

Proletarian Era

Volume 36 No. 20
JUNE 15, 2003

Organ of the SOCIALIST UNITY CENTRE OF INDIA
Founder Editor-in-Chief : COMRADE SHIBDAS GHOSH

Price : Rs. 2.00

Iraq let down

Ignominious Surrender of UN

After occupying Iraq through wholly illegal war defying world public opinion, now the US-UK aggressor duo has completed preparing the groundwork for achieving its real object of exploiting and plundering that country in unhindered way and establishing further imperialistic hegemony in Middle East. In a meeting on 22.5.03 the UN Security Council virtually unanimously — only Syria abstaining — lifted its 13-year old sanctions on Iraq, and what is most shameful, in another resolution (No.1483) accepted the illegal occupation of the country by the US-UK imperialist aggressors!

Since occupying Baghdad the US, even after its ignominious failure to detect any weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in Iraq and unable to trace Saddam Hussain

was trying all along to make the UN lift the 13-year old sanctions — imposed once at its behest with UN rubber-stamp, resulting in death of lakhs of Iraqi children and untold sufferings of the Iraqi people — while France, Russia, Germany including the UK had been opposing this move after the war ended. Now they easily went along with USA. What does it indicate? It is a fact, that the first three 'champions' of peace and justice complied with US wishes on 22nd May in UN with the same imperialist interest for which they protested the act of invasion before and during the rampage on Iraq. That time their compulsion behind their protest was their interest in Iraqi oil. They strongly expected that once the UN officially accepted arms inspection team's report declaring Iraq free from WMD,



Police arrest a blockader in front of the International Department of Bechtel Corporation in Sanfransisco, USA on 5th June. The company has received an order of \$680 million in the so-called reconstruction of Iraq. The protesters demand scrapping the order and giving the money to Iraqi people. (Times of India, 7.6.03)

sanction would be lifted and they would get considerable share of oil trade with Iraq. But possible

invasion of Iraq by US-UK combine would jeopardize this prospect.
Contd on page 7

Claim and Reality

CPI(M) Leader's Bluster of Land Reform and People's Welfare

Sitaram Yechuri, a Polit Bureau member of the CPI(M) has written an article captioned "Red is the colour" in Hindusthan Times of 24th May, 2003. In the said article he has tried to show that as against the anti-incumbency factor generally influencing election results, West Bengal under CPI(M) rule is an exception. Here the "government works for people's welfare", and so the people have sided with the CPI(M) in thwarting all attempts of the forces of reaction to dislodge them from power. Such popular support has been reflected in the recently concluded

Panchayat elections as well. That is why, the CPI(M) has been holding the governmental rein in the state for the last 26 years. In support of his contention, Shri Yechuri has given us some numerical figures and arguments as well. In his words, "As a result of the land reforms implemented by the Left Front government, nearly 11 lakh acres of land hitherto held illegally by landlords and rural vested interests were acquired and legally distributed among the landless poor. Even if we were to put a value of Rs. 1 lakh per acre (which is an underestimate) then this

land distribution means a transfer of assets worth Rs. 11,000 crore to the poor. Such a massive transfer of assets to the poor is unprecedented anywhere else in independent India." He further added, "In every election, an attempt is made to reverse these gains that have accrued to the people. By defeating the Left Front, the erstwhile landlords and rural vested interests seek to recapture these lands and resources once again. By capturing the panchayats, these sections hope to doctor the records and drag the poor into litigation that they can ill-afford and through manipulation,

recapture the land that has legally been distributed to them". Obviously, Shri Yechuri's has been an attempt to prove that such has been the case in the recently concluded West Bengal panchayat elections as well when the forces of reaction were desperate in defeating the CPI(M). The unprecedented violence and terror one witnessed during the panchayat polls was perpetrated by these vested interests and so in Shri Yechuri's language, there is "a battle between the exploiters and the exploited" in which the CPI(M) represents the exploited.

The claim of the CPI(M) leader and the factual position

Let us see how factual are the claims of the CPI(M) leader and on the anvil of facts, proofs and logic, how far tenable is the conclusion of his about CPI(M)'s defending the poor against the oppressed class. We begin with the much trumpeted land reforms and the disposition of the rural gentry. Shri Yechuri has not thought it necessary to substantiate his points with supportive documents, reports or published facts. Perhaps he, like most of the echelons in the CPI(M)
Contd. on page 2

The Hoax of Land Reforms

Contd. from page 1

hierarchy, feels that whatever they say is taken as factual and true! But we, who try to follow the rational course of debate and argumentation, would be basing on some relevant documentary evidences. Let us first take up the point of acquiring and distribution of illegally held vested land. Shri Yechuri is aware that the West Bengal government had appointed a Mukherjee-Banerjee Commission in 1992 to prepare a report on the land reforms and Panchayat system. The findings of the said Mukherjee-Banerjee Commission, published in 1993 under the title "New horizons for West Bengal's Panchayats", unfortunately do not corroborate to what Shri Yechuri claims. The Commission quoting from 'Land Reforms in West Bengal Statistical Report - VII' published by the Board of Revenue (1982) as on 31.12.1981, showed that the vested agricultural land totalled 12,49,177.76 acres (p-23). Out of this, "During the years 1967-70, a massive drive had been undertaken under the first and second United Front governments to detect and vest lands that had been clandestinely retained by the landowners beyond their entitlements. Over a million acres of good agricultural lands had thereby been taken over. This considerably weakened the hold of the big landlords, who had traditionally led rural society because of their dominant economic and social position. Thus when the first Panchayat elections took place, the power structure in the rural areas had already altered substantially" (ibid, p-3)

The role of the First and Second United Front Governments (in 1967 and 1969)

What is then revealed is out of 12.49 lakh acres, over 10 lakh acres of land were detected in the 22 months of the First two United Front Governments. So the CPI(M)-led Front could, at best, boast of detection of

2.5 lakh acres over a period of 26 years of uninterrupted rule. Even this claim is not beyond doubt. The same Commission observed: "During our district visits, everywhere the figure of vested agricultural land was shown as less than the corresponding figure in the published Statistical Report of 1982. No satisfactory explanation was forthcoming for the discrepancies". Still, if Shri Yechuri and his party are given the benefit of doubt, yet the question remains as to why the CPI(M) led government could detect only 2.5 lakh acre of land in long 26 years when the previous two United Front Governments had the record of unearthing 10 lakh acres in just 22 months?

We know Shri Yechuri would feel a little embarrassed at this but then we are helpless. Would it then be illogical to conclude that the CPI(M) was not at all serious in such land detection lest they should invite the wrath of the rural gentry and jeopardize their election prospects in the villages? Otherwise, the statistics would have spoken differently and several more lakh acres of land would have been vested with the landless poor. Shri Yechuri and CPI(M) cannot escape by branding this conclusion as SUCI's ill-conceived propaganda. Let us again flip over the pages of the Mukherjee-Banerjee Commission constituted by the CPI(M)-led government itself. "More disturbing is the fact that the second and third amendments to the West Bengal land reforms Act have not yielded any addition to the quantum of vested agricultural land."

