, but to the cadres of the organisation, to those who were aware of the context in which the resolution was adopted, the discussion preceding its adoption, it was a call to organise campaign against the erstwhile ruling party and in favour of the opposition. The All India Loco Running Staff Association (AILRSA) is believed to have instructed its workers to act effectively to ensure ouster of the anti-labour anti-people and corrupt regime led by Rajiv Gandhi in the course of the Parliamentary elections. Similar instructions were also believed to have been issued by some other categorical organisations. South-Central Railway Employees Union issued an appeal to its members to vote down Cong(I). According to our report, the workers of these organisations faithfully carried out the instruction in many places. Some of these organisations have already come out to greet the new Government and to apprise it of the grave injustice done to them by the previous regime, hoping for fair deal from the new Govt.

New Govt. Welcomed

AIRF : The monthly journal of the AIRF in its December 1989 issue writes, "The General elections are over, the old, corrupt and disastrous Government

is out. The new NF Govt with Shri V.P Singh as Prime Minister has taken over. It is the victory of the Indian people". Referring to the resolution of the Calcutta convention from which we have quoted above, the journal adds "The AIRF. has welcomed the formation of the NF Government under the leadership of Shri V.P. Singh from whom the people have high hopes, and has pledged support to the Government in curbing price rise, including Right to Work in Constitution and for settling problems of the workers.

"The AIRF General Secretary Shri J.P. Chaubey has in a letter congratulated Shri V.P. Singh on his taking over as Prime Minister and has offered full cooperation for the success of his Government, which will surmount the challenges with political will, conviction and courage."

AILRSA : On December 4, S.K. Dhar, Secretary General, AILRSA sent a telegram to Shri V.P. Singh extending hearty congratulations on his assuming office as the new Prime Minister of India. It was stated in the telegramme, that the railwaymen, particularly the loco running staff, being the worst victim of repression under the previous regime which had dismissed/removed hundreds of railwaymen arbitrarily by application of Rule 14(ii) and Art 311(2) (a)(b)(c) of the Constitution without giving any scope for self-defence, played an active role in bringing about the change. Expressing appreciation of the new Government's policy declared by the Prime Minister in course of his address to the nation on December 3, the telegramme also expressed the hope that "dismissed railway employees would immediately be taken back and arbitrary provisions under Art 311 of Constitution be deleted."

On December 7, in a telegramme sent to Shri George Fernandes, Dhar congratulated him on his assuming office as the Minister for Railways, and expressed his hope that the industrial relations in the railways would be put back on the right track. He expressed hope for early reinstatement of dismissed employees.

On December 20, according to AILRSA press release, S.K. Dhar made a courtesy call on the new Railway Minister George Fernandes at his residence and submitted a memorandum on issues demanding attention of the new Govt. where in course of cordial talks Shri Fernandes assured Dhar of early action in regard to reinstatement of dismissed/removed employees. He also assured of action on other issues soon.

A formal discussion with the Minister was held

on December 23.

Eleventh Conference of AILRSA

In the mean time initial steps have started being taken by the Central Executive of AILRSA for holding successfully the annual conference of the organisation, which has been scheduled to be held in Delhi on February 19-21, 1990. According to LRSA sources a large amount has already been collected by the LRSA of Northern Railway which is hosting the conference while collection of fund in other railways is also in progress. These Zonal Units have been asked to send some amount in advance. Conference hall has been booked and search for appropriate accommodation for delegates is going on. A meeting of representatives of different trade unions and other mass organisations has been convened in Delhi on December 28 to constitute a strong reception committee for proper management of the Conference.

Ferozpur Divisional LRSA Conference

The 8th annual conference of the Ferozpur Divisional unit of AILRSA was recently held at Ludhiana an important Centre of railway trade union movement in the Division. Nearly one hundred delegates and visitors attended the Conference. Among the invitees who attended the conference were Y.P. Kohli, the Treasurer of the Zonal Unit (Northern Zone) and R.C. Gupta, Divisional Secretary, Delhi Division. After flag hoisting by Joginder Singh, Divisional President, Chairman of the Reception Committee Dev Raj, Jt. Secretary, Technical Services Union, Punjab welcomed the delegates. The delegate session under the presidentship of Joginder Singh was inaugurated by Y.P. Kohli. In all 14 delegates took part in the discussion on Secretary's report presented by Harcharan Singh, Divl. Secretary, after which it was adopted unanimously. Divisional executive for the next term was elected unanimously with Manoharlal Tangri as President, Har Charan Singh as Secretary, and Baldev Singh as Treasurer.

