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Demanding Permanent Control of Cyclone, Flood, Drought and Rehabilitation

Mammoth rally at Bhubaneswar

A mammoth rally was held on 11th January by the SUCI at Bhubaneswar demanding the rehabilitation of 1 crore 5 lakh people of Orissa affected by the super cyclone and the flood that hit the coastal districts and the government was called upon to take steps for permanent and long term solution to the problems of flood, cyclone and drought.

More than 30,000 people participated in the rally who had come from the 14 districts of the state affected by flood and cyclone; thousands of people also joined them from other districts of Orissa. They carried posters and banners highlighting the 13 point charter of demand of the SUCI for the cyclone and flood affected people and raised slogans. The biggest march held so far of the people affected by cyclone was spread over more than 3 kms. They gathered near Rabindra Mandap Square, where the protest meeting was held, presided over by Comrade Sambhunath Naik, Comrade Tapas Dutta, member of the Central Committee and Orissa

State Secretary of the SUCI addressed the meeting as the main speaker. He said, both the BJP-led NDA government at the Centre and the Congress government in the state kept blaming each other for not discharging their responsibilities to the affected people which had aggravated their plight. The shifting of responsibility and callousness of governments and ruling parties in the face of such calamities and devastations was unprecedented and most inhuman. There is no language to condemn their heinous attack.

Comrade Tapas Dutta further said that when the parties in power were busy blaming each other, the SUCI organised collection of relief materials from different parts of the country realising the situation as one of the worst national calamities and provided food, clothing and medical care to the affected people.

Comrade Dutta observed, in order to divert the fury of the people and hide the inhuman conduct of the central government which neither declared the grave disaster as national

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AIRBUS HIJACKING

Deplorable Role of BJP Government

On 24 December, a Delhi bound Indian aircraft IC-814 after taking off from Katmandu airport was hijacked over Lucknow within less than an hour. The identity of the hijackers though hinted at initially, has been declared clearly later by the government to be Pakistani in origin. After suffering an ordeal unforgettable for them, the passengers — 160 in number and 14 crew, all hostages for 8 long days — returned from Kandahar airport in Afghanistan, without Rupin Katyal, a co-passenger, a young man returning with his newly wed wife after honeymoon, who had been killed by the hijackers.

We join the people in heaving a sigh of relief at their return after so many days of anxiety. We share the deep feelings of injury of their relatives whose genuine concern instead of being treated with due

sympathy and the voice of reason being heeded, were dealt with by brutal lathicharge by police. We condemn this wanton act of state coercion on the aggrieved citizens. We have not the slightest doubt had any dignitary, or his relative, been involved the BJP government would have acted in the same manner as did the V P Singh government when the daughter of the Union Minister Mr Mufti Mohammed Sayeed was held hostage and whose release was promptly secured however much the BJP had decried this act of its parliamentary rival. And it has been proved by concrete facts like the recent supercyclone in Orissa or the hijacking incident etc. that the government has shown least concern for the life, safety and security of common people.

No words are enough to express

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AIDSO CONFERENCE, WEST BENGAL

Thousands Pledge to Unleash Struggle

The 6th Conference of the WB State Committee of AIDSO was held in Purulia town from 28-31 December, 1999. At the open session organised on the first day at M.S.A Ground, Purulia, the meeting was addressed by Comrade Provash Ghosh, Advisor of AIDSO and member, Central Committee of the SUCI. Prof. Sunanda Sanyal, a noted linguist who played a leading role in the recently victorious language movement in the state, Prof. H N Prosad, an eminent educationist, Comrade Pratap Samal, President AIDSO, Comrade Chandidas Bhattacharyya, Secretary, WB

State Committee of AIDSO, and Comrades B K Rajagopal, Om Prakash, Presidents of Kerala and Haryana State Committees respectively, Prof. Kanai Poddar, Chairman of the Reception Committee and Comrade Swapan Chatterjee, General Secretary.