The role of the CPI(M)-led Front Government

So the reality is that the CPI(M) was not at all sincere in their land detection exercise and thus refrained from making the vested interests hostile. They have in fact been allowing the exploiting rural kulaks to enjoy the land legally declared as vested.

How can Shri Yechuri obfuscate this reality by making a wild unfounded claim of uncovering 11 lakh acres of land?

We now come to distribution of vested land. Once again, published facts run so much counter to Shri Yechuri's weavings. "Till September, 2001, West Bengal Government has distributed 10.52 lakh acres of land mainly to the landless and marginal peasants. Out of this, 6.26 lakh acres were distributed till July, 1977, most of which were acquired during the rule of United Front Governments of 1967 and 1969. The balance 4.32 lakh acres were distributed in the next 24 years. (The Economics and Politics of West Bengal - Ajit Narayan Basu, P.60) Alas! Even statistics here allot 4.32 lakh acres and not 11 lakh acres to the credit of the CPI(M)-led government since 1977.

Detected vested land vanishes in the blue

We are sorry we could not put a full stop on the story of distribution of land because of some more startling observations by the CPI(M)-led government appointed Commission. "The latest official statistics in fact indicate a diminution from the December, 1981 figure by 79,675.4 acres ... The amount of vested agricultural land still undistributed and the vested land which has disappeared total 3,38,391.18 acres. Even on a conservative assumption that an acre on the average grasses Rs.1000 per annum, the undistributed and vanished lands together yield a tidy Rs. 34 crore annually. The possibility cannot be ruled out that there are collusive arrangements for the illegitimate appropriation of the usufruct of these vested lands." (p-23) Such is the contribution of Shri Yechuri's CPI(M)-led government in distribution of unaccounted land — disappearance of 3.38 lakh acres of unearthed land and the purse of the rural gentry and vested interests getting

flattened by Rs. 850 crores (Rs.34 cr. per annum × 25 years) through "collusive arrangements" and "illegitimate appropriation".

Shri Yechuri has also claimed of his government's success in recording the names of the bargadars (tillers of land on barga or lease system). It is true that in the first six years of the CPI(M)-led government, 11.26 lakhs of bargadars got their names registered. But the number slipped to just 2.86 lakhs in the next 18 years. Right now, the exercise is stopped. Many of the lessee tillers have lost their ownership on land. Concentration of land in the hands of rural bourgeoisie, who are investing substantially in agriculture, is on the increase. (Source: Times of India, 8.4.2001 and 23.8.2002, The Statesman, 25.2.95). Even those who could get their names registered as bonafide lessee are denied the due 75% share of the crop. "From the quantitative angle, we come across numerous cases in which crop sharing is not according to law and is adverse to the bargadar's interest. It is almost universally on 50:50 basis against the 75:25 ratio prescribed by law. (Mukherjee-Banerjee Commission, p-26) So, barga recording has ceased, bargadars are unable to hold on to their land and they are not getting the legitimate share of crop. This is the iconoclastic achievement in land reforms Shri Yechuri and his CPI(M) take pride in.

The behind-the-scene story of CPI(M)'s Panchayat victory

Not only this. Even the lessee peasants are not being handed over the documents of lease unless they consent to give political support and vote to the ruling party. Thus these hapless poors are bullied to be subservient to the CPI(M) politics and used as vote-banks in retaining Panchayat power. So the old process of denial to legitimate lease right, lessee tillers getting reconverted into landless

peasants, increasing economic disparity, appalling poverty and pauperization, concentration of land in the hands of a few, continues while Panchayats and rural Parliamentary constituencies are in the captivity of the CPI(M) and its lackeys. This is the real face of the CPI(M)'s much clamoured "Operation Barga" which, as per its tall claim, has revolutionised rural West Bengal. Yes one significant change did happen. The baton of power has changed hands from the Congress to the CPI(M). The vested interest who thrive on illegal ownership of vested land, the blood-suckers and ruthless exploiters who trade in the hunger and destitution of rural poors, the utterly corrupt nexus of landed gentry-criminals-anti-socials-police-administration have found a very trusted force in the CPI(M) who with its left embellishment, is better poised to deceive people. So they unhesitatingly back the CPI(M) in the elections, coerce the poor peasants to follow their dictates and vote for the party of their choice. The so-called swing of rural votes in favour of the CPI(M) is attributable to this overwhelming support of the forces of reaction. Such landslide success would never be forthcoming if there is a free and fair exercise of franchise. As an exposed political dispensation of the exploiters, the CPI(M) and its government stand totally isolated from the toiling mass and hence do not expect genuine popular support to rally round them. That is why CPI(M) leadership is so desperate in ruffling the peace during the election time by creating an atmosphere of tension, apprehension, intimidation and termination to disturb the normal election process. In the recent Panchayat elections of West Bengal, they were so sure of the popular mandate going against them that they took no chance and went to the extent of physically preventing the opposition candidates from filing nomination. Thus they

Contd. on page 5

Comrade Ashutosh Banerji Remembered

Trade Union Leaders Pay Homage in Calcutta

In a well attended meeting at Moulali Yuba Kendra in Calcutta on May 30, 2003 Comrade Ashutosh Banerji, departed All India President of UTUC-LS was remembered in a solemn manner under the presidenship of newly elected All India President, Comrade Anil Sen and member Central Committee, SUCI. Leaders of unions of different industries affiliated to UTUC-LS and leaders from district committees paid their homage by garlanding the portrait of Comrade Banerji. Wreaths were placed by Comrade Samarendra Nath Kundu (CITU), Comrade Sunil Sengupta (UTUC), Comrade Jyoti Lahiri (AITUC), Shri Lalbahadur Singh (INTUC), Shri N.C.Dey, (BMS), Comrade S.N. Tiwari (TUCC) and Comrade Dibakar Bhattacharya (AICCTU). Following it Comrade Anil Sen, President of the meeting, main speaker Comrade Sanat Datta, President, West Bengal State Committee of UTUC-LS, Comrade Sunil Mukherjee, All India Secretary, Comrade Shankar Saha, Secretary, WB State Committee, Comrade Achintya Sinha, All India Secretary and Comrade Provash Ghosh, member, Central Committee and West Bengal State Secretary, SUCI placed wreaths. Comrade Tapas Dutta, General Secretary, UTUC-LS, could not attend the meeting owing to illness. The message sent by him was read out by Comrade Sunil Mukherjee. Two minutes' silence was observed in memory of Comrade Banerji.