SE. Rly.

Meetings of the Zonal Working Committees of LRSA and AIRF were held at Adra on 8th & 9th December respectively. Both the meetings were addressed by S.K. Dhar, Secretary General, AILRSA who in course of his speeches, explained the task of railway trade union movement in the changed situation. Decision was taken to meet the Divisional and Zonal authorities on the question of reinstatement of 14(ii) victims and other issues.

CLW Union Delegation Meets Railway Minister :

A deputation met the Hon'ble Rly. Minister, George Fernandes led by Basudeb Acharya, M.P., Haradhan Roy, M.P., with the General Secretary Nirmal Mukherjee, Secretaries R. N. Singh and Joseph Bhattacharya of CLW Labour Union, Chittaranjan on December 22 for highlighting the following demands and their settlement :

Regarding recognition of Union at CLW and other production units, Rly. Minister explained that some legislations are going to be adopted and a seminar on 8 & 9 January 1990 on this issue and workers participation in management is going to be held by the Govt.

A mass petition and memorandum was also submitted in which it was argued elaborately to (i) withdraw protected area ; (ii) stop off-loading ; (iii) introduce city allowance ; (iv) reinstate all the victimised employees under 14/11 rules ; (v) to stop re-examination for DI khalasis which was already held on 3.9.89; (vi) to withdraw punitive measures, wage cut on account of 30th August Bharat Bandh and others.

It was also explained to him that workers have already participated in the strike ballots for achieving the demands but because of the assumption of new Govt, the union has kept it in abeyance although the G.M / CLW recommended for recognition of union through secret ballot long back in 1984.

Mr. Fernandes assured to look into the matters at the earliest and from union side it was emphasised that all imports should be stopped and CLW is capable of producing all types of electric and diesel locomotives for the requirement of the country.

BEFI Launches Struggles

Ashis Sen, M. P., General Secretary of the Bank Employees Federation of India has issued the following communication to launch struggles in pursuance of the demands of the bank employees :

The Lok Sabha elections are over. An authoritarian regime which earned wrath of the toiling people and the common masses for its anti-people policies has fallen. A new set-up opposed to these policies has come to power. Leftist forces have tendered unconditional support to this set up. Let us look forward for commencement of, under the aegis of the new Government, a climate conducive to the interests of the working class, democratic values, communal amity, national integrity, eradication of

corruption and peace in social life. Let us also expect that our disputes over wage revision in the banking industry will receive proper attention of the new Government and a solution will emerge.

In view of the elections we had kept withheld further agitational programmes, subsequent to 24 October 1989 on which date massive dharnas were organised all over the country, on the demands formulated by the General Council. As it appears, the bankers are still not amenable to the legitimate and deserving claims of bank employees. Having gained a position of advantage because of the 5th bipartite settlement by depressing a proper wage-revision and by securing agreement of the signatory organisations to various anti-employee provisions, they are now playing a game to consolidate their position and perpetuate the injustice meted out to bankmen.

The office bearers at headquarters met on December 1. The situation has been reviewed. It has been decided that the movement for improvement over the 5th bipartite wage formulations, which was held in abeyance for a while due the elections, should now be pursued and gradually levelled up to higher forms. The Central Committee will meet towards the last week of December 1989 or first week of January 1990.

Meanwhile, the following programme is released to initiate the fresh round of movement :

14 December 1989 : Centralised rallies at all cities and towns.

21 December 1989 : Mass deputations to management at all bank offices

All units are advised to take up the matter in right earnest to mobilise the employees in the perspective of an intensified agitation including strike action for realisation of the demands. The issue of BEFI's participation in negotiations shall have to be made a focal point along with highlighting the demands on wages.

Wage Settlement In IDPL Delayed

The following statement has been issued by P.K. Ganguly, Secretary of Centre of Indian Trade Unions:

The final settlement of the wage negotiations, in Indian Drugs & Pharmaceuticals (IDPL), a Central Public Sector Undertaking, was further delayed.

The management of IDPL made an inordinate delay in arriving at wage settlement in IDPL which expired on 30th September, 1988. While in all the other major public sector undertakings the wage settlements had been completed more than six months ago, in IDPL it got stalled due to the management's insistence on the BPE guidelines, despite the fact that it was rejected by the workers long ago and it was thrown overboard in all the other undertakings.

The management had called the wage negotiations at Hyderabad on 15th & 16th of December 1989 and invited the central leaders at the apex level of the Central Trade Unions to participate in it. But in this meeting also the management harped on the BPE guidelines and wasted almost one full day over it. However due to the strong and united resistance of the trade unions the management had to agree to discuss the wage and other relevant matters at par with other public sector undertakings as demanded by the trade unions.