Comrade Provash Ghosh in his illuminating speech dealt with the severe crisis the system of education is going through at present. He observed that the attack on education started after independence. The then chairman of the UGC Mr C D Deshmukh announced : We want to restrict

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Comrade Tapas Dutta addressing at Bhubaneswar (another picture on page 8)

BJP's Heinous Politics in Hostage Crisis

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the terrible shock and agony of the young wife of Rupin Katyal, widowed on the morrow of honeymoon as also of her relatives in both the families. We share their sorrow and mortification.

Any sensible man cannot but question was all this unavoidable ? The BJP-led government must give an explanation to this all-important question if it lays claim to governance.

Situation thereafter

After this tragic episode, no man having minimum reasoning faculty can be misled by the false sense of victory or achievement being trumpeted by Mr Vajpayee and his colleagues. The media have lamented the government's lapses and ineptitude in general. But what did not come into sharp focus was the propaganda of the BJP stalwarts having portentous consequences in the polity. But at least one columnist in a vernacular daily (*Anandabazar Patrika*, January 2, 2000) has brought into bold relief the propagation of absolutist state that gave birth to fascism. His comment translated reads thus : "Indoctrination of individuals interest with that of the state, if it succeeds would hardly require the need of coercion. People with this misconceived idea, being injected, would readily submit and declare their readiness to give up everything for the state, even sacrifice of lives of their near and dear ones. Hail the state !"

Some concrete questions

We come to some concrete questions to which we hope people would give serious consideration, and which the Prime Minister Mr Vajpayee and his colleagues are duty bound to answer, however unpleasant those may be to them.

Is it not a fact that hijacking of aircraft is nothing new but an experience quite familiar over the decades ? Is it not a fact also that the government is spending thousands of crores of rupees, extracted from the people, for building up a security arrangement to ensure safety and security for the passengers and the aircraft ?

In the light of these facts can the government explain how the hijackers could make their entry into the aircraft with explosives and weapons like AK-47 as reported in the press ? Did the service of Indian Airlines deteriorated below the minimum security norm ?

It reminds one of the Kargil incident. The government failed to explain how despite military and various wings of intelligence services, maintained with thousands of crores of people's money, several hundred intruders could make their safe entry into and build bunkers inside Indian territory. As it remains a mystery so also will the entry of hijackers into the aircraft despite intelligence services and security measures remain another mystery. The government is trying its best to minimise the matter by admitting lapses. They may also punish some small fries as proof of its responsibility. But this cannot reveal the truth. Nor can it prove the government's worth.

The most important question the Vajpayee government cannot escape as to why it did not take the opportunity to act by intercepting the aircraft and starting negotiations at Amritsar. Mr Irani, the Chief Editor of *The Statesman* wrote on January 4 that the hijacked plane was overhead and on the ground of Amritsar "for all of two

hours". Had not the government enough time and means at its disposal to contact the hijackers ? What the security agencies were doing? In fact they were ready but surprisingly enough the political decision was wanting. The military experts have stated, as reported in the press, that they were competent to immobilise the aircraft at Amritsar but the government did not call for their service.

Had the military expertise been utilized, the aircraft immobilized and negotiations started for release of the hostages within hours of hijacking, the government would certainly have the advantage to dictate terms to and put the hijackers into a tight corner. Why this did not happen will have to be explained by cogent reasons and not by the lame excuse that the Prime Minister and other dignitaries were not present in the capital. Does their absence in the capital mean absence of the government ? They were all within the country.

But is it not a fact that when they are to remain even outside the country there is no difficulty in contacting them for decisions to meet an emergency situation. Even in case of stay abroad for days regular as also urgent administrative matters are not in any way hampered as they can be contacted at any moment. What sort of defence the BJP government produce to cover up something they do not want to disclose is for the people to judge.

What stood in the way

So, the government allowed the aircraft to cross the national boundary and fly to Lahore airport to land for refueling. The Pakistan government did not allow it to do so at first before it went back to Amritsar. But after being requested by the Indian government landing and refueling were allowed.