Paying tribute to the departed leader, Comrade Sunil Sengupta, veteran leader of UTUC said : Comrade Ashutosh Banerji lived only for the noble cause of building a new society for the working class free from exploitation. In trade union movement armed with the brilliant and

sharp logical arguments of Comrade Banerji we, the leftists, could pursue an alternative line of attack against the reactionary line of the rightists. Necessity of a man like Comrade Banerji was utmost in our struggle against the world-wide crisis now the working class faces. His demise is a loss not only for UTUC-LS but a great loss to the working class movement as a whole.

AICCTU leader Comrade Dibakar Bhattacharya said, presence of a leader like Ashuda was badly needed in our struggle when all-out attack is coming down from the imperialists, the central government as well as from the state governments in various forms.

INTUC leader Shri Lalbahadur Singh affirmed that with leaders like Comrade Ashutosh Banerji valiant UTUC-LS workers can even lay down their lives in fight against capitalism and imperialism.

TUCC leader Comrade S. N. Tiwari said, at the demise of Comrade Ashuda, trade union movement in this country suffered a great loss. But the struggling leadership is still alive. Death of Comrade Ashuda will not go futile. Comrade Jyoti Lahiri of AITUC said, when our trade union movement is faced with a big debacle we are losing experienced stalwarts like Comrade Ashutosh Banerji and in such a situation we have to wage far more organized and united battle in the coming days to make up for the loss.

The way the economy of this country was being attacked by the WTO, globalization, liberalisation, etc., and the government-owned industries were being sold out and foreign investments being allowed in a dangerous way, Shri N.C. Dey, BMS leader said, this must be resisted and his union would be with the

UTUC-LS, he promised. He highly praised the role played by Comrade Banerji in this regard.

The main speaker Comrade Sanat Datta said : Comrade Ashutosh Banerji always led trade union movement on the working class revolutionary line keeping it free from all sorts of economism-opportunism. His role in WFTU also in this respect was glowing example to others. Without developing proper political consciousness among the workers and employees and developing such activities from amongst them success cannot be achieved in trade union movement and Comrade Banerji always

painstakingly strove for that.

While remembering Comrade Banerji, Comrade Anil Sen, his comrade-in-arms for decades and president of the meeting said, Comrade Banerji was afflicted with serious diseases from the very beginning of his political life in his teens. At that period he was bed-ridden, his whole body was in plaster for long seven years but he never let others realise his pain and sufferings. His quest for truth and knowledge was exemplary. He built up cadres in youth movement and trade union movement. He used to go to the

workers' slums to conduct political classes for developing equipped trade union cadres. In a painful physically handicapped condition he took up charge of organising the whole of north India and built up organisations in Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Himachal Pradesh. To him, life was party and party was his life. Deep yearnings for revolution created this indomitable character. Unlimited was his love for the comrades and great respects for the elders. Urging to successfully accomplish the unfinished tasks bestowed upon us by him he ended the meeting.

Comrade Ashutosh Banerji Memorial Meeting in Delhi

Under the auspices of the SUCI party units of North Indian states, memorial meeting of the departed Comrade Ashutosh Banerji, member, central committee of SUCI and All India President of UTUC-LS was solemnly held in Delhi on 23 May last at the Speaker's Hall of Constitution Club.

On this occasion, hundreds of people comprising leaders of different political parties and trade unions, students, youths, teachers of universities and colleges and other sections of people thronged the Hall. Comrades A. B. Bardhan, General Secretary, CPI; M. K. Pandhe, Polit Bureau member, CPI(M) and General Secretary, CITU; Gurudas Dasgupta, General Secretary, AITUC; Dev Kumar Ganguly, Jt. Secretary, WFTU; Swapan Mukherjee, member, CC, CPI(ML)-Liberation and General Secretary, AICCTU and Abani Roy, member, CC, RSP, were some of the distinguished leaders who attended the memorial meeting.

Comrade Girijeswar

Singh, Secretary, Rajasthan State Organizing Committee took the chair. Wreaths were placed at the portrait of the departed leader by Comrade Krishna Chakraborti, Central Committee member, secretaries of the State Committees and the State Organizing Committees of northern India, Incharges of different mass organizations, leaders of different Left parties and trade unions and eminent personalities. After the introductory speech of Comrade Pratap Samal, Secretary, Delhi State Organizing Committee, two minutes' silence in memory of the departed leader was observed.

Leaders of different Left parties and trade unions while paying tribute to Comrade Banerji said: Comrade Ashutosh Banerji always tried his best to build up countrywide united left and democratic movement. Despite his physical handicap, Comrade Banerji continued his all-out attempt to build up united resistance struggle against globalization and free market economy. Some of

the leaders expressed profound admiration the way he used to explain the present crisis of capitalism and its implication in the light of the teachings of Marxism-Leninism. Lawyers, journalists, university teachers and artists highlighted his great concern for building up broad-based countrywide secular democratic movement.

Comrade Krishna Chakraborti, member, Central Committee of SUCI and main speaker, observed that Comrade Banerji was the product of the very process of uninterrupted struggle conducted by him for merging his self with the interest of the class and the party through ceaseless battles against all sorts of individualism and bourgeois decadence. He said, it is only through the proper assimilation of the noble ideology of Marxism-Leninism, as concretized by Comrade Shibdas Ghosh in India and its correct application in his life that produced Comrade Ashutosh Banerji as a revolutionary of such a high stature.

Interest Rate Cut

In Whose Interest ?

The Reserve Bank of India has announced a further reduction of bank rate by 0.25%. The Union finance ministry has, on the other day, declared that the interest rate of provident fund would further go down by 0.5% to 9%, though this has now been temporarily withheld in view of the impending elections to five state assemblies so that the election interest of the ruling BJP is not harmed. During last few years the interest rate has progressively been dropped for all classical modes of investments like bank deposits, postal savings, public provident fund etc. The BJP claims that the cut in interest rates would boost up the economy.

Whether the economy gets any lift or not is to be seen. But the policy is like a death blow to the middle class and lower middle class, more particularly to the retired senior citizens and those who have been compelled to seek VRS, who have to depend solely on the interest of bank and postal savings for their living. For, they normally have no other source of earning. Days thus become more and more hard for them. However, the government seems not to bother for their plight.