Yet, although understanding could be arrived at on several other relevant matters, the main component regarding revision of minimum wages, fitments, interim relief, FDA, etc, remained unsettled. The trade unions gave their minimum final proposal within the frame work of agreements arrived at in other public sector undertakings.

The management failed to give their reaction to the proposals and sought further time for finalisation of the agreement. It was ultimately decided to hold the last and final negotiation at Madras on 2nd January, 1990.

The discontent of the workers who are already on the path of agitation grew more. In case the management fails to make the final agreement at Madras on the wage component at par with other public sector undertakings the workers will be bound to launch direct action programme all over the country.

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Was it a Disaster

(We are publishing hereunder a report published by Vyavsayik Swasthya Suraksha Mandal, Baroda on environmental pollution and Mercury Poisoning caused by dumping of Mercury waste at Nandesari by Gujarat Alkalies & Chemicals Ltd.—Ed.)

Newspapers in Baroda ran headlines on 25th June: Mercury bazar at Nandesari: A big boom etc. No, Nandesari is not a business place nor is it a mining area from where mercury is found.

Where did the mercury come from? Who were the sellers? Who were the buyers? Those who were selling the mercury were hundreds of poor, residing nearby and the buyers were the affluent, who would wait on their parked scooters on the roadside with cash in their pockets.

But the question is—from where did it come? It was Gujarat Alkalies & Chemicals Ltd. which manufactured Sodium Hydroxide and Chlorine by Mercury cell technology. Gujarat Pollution Control Board had permitted them to dump their solid waste at this site. The site is owned by Gujarat Industrial Development Corporation. Last year company decided to discard mercury cell technology and go for membrane cell technology.

The plant was shut down in June 1989 for technology transfer. In the process huge quantity of solid waste was dumped at Nandesari, 3 kms. from the factory. Some plastic picker-boys noticed something glittering in the mud. Curiosity took them there to find mercury. It was easy for them to separate mercury from other materials. Only water and a small utensil was required. Then they would collect the mercury in a bottle. Slowly others came to know and within a day or two there were hundreds of people searching for mercury in the mud amidst unbearably foul smell. Most of them were staying in surrounding villages and working in one industry or the other, some at Nandesari. The company spokesman told the reporter that "not more than 4 kg would have gone in the waste." But the reporter notes that while he went to get reports at the site, during only one hour he saw at least 12 kg of mercury being sold. One man, alone bought more than 200 kg. of mercury in a few days at Rs. 26,000/-. The company spokesman said, waste does not contain more than 15 PPM of mercury but the Pollution Advisory Committee of Nandesari Industries Association (Employees Association), said, it contained 7% mercury. After the uproar in newspapers the company declared that not more than 10 kg of mercury had gone into waste. Managing Director, Mr P.K. Das informed reporters that, "We had 80 tonnes of mercury which was sold out to Wimco and Mahar-

ashtra Steel. We have checked our stocks and it is found OK". People kept themselves very busy looking for more and more Mercury.

There was no fencing nor any caution board. The show went on for at least one week. Then came the police, vacated the area and GACL arranged its security guards to see that no one collected mercury. Nobody knows how much mercury was dumped there, how much was collected and how much is still left behind. It is alleged that a contractor working for GACL was supplying cash to buy away the mercury. It true, what were his intentions, whether he was alone or had he any partners? Was this a scandal or a genuine accident?

Mercury affects the body in many ways. Main targets are brain, kidney, and liver. Signs and symptoms of mercury poisoning include: cough, chest-pain, dyspnoea, bronchitis, tremors, psychic disorders such as insomnia, irritability, indecision, headache, fatigue, muscle pain, stomatitis, digestive disorders, anorexia, weight loss etc. Minamata methyl mercury poisoning case is well known and need not be described at length.

We are worried about the far reaching consequences. In days to come mercury left behind will spread to reach water sources in the soil, contaminate land and through crops and cattle will reach human bodies. We appeal to the environmentalists to pressurise the government to enquire into the matter.

CITU Wins in BEL Secret Ballot

The CITU has won a significant battle in the secret ballot for union recognition in BEL, Ghaziabad. The ballot was taken on 22nd December 1989 to determine the collective bargaining agent both for the local and national level negotiations. The CITU has come first securing 43.71% of the total votes cast. BMS affiliated union ranked second with 42.33% of the votes. INTUC union got 131 votes which comes to 5.6%.