Prof. Chamanlal Gupta, the State Minister of Aviation said after the aircraft was refueled and left the Lahore airport that the hijackers had gone back on their word that they would release the women and children if the aircraft was refueled. The breach of promise of the hijackers could not be raised had not there been exchanges between the government and the hijackers. But why release of women and children only ? Why not the 189 passengers and 14 crew on board ?

The Minister of State expressed apprehension, quoted in the daily on the same day (25 December) that as the tank of the aircraft was full it would proceed to distant place if not allowed to land at Kabul. The Aviation Ministry's officials were of the opinion that the routes undertaken by the hijackers suggested their link not only with Pakistan but with the Talibans also. The questions to be answered by the government must be whether on the basis of the hijackers' promise of releasing women and children at Lahore it requested the Pakistan government to allow landing and refuelling ? Why did it put faith on the hijackers in a hostile territory when it did not take appropriate steps within the national territory?

Some women and children on board, 27 in number, were released on the next day along with the mutilated body of Rupin Katyal. Mr Sharad Yadav, the Civil Aviation Minister flew to Dubai to escort them back to Delhi. Was there any political reason obstructing the release of the 27 on the day of hijacking at Lahore ?

Was it unnatural after the sad end of Rupin Katyal for the relatives of remaining hostages, who became very much fearful and anxious, to demand immediate return of the hostages ? They were demanding of the government to concede the release of only one prisoner in exchange of release of hostages.

BJPs gambit

Messrs Vajpayee, Advani and their ilk in BJP and Sangh Parivar were opposing the demand in unison. Mr Vajpayee took the brave posture of his government of not surrendering to the "terrorists" demand as it would mean compromising national honour and security. Mr Advani went further by calling upon the people to be prepared for sacrificing everything in the interest of the state. And that every citizen must consider himself or herself a soldier of the state wherever they may be.

To counterpose the demand of the relatives, natural and just, and who were storming the External Minister's daily press briefing out of fear, anxiety and impatience, 23 widows of soldiers fallen in Kargil were presented before the Prime Minister under wide coverage to say that their husband did not lay down their lives for the release of enemies in prison. Even a little girl whose parents were among the hostages was shown on the TV screen to repose confidence in the government and echoing what was tutored 'nation's interest is supreme'!

So, alongwith whipping up national jingoism and releasing at the same time communal undercurrent only to divert people's anger from the BJP government to Pakistan, efforts were made through prompt diplomatic means for stalling the move to raise the matter in the UNO. Mr Vajpayee declared his government's opposition to UN intervention. He was aware that internationalization of the matter would not only internationalize the question of its competence but the Kashmir issue itself which is at the root of all the troubles.

Government's claim unfounded

On day 8, i.e. on December 31, all the heroics and tall talks about 'national honour' 'national interest' ended in a damp squib. The BJP government accepted the terms of releasing three prisoners in place of the original demand of one. Mr Jaswant Singh, the high-profile figure in the so-called "crisis-management group" had to take them to Kandahar airport. The co-pilot of the aircraft has revealed, as reported in the press, (January 6) that the passengers were informed about the agreement on their release long 18 hours after. This tells the saddest story about the criminal indifference of a government to the passengers kept hostages in a distant place with temperature below freezing point and the urgency for them to have a sense of relief from a nightmarish experience.

It is to be noted that in any case of release of hostage the hijackers demand asylum. In this case, it was agreed that their asylum would be kept secret. The Taliban government ordered them to go out of Afghanistan within 10 hours and helped them to do so.

The Vajpayee government accuses Pakistan to be a 'terrorist state' and appealed to the USA and

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Meeting with Finance Minister**UTUC-LS' concern over unemployment**

Comrade Ashutosh Banerji, President and Comrade Shankar Saha, Secretary, United Trade Union Centre-Lenin Sarani (UTUC-LS) presented a note on employment situation at a meeting called by the Finance Minister, Government of India with the representatives of Central Trade Unions on 6th January, 2000, the text of which is given below:

In the fitness of things, as the representatives of the workforce in India, we like to alert the Finance Minister about the alarming declining trend in the employment situation, a fallout of the New Economic & Industrial Policy of the Government of India.