On all previous occasions when the BJP government slashed the interest rate, the Union Finance Minister tried to impress that since the inflation runs low, even the lowered interest rate on savings is effectively very high. From the year 2000 onward, they have been claiming that the inflation has come down to 4% during their tenure against 7% during previous regimes, though very recently it exceeded 6.5% and in the week ending May 17 it was 5.90%. If the interest rate falls, they claim, it would not affect the people provided the inflation drops. For, the effective interest rate is calculated as the official interest rate minus the inflation. Thus even if the inflation runs low, as they say, the effective interest rate would not seriously go down, even when the official interest rate is lowered. It is to be mentioned here that they compute the rate of inflation deliberately following an inaccurate method. The government considers the

Wholesale Price Index (WPI) for working out the rate of inflation but the WPI is not at all the index of consumer market. The Consumer Price Index (CPI) is the measure of the price level of consumer market. One cannot rule out that the price of commodities bought from the wholesale market is largely increased by the middlemen and others while selling in the retail market thereby making the CPI considerably higher than the WPI. Thus we see that the prices of cereals, medicine, education, transport and other essential commodities and necessities soar at an average of 15-20% annually even when the government claims that the rate of inflation remains low. Also, it is to be mentioned that, for manipulating the value of the CPI, they follow a fraudulent way of calculating it by considering some commodities with extra weightage attributed that are usually not consumed by the common people. Added to it is the circulation of huge amount of unaccounted black money, which can and does jeopardise all calculations of the rate of inflation.

Another important point is that whatever be their claim regarding the rate of inflation, the inflation is not zero. Even if the inflation is 1%, it must affect the people by reducing their real income and thereby the purchasing power. Moreover, the actual value of the savings plummets with the rise of market price. The situation has reached such a pass that the interest which the banks provide on savings has effectively become zero. On April 10

last, when the official rate of inflation was declared as 5.99%, it was reported that for the first time in last twelve years the actual interest rate plunged below the zero level. (The Economic Times, 11-04-03). It is a severe blow to the those, who have to depend on their small savings.

The BJP's argument has been that when the interest rate was as high as 10%, the interest on industrial capital, taken as loan from the banks, was higher accordingly, which in turn retarded the industrial growth. So if the rate of interest varies with the price rise, the people would not be in trouble any way. On the contrary, the entrepreneurs would have to pay less amount to the banks due to lower interest rate, resulting in higher capital investment and faster industrial growth.

Let us review the rate of growth of industry with lowering of interest rate. On reviewing the income-expenditure of 100 plus Indian business houses, The Economic Times in a recent report said that in the year 2002-03 the expenditure of those companies for payment of interest has fallen by 11.1%, while their profit climbed by 43%. The picture in the previous years of the BJP rule was not much different. But what about the much claimed growth of industry or job potentiality? In the year 2001-02 alone 420,000 jobs were slashed. During last five years from 1997-2002, many industrial units suffered closure. Number of sick units in the country has gone up significantly. Upto March 2001, as many as 252,947 units were declared sick, out of which 249,630 were small industries and the rest 3,317 were the medium and large industrial units. About 90,000 workers belonging to government and quasi government organisations had to forcibly accept VRS in the years 1999-2000 to 2001-02. The authorities of the nationalised banks forced

about 100,000 employees to take VRS during the same period (The Economic Times, 7-05-03). We can recall here that the Economic Surveys as presented by the finance ministry before this year's budget show that the improvement of the Indian economy during the last decade has been negligible and the growth that is claimed to have taken place is jobless growth. In fact there has been no growth in employment in the organised sector since 1997-98. It proves beyond doubt that the so called argument of industrial growth and augmentation of job opportunities with the decline of interest rate is in fact a hoax and has no relation with reality. The only thing the government policy of lowering the interest rate has ensured is piling up of huge profit of the big industrialist houses.

The government has some other designs to fulfil by this policy. Its conspiracy is to turn the people away from classical modes of savings and to force them to invest in share market. It also intends to reduce the debt service, for which the government has to pay for the huge loan it takes from financial institutions, with lowering the large budget deficit in view.

Coming back to the argument of industrialisation it can be said that in this age of acute crisis, due to the inherent law of capitalism, there cannot be any unhindered industrial growth in any capitalist country. Rather, existing industrial units become sick and ultimately face closure. It is the general feature of the capitalist world including the advanced capitalist countries of the West. Whatever industry they set up, in order to make maximum profit, they do so by introducing state of the art machines, thereby reducing the number of labours. By modernisation the mill-owners strive to

enhance the production but not the wage of the labour or employment. This leads to further fall of purchasing power and thereby more pauperisation. The fall of purchasing capacity of the people causes further recession in industries. The bourgeoisie can never come out of this vicious cycle of modernisation of industries for more profit causing reduction of employment potentiality, thereby drop of people's purchasing power, causing thereby further industrial recession and so on. There should thus be no illusion that reducing bank rate or any similar concession to the capitalists can speed up industrial growth.

So, whatever arguments the BJP puts forward to justify the lowering of bank rates, are full of deceptions. Their first claim that the effective interest rate wouldn't plummet even if the bank rate falls, has been proved to be a hoax. The second deception is the method, which the government adopts to work out the rate of inflation, has been proved to be a deliberate inaccuracy. The third argument that fall of bank rate would work as a motivation to the industrialists for further investment has also been proved to be a fraud. And the last one, that is the scope of enhancement of job potentiality needs no further discussion. In whose interest the BJP is then working? For whose benefit it does dole out crores of rupees from government exchequer in different forms, one of them being the lowering of bank rate? That the people cannot benefit out of it is clear. It is the capitalist class alone which reaps the benefit by piling up maximum profit. In fact, parties in power of all shades, in Centre and states, with no single exception, are engaged in ensuring maximum profit for the industrialists. They are the parties subservient to the ruling capitalist class and committed to take care of its interest. How can they bother for the poor, the middle class or the retired senior citizens?

Welfare or Ruination

Contd. from page 2

robbed the people of the very basic civil right to elect and to be elected. In this regard, they left behind even a tainted person like BJP's Narendra Modi who at least allowed a contest to be staged.

The CPI(M) government and people's welfare

Shri Yechury is proud to mention that "In West Bengal the government works for the people's welfare." Who has not heard right from George Bush to Indira Gandhi, Vajpayee-Advani to Narendra Modi, Mayawati to Sonia this penchant for people's welfare? Only the common people groaning under the yoke of capitalist exploitation and tormented at every sphere of life are aware of the nature of welfare the trusted representatives of the moribund bourgeois class provide them with. The common people in the CPI(M) governed West Bengal, too, have a good measure of the kind of welfare, Shri Yechury speaks of. Few columns in our organ can hardly accommodate even bare mention of so many a welfare measures the West Bengal government has doled out to the people of the state in successive tranches that brought in their wake untold misery, distress and suffering to the toiling people. Let us have a look at some revealing facts.