In a surprise development the AITUC withdrew its candidate in favour of BMS. The AITUC-BMS combine got the blessings of the management making the INTUC insignificant. Management exercised all possible measures to manipulate the ballot result in favour of the BMS. But all the efforts of the BMS-AITUC combine and the management were grounded by the workers. The CITU came out victorious. The BMS of course could muster a substantial number of votes.

Another ominous situation was the playing of caste and communal cards desperately by the management to dislodge the CITU, and AITUC leadership willingly subscribed to the game. In this context it may be recalled that the AITUC leadership in Bangalore had opposed secret ballot in BEL, Bangalore to block the entry of CITU in the negotiations. All these developments are paradoxical to their own commitments. Will the AITUC leadership in BEL think over ?

US Invasion on Panama

The U.S. military invasion against Panama on December 20 has sparked worldwide condemnation. Except Margaret Thatcher, who has made Britain a satellite of America, no other Government has come out in open support of US action. Starting from the neighbouring Latin American countries headed by Cuba and Nicaragua, a number of Western European countries, the OAS, USSR and Peoples Republic of China and India have denounced the naked US aggression.

US President George Bush himself ordered the invasion on the plea of protection of American citizens and asked the US army to bring General Noriega, the Panamanian head, under arrest to USA for his trial in US Court on the charge of drug trafficking. But the real cause of aggression lies elsewhere. It is prompted out of fear from the emerging nationalism and U.S. agony of maintaining political and military hegemony over the Panama Canal which connects the Atlantic and Pacific oceans and would come under the control of Panama in 2000 A.D. The struggle of Panamanian people are for independence from the imperial interests of the United States to extend the lease of the canal beyond 2000 A.D., and for the return of their rightful sovereign authority over the Panama Canal. Despite two coup attempts made earlier under American plans, General Noriega refused to bow down before the Bush administration. The growing consolidation of the Latin American countries against the U.S. imperialists in the region became a serious concern for the Bush administration.

Thousands of U.S. army under air coverage started storming into the Panama City on 19th December. The Military H. Q. of Panama and the civilian population had been the target of shelling. A number of important installations and public property were raged into the ground. Hundreds of Panamanian troops and civil population were killed. Organised arsons and lootings were conducted.

The campaign which had been taken up after long preparations was originally scheduled to be mopped up within three days. But resistance continued for days together and General Noriega managed to escape arrest by the U.S. forces. He ultimately took refuge in the Vatican Embassy at Panama. Bush has refused to withdraw the U. S. troops in near future.

Panamanian invasion was not the lone in Latin America by the U.S. army. Few years ago the U.S. army had been sent to occupy Grenada and it has ousted the democratically elected Government there. But Panama invasion has been the biggest military intervention by U.S. after Vietnam. The U.S. action has once again revealed its dream for world domination and subversion of the independence of the Third

World Countries. This time U. S. isolation was almost total. They could survive censure in U. N. Security Council mobilising the Veto power of Britain and France only. But the Latin American and NAM countries moved similar motion to the General Council which the U.S. administration may find impossible to resist.

Air Hostesses meet Minister of Civil Aviation

A delegation of three Unions of the Indian Airlines and Air India from Bombay led by Dipen Ghosh M.P. (Rajya Sabha) and Ms Subhasini Ali, M.P. (Lok Sabha) of C.P.I.(M) met the Minister for Civil Aviation, Arif Mohammad Khan on December 22. The Union representatives were Hemant Kumar, Secretary, Air Corporation Employee's Union (AC EU); K P C Pillai of the Indian Aircraft Technicians Association (IATA) Bombay; Ms Ruheen Khambatta, President of Air India Hostesses' Association (AIHA) and Mrs Veera Mahajan also of AIHA.

In an hour long meeting the delegation apprised the Minister the various problems faced by the employees and the Corporation arising out of the vindictive approach of the two managements. The help and assistance given to communal forces at Bombay to organise themselves including monetary assistance, was brought to the notice of the Minister. The extravagant expenditure amounting to nearly Rs. 100 crores by Air India on the New Corporate image and its futility were also informed to him.

The Unions also expressed dissatisfaction over the attitude of the Air India management and the Indian Airlines management to circumvent the decisions of the government to increase the retirement age of the air hostesses from 35 years to 58 years by introducing a compulsory annual medical examination for air hostesses alone after their attaining the age of 35 years.

The Air Corporation Employees Union (ACEU) sought the intervention of the minister to discontinue the forced deduction of membership fees from the salaries of Air India employees by the management of Air India to the minority recognised Air India Employees Guild. All the unions listed specific cases of victimisation of their office-bearers and activists and demanded an immediate and to it.