The Economic Survey 1998-99, issued by the Economic Division, Ministry of Finance, Government of India, painted a grim picture about the rate of growth of employment (page 147, Table 10.8). The data reveals the declining trend during the period from 1987-88 to 1993-94 in both organised and unorganised sectors. Overall annual average growth of employment came down to 2.37 per cent during 1987-88 to 1993-94 from 2.75 per cent during 1972-73 to 1977-78.

Annual average growth rate of employment in the organised sector also reveals the same trend. In the public sector, which used to generate major chunk of employment, the average growth rate came down from 2.99 per cent during 1977-78 to 1983-84 to 1.00 per cent during 1987-88 to 1993-94.

In the private sector, it came down from 1.41 per cent to 1.18 per cent during the same period, respectively.

Though private sector produced more jobs during 1987-88 to 1993-94 in comparison to public sector during the same period, it could not reach even nearer the level of rate of growth of employment in public sector during 1977-78 to 1983.

Year to year analysis of organised sector employment from 1991 to 1997 (ibid, Table 10.9) reveals the same declining trend. In public sector the decline is very steep. The annual rate of growth of employment came down to 0.67 per cent in 1997 from 1.52 per cent in 1991. Though the rate increased in private sector from 1.24 per cent in 1991 to 2.04 in 1997, yet it is well below the rate of average growth of 2.99 per cent in public sector during 1977-78 to 1983.

Incidence of VRS in basic industry

Unemployment situation has been aggravated by the scourge of Voluntary Retirement Scheme (VRS). It is virtually a cognate part of NEIP. Though total number of workmen retrenched through VRS in public and private sectors is not available, the magnitude of this scourge can be gauged by only gleaning facts from the plan to impose VRS upon one lakh employees out of total strength of one lakh seventy four thousand in five years in SAIL alone. BALCO will be forcing out three thousand three hundred out of total strength of seven thousand three hundred employees.

VRS in Banks

In banking sector employment a scandalous situation is being created. Out of nearly thirteen lakh employees, ten lakhs are being targeted for VRS in course of four to five years.

Varma Committee has already recommended twentyfive per cent cut in work strength in three nationalized banks, to start with the process of gradual downsizing.

Unemployment due to closure in basic industry

In 1998, Hindustan Copper Limited, a PSU in Bihar, closed down two copper mines, terminating services of two thousand eighteen workmen. In 1999, the company has applied again to the Labour Department for further permission to close down two more mines, retrenching one thousand workers.

We like to draw the attention of the Finance Minister that thoughtless steep cut of import duty on copper, a basic industrial input, has made indigenous copper dearer than imported copper, thereby artificially making copper-production uneconomic. This policy is directly responsible for the loss of jobs of thousands of workers.

This policy, in the short run, may be helpful to the light industrial sector, manufacturing items, using copper as an input. But this is going to grievously injure a basic industry, like copper. The government may ignore the fact at the country's peril that the basic industry constitute the rockbottom foundation of both light industry and economic independence.

Coal

The same thoughtless economic policy is being drawn for implementation in the sphere of coal, another basic industry. Government of India is planning to close down nearly sixty four coal mines, in eastern region, rendering about one lakh workers jobless.

These facts are only glimpses of the fact of deteriorating joblessness.

Review of customs duties needed

Under these circumstances the Finance Ministry should review the structure of the customs duties, particularly the import duties. The impact of heavy cut in import duties on basic, heavy and infrastructural industries, rendering these sectors, the important foundations of the economy, unviable and ultimately leading to spiraling redundancy among the working population should be properly studied and remedial measures taken in the ensuing budget.

Disinvestment in PSUs in basic and heavy industries

Disinvestment in PSUs are affecting the workforce adversely in various ways.

First, to make attractive, disinvestment of equities, or outright sale or taking in strategic partners, workforce are being downsized considerably.

Second, the immediate declared aim of disinvestment is to collect rupees ten thousand crore to meet budget deficit. Consequently, the sale proceeds shall not be ploughed back to make the capital of the concerned PSU relatively more adequate and more competitive. Neither the government has any plan to invest the sum to build new productive capacity and generate new job opportunities. Naturally the policy of disinvestment is thoroughly sterile and unproductive.