When CPI(M)-led government took over in 1977, the number of registered unemployed was 17 lakhs. Today, it is touching 70 lakhs. Over 31 thousand factories have been either sick or closed. The number of workers of the closed units is 4.73 lakhs. Curtailment of employment in varied forms, is on. Already, 175 workers of the closed jute mills have committed suicides. 89% of the working days are lost due to lay-offs. (Source: Labour in West Bengal, Deptt. of Labour, Govt of West Bengal). 85.7% of the

people who die do not receive any institutional medical treatment. (Source: Health on the march, West Bengal, 1997). Half of the children do not get any education. Even of those very fortunate to enter school, 92% do not go upto secondary level (Source: Annual Report of School Education, 1999-2000). The agricultural cess has been increased to the tune of even 113 times, service charge in some cases has gone up by 2667 times. The number of marginal peasants has gone down by 2.44 lakhs and the land these marginal peasants lost amounts of 47.65 Bighas (Source: Evaluation Programme, Evaluation Wing, Directorate of Agriculture, GOWB). From 1991 to 2001 the percentage of landless agricultural labour among the peasants has soared from 46.4% to 56.7% with actual number of agricultural workers increasing by over 23 lakhs (Census Report- 1991 and 2001). These agricultural workers remain unemployed for 251 days in a year (Source: Economics and Politics of West Bengal, Ajit Narayan Basu, p-124). If one takes 1977-78 as the base year, the average daily wage in West Bengal is Rs. 6.40 as against Rs. 10.60 and Rs.8.40 in Kerala and Haryana respectively (Report on Wage and Salary earnings of casual workers - P. Jacob). And cost of living in West Bengal villages is the highest in India (EPW-6.2.98)

Anti-people measures galore

Instead of providing any relief to the common people, the CPI(M)-led government has been very consistent in taking anti-people measures in every sphere of common life making livelihood to worsen further. They are in fact in a fee-tariff hike spree. Education fees have gone up at alarming level. The much clamoured free education upto secondary level is now reversed to reintroduce school fees. In cohort with the BJP-led Central government, commercialization and

privatization of education are on. There is galloping rise in hospital charges. Free health care is virtually abolished. Semi-urban and rural areas are starved of any medical facility. Recently over 48 children died of a mystery disease in Murshidabad district within a few days without any treatment but the government health officials remain unfazed and least concerned. Revision in power-tariff is mindboggling making electricity costliest in West Bengal. While 100 domestic units in Gujrat costs Rs. 73/-, it is as high as Rs. 253.25 in West Bengal. Equally severe is the increase in the transport charges which are also much more compared to many other states. But there is progressive deterioration in passenger safety and comfort. Under the pretext of augmenting revenue earning, hooch licenses are liberally distributed. In line with the principles of globalization and liberalization, the CPI(M)-led government is also privatizing the power-sector and inviting private entrepreneurs to health services and conservancy works.

These are some of the glimpses of the social welfare measures Shri Yechury talks about. Can one find any difference with what other governments under BJP, Congress, AIADMK or BSP are following in their respective states? In fact in many areas, the CPI(M) is ahead of others in mounting fiscal and other attacks on the people. While the CPI(M) leaders cry hoarse against the devastating consequence of globalization, they are with due care implementing every prescription of the said doctrine in the states under their rule. They are now talking of special economic zones which would be kept out of the purview of Industrial Disputes Act and other legitimate Trade Union activities. Bourgeois media is also giving them lavish publicity and support for "appreciating the reality"

and "moving in the right direction".

On the other hand, when the toiling people are raising their voice against the burning problems of life through organized democratic movement, the CPI(M)-led government, like any other BJP or Congress government, is equally deft and ruthless in crushing these movements with police atrocity.

The CPI(M) Government in West Bengal is Pro-Rich

Facts speak and show so glaringly what the reality is. There is not even an iota of doubt that the CPI(M) led government, under the garb of leftism and Marxism, is pursuing anti-poor policies. Their sole aim is to serve the class-interest of the bourgeoisie, both Indian as well as foreign, be it in the industrial sector or in the area of agriculture or in throttling the voice of dissent.

In 1997, Shri Jyoti Basu, the then CPI(M) Chief Minister opined, "one has to take full advantage of the enormous opportunity of capital investment in agriculture following liberalization of economy". Accordingly, the CPI(M) government had revised the land ceiling Act, brought out changes in the Bargadar Act. Based on such amendments, there has been distribution of land to the industrialists as per their choice for tea and rubber plantations. And now the CPI(M) is making all efforts for opening up the agricultural sector to the Indian and foreign capital. It is the American consultancy firm Mackensy who has been hired by the State government for seeking advices on formulating new agricultural policy which would have cultivation of economic crops as desired by the investing capitalists and introduction of contract farming as two of its main planks. The way the CPI(M) ministers are holding brief in favour of capital investment in agriculture by the Indian and foreign bourgeoisie, an impression is created as if such capitalists are no exploiters but champions of human cause. They have no class-

character or class-motive but would come forward to improve the lot of the poor peasants, landless peasants and agricultural workers at the behest of the CPI(M) leaders. This in fact tantamounts to refusal to recognize the exploiting character of capital — the crux of Marxist political economy. If so obliging is the attitude of the state government under the CPI(M), why should not the capitalist class reciprocate with all alacrity and enthusiasm? Exactly that has happened. The exploiting rural gentry as well as the capitalists sensing scope for amassing huge profit in the agricultural sector have thrown all their weight behind the CPI(M) and its government. This is how the CPI(M) under the radical slogan of land reforms and public welfare is paving way for big corporates and multinationals to have a strangular grip over Rural West Bengal.

Why Shri Yechury chose Hindustan Times to write in :

Incidentally, it needs to be understood why, of all publications including their own party organ, Shri Yechury preferred to publish his article in the Hindustan Times.

The CPI(M) leadership knows very well that their image of a Left party has been considerably sullied after the news of large-scale violence and terror, mockery of the electoral process, trampling of democratic norms and principles and robbing of democratic rights during the West Bengal Panchayat elections hit the headlines both in print as well as electronic media. It may incidentally be noted that of late, the media controlled by the ruling capitalist class have been overemphasizing the so-called left leaning of the CPI(M). One of the reasons for such act of the media is to malign genuine leftism by highlighting the misdemeanour of the pseudo-lefts like the CPI(M). On the other hand, the attempt is to project the CPI(M) as a Left party of

Contd. on page 6

CPI(M)'s True Colour

Contd. from page 5

reckoning despite all its anti-Left politics and activities. The CPI(M) does not want to loose this advantage of being viewed as a Left party in the states it is not in power. Hence was the necessity of a repairing exercise and playing to the gallery in the aftermath of the panchayat poll saga with the help of a heavy doze of falsification and weird theoretical constructs. This prompted Shri Sitaram Yechury to plant the article under discussion in the Hindustan Times which has its major readership in Delhi and other northern states. Deliberately the CPI(M) party organs and publications having good circulation in West Bengal were avoided because people of West Bengal would not buy any cock and bull story woven by the CPI(M) to give a distorted version of the reality. But such plantations or concoctations, the CPI(M) leadership feels, might succeed in obfuscating the truth from the people of other states and rubbishing the media reports on panchayat poll violence as a smear campaign by the interested quarters. So they planfully targeted the readers outside West Bengal, gave them an utterly distorted and fabricated accounts of land reforms in West Bengal and pitchforked the so-called version of a battle between exploiters and the exploited as a diversionary tactics. This is typical of the social-democratic character of the CPI(M) as a force of compromise between the labour and the capital. This is the way the social democrats feign as friend of the poor and have nots but surreptitiously work to serve the class interest of the exploiters.