The Minister gave a patient hearing to the delegation and assured that he would look into the grievances and ensure that all victimisations are withdrawn.

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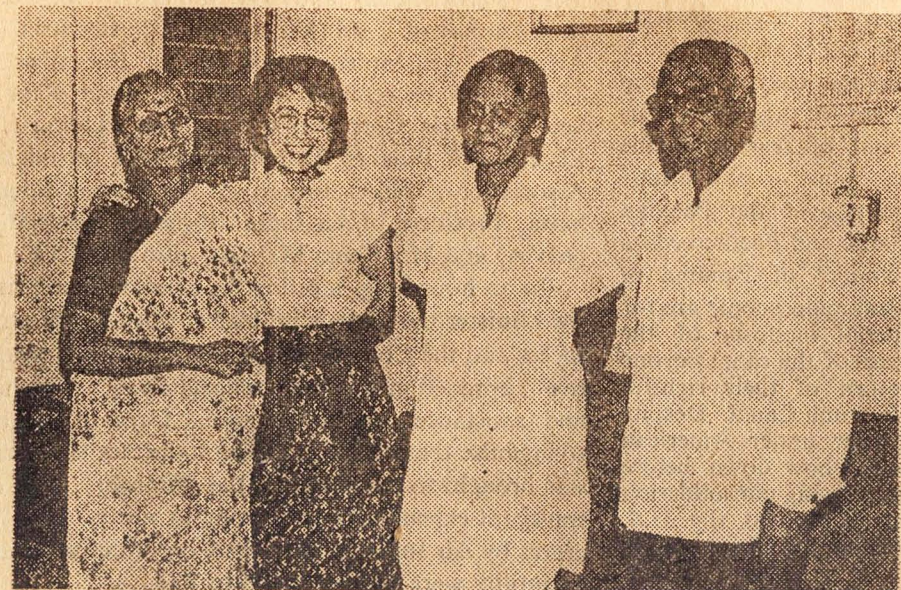
若年定年制を廃止 インドのスチュワーデス2人

インド政府は十月十六日、インド国営航空（国際線）の客室乗務員の男女差別廃止を発表しました。その四日後、「やっとなね。おめでとー」大滝昌興さんとルヒーン・カンバータさんは、固い握手をかわしました。二人はインド航空にそれぞれ十六年、十九年勤務するベテラン・スチュワーデスです。

ガンジー 首相に直接

成田からやってきた大滝さんとカンバータさんが、それぞれの勤務の間、デリーのインド労働センター（CITU）を訪れての再会でした。そこからCITUのパンデ委員長が「これはインドと日本のたが女性差別の共同の勝利」といふ喜びを述べました。

カンバータさんは、その先頭にあつた活動家です。CITUも支援し、彼女はインド共産党（マルクス主義）の議員が政府を追及しています。カンバータさんはガンジー首相に直接訴えたこともありました。



ニューデリーで
三浦一天特派員

他の職場の 仲間に励み

そんなカンバータさんは、重要な勝利です。でも、大滝さん（左から2人目）とカンバータさん（その隣）の男性はパルデ委員。左隣の女性はインド民主婦人連盟のヒマール・ラナデーさん。

たたかう女性、共同の力よ

昇進などを いぜん差別

問題はまだまだ残っています。インド政府の今回の指示は、定年での差別を廃止して男性乗務員と同じ五十八歳までとしたものの、四十五歳以後は新たに「身体適応検査」を受けるとの条件つき。結婚後四年以内の出産禁止も廃止しましたが、新採用にあつたことを新入者は採用しないことを新入女性に押しつけています。また、乗務員の差別はないものの、女性にはパイロットになれないなど昇進で明らか差別があります。

望月さんに 二重の喜び

この翌日、デリーにいた大滝さんに目から電話が入りました。十月に四十六歳の誕生日を迎えることで、九月初めに会社側から地上勤務に配属転換の指示が出て、これを拒否して法廷闘争をおこなっていた望月さんに、会社側が配属転換を撤回したの知らせでした。望月さんにとっては、職場復帰、勤務継続、二重の勝利でした。

Pictured above are Mosami Ohtaki, Japanese airhostess, an employee of Air India and Ruheen Khambata, President of Air India Hostesses Association with Vimal Ranadive and M.K. Pandhe, Secretaries of CITU. The above report was published in the Japanese Communist party paper, Akahata. A report was also published in the Working Class November issue,

くわんがく家庭