CPI(M)'s theory of Class-based Front and its menacing fall out

Raising the bogey of class conflicts or battle of classes to buttress an altogether different motive is nothing new with the CPI(M). One would recall

that in late 60's the CPI(M) leadership in their eagerness to expand their sphere of influence for creating vote-base, began to carry out violent attacks on the fraternal constituents of the United Front with the backing of the police and administration which their representative Mr. Jyoti Basu controlled as the Home Minister. When they faced severe criticism and reviling for such dastardly acts, they coined a slogan of forging a class-based front as if the CPI(M) was representing the exploited class and the other parties were protecting the interest of the exploiting class. But in reality, they were engaged in physical annihilation of the opponents to create a vote-bank and pitting the poor against the poor. Comrade Shibdas Ghosh, our beloved leader and teacher at that time unmasked the hollowness of this so-called fanciful theory of class-based front. Logical conclusion of such a class-based front, Comrade Ghosh showed, meant that the phase of struggle had reached the stage of final seizure of power. But the CPI(M), paradoxically demanded instead, parliamentary elections. Hence the slogan of class-based front was, in fact, a camouflage to shield their initiation towards the process of winning the confidence of and serving the bourgeois class. Comrade Ghosh also warned that such cowardly violence, blindness, party fanaticism and philosophical intolerance of others' views as well as attempts to resolve ideological and cultural questions by violent means would create favourable condition for advent of fascism. But the CPI(M) intoxicated with power turned a deaf ear to such warning and continued its violent assaults on the organizations of other United Front partners. Inevitable did happen. The Congress, which was so hated and rejected by the people could stage a come back under Indira Gandhi and counter violence with

all accompanying fascist onslaughts swept the state of West Bengal as well. Old and veteran workers of the CPI(M) who honestly believe in leftism might not like to be reminded of the way the resurgent Congress captured power in West Bengal by completely rigging the 1972 elections and how all the Left workers including many of the CPI(M) cadres were victims of worst kinds of attacks and oppression. In the same way, if the CPI(M)'s current politics of terror and violence continue unabated, one cannot rule out the possibility of worst fascist forces taking over in near future.

Whom then does the CPI(M) represent — the exploiter or the exploited ?

In accordance with the laws of social development,

the class-contradiction is getting intensified throughout the country. West Bengal is no exception to that. Everywhere the exploited people are rising against the oppression and suppression of the ruling class and trying to resist such exploitation to the extent possible by waging mass struggles in varied forms. The spontaneous emotional response of the people to the various democratic movements organized by our party is illustrative of that. But the CPI(M) having discarded the line of democratic mass movements and instead embracing politics of serving crisis-ridden bourgeois class has the festering sore of decadent capitalism so vividly manifest in them. No more are the CPI(M) leaders bothered about the rich heritage of left democratic movement of this soil which was a source of inspiration for all struggling people of

the country. They are now more comfortable in five-star hotels, confabulating with the industrialists and big corporate houses, in the company of the rich peasants and landlords, in the safe haven of the criminal-mafia-administration-police combine. Today, the CPI(M) leaders find their admirers and votaries in the big industrial houses, American and British multinationals and even in the diplomatic circles of the Western imperialist countries. Their singular objective is to be in power and serve the moribund capitalist system.

Yes, Shri Yechury! You have rightly referred to the battle between the exploiters and the exploited. But what you tried to cover up is the affiliation of your party with the exploiting camp. But would you be able to deceive the people so easily? You may like to refer to the pages of history for the answer.

21st May's Successful General Strike **Build up Protracted Struggle**

There was successful countrywide industrial strike on 21st May last at the call of seven central trade union organizations including the UTUC-LS. The strike was called on 8-point demand for stoppage of privatization of PSUs, scrapping of proposed amendments to labour laws in the interest of the capitalist owners, abolition of policy of unfettered imports, abolition of the upper limit in the Bonus Act, fixation of 12% interest rate on provident fund and small savings scheme deposit, enactment of consolidated legislation covering agricultural workers, scrapping of the anti-working class recommendations of the 2nd Labour Commission, introduction of comprehensive social security scheme including unemployment-insident, etc. The strike had widespread effects on the states of Eastern India like West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa, Assam, etc. Even in a state like

Gujarat ruled by BJP and torn with state-backed minority pogrom, the industrial strike was an all-out success. Congratulating the toiling masses for this, Comrade Anil Sen, the All India president of the UTUC-LS, has called upon them to form struggle committees from factory to factory to ensure withdrawal of the anti-people, anti-working class policies of the central government through continuous strike and also to build up movement against the state governments pursuing the anti-people labour policies of the Centre.

After the 21st May strike, the capitalist class, through one of its weapons, the news media, has raised a row that a loss of thousands of crores of rupees had to be incurred because of this one day strike, and a myriad of poor people had to lose their day's wage. This strike destroying work is in whose interest, they ask. So, the workers-peasants-middle class have to clearly

understand today: why was this strike, in whose interest? Why the working people have to take to the path of movement today? It is because they are confronted with great danger. Deep darkness faces the working people. In 1991, Narasimha Rao-led Central government introduced the economic policies of liberalization, it was said in justification that it would increase investment tin industry and employment opportunity would expand. But whatever has been the fresh investment, employment opportunity has shrunk and job permanence has reduced in practice.

It was also trumpeted that privatization would bring about an upsurge in the industrial sphere. But here too the situation is miserable. As a result of liberalization, many an industry, in competing with freely imported foreign commodities, has come to grief. The workers are not

Contd. on page 7

Despicable Role of UNSC members and India

Contd. from page 1

which actually happened. Now after the war they, including the UK, are scrambling for the booty — share of contract for reconstruction of Iraq, paid for by Iraq's oil and obviously a share of oil trade too. It is easily conceivable, when, after much deliberations accompanied by political bargaining with the US, they could come to a beneficial understanding with it they sided with the US only to serve the respective imperialist interest no matter what awaits Iraqi people's fate.

These forces knew it very well that without UN action to lift the sanctions the US would have been in a no-man's land with most of the firms unwilling to engage in trade with Iraq under sanctions. That is why, the US was so hasty from the day after occupation of Baghdad to make UN lift the sanctions. As the report goes, for example, some 8.3 million barrels of Iraqi oil stored at the Turkish port of Ceyhan can now be exported. (*Times of India*, 23.3.03) The US oil companies are eagerly waiting to grab this oil, let alone the trillions of barrels of oil beneath the debris of this war-ravaged country.

But most despicable is the role of the Security Council members, particularly, including the Secretary General Kofi Annan, clinging to his chair with US blessings, who did not feel the least compunction in officially accepting the most illegal and illegitimate occupation of a free sovereign country by two war-mongers who defied the same very Security Council in doing such a thing. Had a powerful Socialist Bloc existed today could such dangerous real drama be enacted on the floor of the UN? Should those adherents of bourgeois democracy who rejoiced at or showed scant concern for the fall of the Soviet Union or socialism in the East

European countries, now think of the possible unipolar holocaust over the globe at the hands of the US imperialists? Not a single member-country of those present 15 had the courage and scruple to protest it and demand immediate withdrawal of the occupation forces and that UN and only UN would be there to help the people of Iraq to elect their own government. After this occupation thus legitimized, not to speak of the lives, livelihood, dignity of women, liberty of the people there and humanity to be crushed under the jackboot of the barbarous US and British occupying forces, now Iraqi oil will be sold at prices fixed by the occupying powers, in quantities determined by the occupying powers, to companies or countries favoured by the occupying powers! Different interests play for different succumbing countries. With all probability France has

been assured of dues from the occupying country, Russia preferred not to raise its finger because its existing interest in Iraq would be honoured and all including UK would get a share in the lucrative Iraqi reconstruction pie. Though India is not a Security Council member, its BJP-led government fully subservient to the interest of the aspiring Indian bourgeoisie is waiting for a crumb of the kill. Which is why it did not outrightly refuse to send Indian troops to Iraq to serve under US command. It has only kept the request in abeyance on so many considerations. During the war Parliament under tremendous pressure from the people throughout the country passed an unanimous resolution deploring the aggression on Iraq although instead of 'deploring' that should have been unequivocal condemnation and demand for immediate withdrawal. However, that parliamentary

resolution still acts as a barrier to sending Indian troops to help US occupation. Secondly, expectation of getting contracts for rebuilding Iraq is acting as a lure to appease the US. Let alone dangling of carrot of such offer by the US ambassador Mr. Blackwill during the war, the US Defence Secretary Rumsfeld visited Vajpayee on 8th June in his hotel in Washington breaking all diplomatic protocol and there he thoroughly pressurized Vajpayee to send troops and Vajpayee borrowed time. Though Vajpayee government is much eager to get largesse from the US it is not also ready to toe the US at this stage keeping in mind public opinion before the ensuing Assembly elections in 5 states. It now only requires for face saving an UN umbrella to send its troops to Iraq. But all these in no way minimize its filthy policy of appeasement of

its big-brother US imperialism.

Moreover, India, a junior imperialist power, cannot ignore or belittle the US imperialists' recognition to India as the regional super power in South East Asia. In such a condition, how can Vajpayee bluntly refuse the US invitation for India's presence in Iraq! But this disgraceful hobnobbing of the Indian government with American imperialism, no doubt blackens the anti-imperialist tradition and glory of the Indian people. But the Vajpayee government is determined to send troops to help US occupation and is trying to devise a scheme for that. And this government's any such future attempt to send Indian troops to Iraq can be thwarted only by more organized and widespread protest by the peace and freedom loving Indian people. We must remain ever vigilant for that.

Build up Protracted Struggle

Contd. from page 6

responsible for this disaster. They have to anyhow fulfil the production quota fixed by the owner-management. But because of the higher capital strength of foreign capitalists or because their commodities enjoy various subsidies, the Indian industries face unequal competition. In such cases, BJP, the standard bearer of Hindudtva, is taking the side of Indian monopoly capital and foreign multinationals. The Indian small and medium scale capitalists are in great peril since the protection from the government so long enjoyed are being systematically withdrawn.

Even in the state sector units where the jobs were considered to be secure, there is retrenchment galore. Even profit-making PSUs are being sold out for next-to-nothing prices.

On the other hand, in the agricultural sphere, millions of agricultural

workers have no fixed employment except for a few months of the year. There is no provision as to how they would eke out a living. Due to deep and widespread extension of capitalism in agriculture, agricultural production has gone up by leaps and bounds with the help of irrigation, high-yield seeds, modern fertilizers and insecticides. But millions of people go hungry, they do not have the money to buy food.

In the capitalist social system, the way the capitalists bring about an erosion of the purchasing power of the common masses in order to secure more profit, generates market crisis in both the agricultural and industrial sectors. As an outcome, the unemployment, retrenchment, closures, etc. appear as crises. So the interest of the whole society is inextricably linked up with this working class move-

ment. The final solution of the burning problems in people's life can only come through overthrow of the capitalist social system and establishment of a socialist system.

But, prior to that, for immediate relief, the central government will have to be forced to totally withdraw its anti-people policies which are aggravating the problems, through building up and intensifying protests into sustained movement against such policies. A one day strike will not achieve this success. The working class would have to move towards continuous strike. For that, workers' struggle committees of workers of all shades of opinion, irrespective of their party affiliations, are to be formed in mills and factories as the instruments of struggle. As against this vision, the working class is being poisoned today with the ideas and thinking of the owning class to lead them

into blind alley. It is being said: Accept the reality; it is very difficult now just to preserve the job; so, accept all conditionalities imposed by the owners just to save your job anyhow. Has ever any worker demanded closure of a factory? Rather, the workers have struck work on the demands for jobs, fair wage and job security, on the demand for re-opening of closed factories. Despite ceaseless confusing propaganda and attacks of the owning class against workers' movement, widespread working class support to the movement has been expressed through the all-out, successful strike of 21 May. To provide an organized form to this support in preparation of a countrywide united sustained movement is the urgent task of the hour. With this objective, the working class will have to prepare itself ideologically and organizationally.

Homage to Comrade Manoranjan Banerjee

Nihar Mukherjee

Comrade Manoranjan Banerjee, veteran freedom fighter and one of the founders of the SUCI, a member of the first Central Committee elected in 1948, breathed his last on 16 May, 2003 at 11.45 p.m. He was 84. His memorial meeting was held on 8th June at DumDum Vivekananda Vidyalaya. The meeting was conducted by Prof. Manju Guha, his close neighbour. After garlanding the portrait of Comrade Banerjee by incharges of different party units and mass organizations, Comrade Manik Mukherjee, member West Bengal State Secretariat and Calcutta District Secretary paid floral tribute on behalf of Comrade Nihar Mukherjee, who could not attend the meeting owing to poor health. He sent his homage in writing which was read out in the meeting.

Comrade Nihar Mukherjee's Homage

Respected President, Comrades and Friends,

Comrade Manoranjan Banerjee, well-known and beloved not only to the senior members of our party but also to many party workers, departed from us at 11.45 p.m. on 16th May, 2003. His greatest attribute is that he was one of the handful of youths who had come forward to stand beside Comrade Shibdas Ghosh, founder leader of our party, our teacher and one of the foremost Marxist thinkers of the era when he was engaged in the historic struggle to build a genuine communist party on Indian soil in the decade of forties. He played a notable role in this struggle during the inception of the party. His dedication to ideology, sense of discipline, loving and pleasing conduct used to evoke reverence and respect in all.

At a tender age, he became associated with the student movement of the revolutionary stream of the freedom struggle. In the forties, he joined the Culture Club in south Calcutta founded by a veteran revolutionary freedom fighter Comrade Chitta Guha. Participating in the Quit India movement of 1942, he was imprisoned in the Presidency jail without trial. In this movement, Comrade Shibdas Ghosh too was imprisoned. After he was released in 1945, Comrade Manoranjan Banerjee came in contact with him for the first time and was deeply attracted by his profound wisdom and lofty character. In the past, Comrade Shibdas Ghosh had been a leading member of the revolutionary Anushilan Samity in the freedom

struggle. Immediately after the RSP was formed in 1940 and most of the members of the Anushilan Samity joined the RSP, Comrade Shibdas Ghosh started an intense socialist ideological struggle within the RSP on the firm basis of the cardinal Leninist organizational principles in order to develop the RSP as a genuine communist party, and he had kept the struggle uninterrupted even within the prison. In 1945, Comrade Manoranjan Banerjee, too, plunged himself into this struggle.

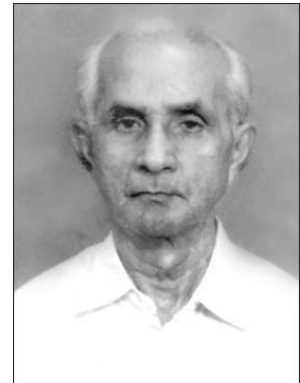
At that time, Comrade Shibdas Ghosh was engaged in an arduous struggle to give birth to a comprehensive and all-embracing dialectical outlook covering all aspects of life on the basis of Marxism-Leninism and in particular to a definite particular concept of revolutionary proletarian ethics, morality and culture, and side by side with this to mould a band of true revolutionaries out of this struggle. In this, Comrade Manoranjan Banerjee significantly helped Comrade Shibdas Ghosh. Comrade Manoranjan Banerjee, Rathin Sen, Pritish Chanda, among others, under the direction of Comrade Shibdas Ghosh, shifted the Culture Club to Lake Temple Road so that it could act as the nerve-centre of the all-out ideological movement that was ongoing. Centring round this club, Comrade Shibdas Ghosh created a captivating environment of cultivation of Marxist ideology by conducting numerous study classes and study circles and, through this, he went on developing able party workers one by one. By establishing extensive mass contacts in the adjoining localities centring round the Culture Club, Comrade Manoranjan Banerjee, too, made a distinctive contribution in this endeavour. Even without elaborate theoretical, philosophical or political discussions, Comrade Manoranjan Banerjee attracted many local youths by his innate sweet temperament and brought them into contact with Comrade Shibdas Ghosh and thus associated them with the party. Many party workers who joined the party in this way through him are still discharging their revolutionary duties, some of them having elevated themselves to the central leadership of the party through their own struggles.

Soon, a fundamental contradiction had arisen between the RSP leadership and the struggle of Comrade Shibdas Ghosh to forge the RSP as a genuine communist party,

and it is in the context of this ideological struggle that Comrade Ghosh's first invaluable booklet "Oitihashik Patabhumikai Revolutionary Socialism" (Revolutionary Socialism in its Historical Background) was published. Comrade Manoranjan Banerjee was the publisher of this booklet. Stopping the circulation of this book, the RSP leadership expelled Comrade Shibdas Ghosh and his followers in 1946. As the next step of formation of our party, the Platform of Action of the SUCI was formed and there, too, Comrade Manoranjan Banerjee played an important role. Although Comrade Shibdas Ghosh and his comrades-in-arms were unwavering in the new and indescribably arduous phase of the struggle that ensued, their hardship used to pain Comrade Banerjee very much. It was he who searched out a room at 16, Janak Road in South Calcutta after prolonged efforts. From 1946 this became the first party centre where Comrade Shibdas Ghosh and I used to live at the beginning. In this way Comrade Manoranjan Banerjee was gradually becoming one of the closest comrades-in-arms of Comrade Shibdas Ghosh.

At the party foundation convention in Joynagar in 1948, he was elected a member of the Central Committee of the party. What a high level of firm conviction of revolutionary ideology and unquestioning allegiance to the leadership he had attained during the inception of the party and in the struggle after to establish it to elevate himself to this position, needs no elaboration. As a member of the Central Committee, he substantially helped in the expansion of the party in Calcutta and North 24-Parganas, particularly in Dum Dum area. He made significant contributions to the trade union movement also. After long efforts, he established the labour union of the Bird Company with about 10,000 members under the guidance of Comrade Shibdas Ghosh in 1950-51. Comrade Shibdas Ghosh was the Adviser and Comrade Subodh Banerjee was the President of this union, while he himself was its General Secretary. He was the President of the Calcutta Golf Club Workers' Union.

It is true that afterwards, being more and more entangled in family duties, he could no longer carry on the heavy responsibilities which he had been discharging in the party for long in this way. But a distinctive



characteristic of his was that even while in family life, his boundless affection and good wishes for the party was undiminished till the last. He did not stay away from the social and political movements and had an innate capacity of intimately mingling with the neighbouring people which is worthy of emulation. While he used to live in Birati, it was his neighbours who got him victorious as an Independent councillor in the election to the North Dum Dum Municipality. He used to maintain regular contacts with the local party workers, inspired them and always helped them with valuable advice. He was ever eager to have regular information from them on the progress of the party and the expansion of the movements. He maintained this as far as possible even after he had a cerebral attack and an operation in 1999 when his day-to-day movements became restricted. Even though he was seriously ill, he was always worried and regularly enquired about the state of health of party workers, especially of the aged leaders of the party, his comrades-in-arms of the past.

I wish to mention another quality of his. He had goodwill, affection and a sense of respect for not only the veteran central leaders, but also for the comrades junior to him who once became associated with the party through him and have now deservedly become central leaders of the party. Without this rare sense of values and lofty faculty of heart, no one can attain genuine revolutionary character. It is these aspects of him that are worthy of emulation.

Comrade Manoranjan Banerjee, one time close comrade-in-arms of Comrade Shibdas Ghosh and an ardent well-wisher of the party till his last breath, will live among us through his qualities and contributions.

Red Salute
Comrade Manoranjan Banerjee!

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF : NIHAR MUKHERJEE