Third, when the disinvestment transaction is between two PSUs, mutually buying each other's equity, the same sterile and unproductive process prevails here. Moreover this type of transaction, particularly on 'replacement cost basis' erodes the capital adequacy level of the buyer PSU, making it vulnerable to sickness in future. Instead of creating job opportunities this potential danger will endanger the existing jobs.

Fourth, disinvestment of PSUs presupposes

withdrawal of the government from all, even basic, heavy and infrastructure industries. In reality the government has to a very great extent withdrawn, practically stopping new investments or renewal of capital or upgrading the capital adequacy level of existing PSUs and PSEs. Tragedy is this that the private capital is not coming forward to fill up the gap.

Consequently, not only productive business but also the job market have become dry. The new labour force coming in the market is only adding to the existing redundancy.

It follows from this, that the whole disinvestment policy in any form should be reconsidered and reversed without loss of time.

Employment of hightech

It goes without saying that more and more use of hightech leads to increase in labour productivity, requiring less manpower. The fallout is more loss of jobs and less job opportunities. Only a very small number of specialized jobs within a very narrow high-skilled job market are created.

Economic consequence of indiscriminate use of hightech will be disastrous.

First, it should be kept in mind, that capital cost is very high today. Employment of hightech requires upgraded and expanded capital adequacy base, at a very high cost. Reduction of manpower may reduce the operational cost to an extent. But the point is whether adequate market and profit commensurate with the upgraded and expanded high cost capital base will be at all available. Spiraling unemployed, under-employed, casual and contractual workforce and 406.3 million people under poverty line even in 1998, constitute a market whose sliding purchasing power cannot afford to buy even food for two square meals a day, let alone high priced high-tech consumer durables produced by the pampered light industries. This is not only true for today when the economy is still in the grip of recession, but also true for tomorrow. Because this imbalance will remain as a constant feature; particularly in a country like ours.

So, we request the Finance Minister to pay attention to this problem and stop use of hightech indiscriminately at the cost of labour intensive industries at the present juncture of the evolution of the Indian economy.

AIKKMS Conference at Rewari

All India Krishak Khet Majdoor Sangthan held its local conferences at various places in District Rewari. These conferences were addressed by Comrades Satyawan and Vijai Kumar, the State leaders of the organisation apart from other district and local leaders. Comrades Ramesh Chander and Ratan Lal of AIDS also spoke to the gatherings. Such conferences were held at village Khaleta and Nimoth in Khol Block and at village Rampuri and Berli Kalan in Jatusana Block. The last conference was held on December 25, 99.

During the preparation of these conferences the youth activists of the organisation staged a day and night dharna at Burauli power house on 14 and 15 December 99. The damaged transformer of 100 kw was immediately replaced through pressure of the movement.

Save Orissa Day Observed in States

Even after more than two months since the super-cyclone hit Orissa the Central BJP government and the State Congress (I) government have not taken any well planned relief and rehabilitation programme to save the distressed people. Protesting against the criminally negligent attitude, Save Orissa Day has been observed by our party SUCI, at the call of the Central Committee throughout the country on 20th December 99 with protest rallies, street corner meetings and sending of memoranda to the President of India through state and district level authorities. In many states, photo and press-clippings exhibitions were organised, showing the plight of the cyclone hit Orissa people, the governments' failure and also the relief work and medical service by our party which has stood by the distressed people from the very first. The exhibition also highlighted the campaign activities by our party for building up a powerful mass movement in this regard with a 14-point charter of demands. We published a brief account of the programme in the last issue and below we give the remaining news, in brief, that has reached us.

Tamilnadu

Chennai: 20 Dec.: On Orissa Day the Tamilnadu unit of the SUCI held a demonstration in Saidapet. The meeting was addressed by Comrade. R Baskaran, member, State Organising Committee. He criticised the BJP-led Central government for spending thousands of crores for nuclear armament missile programmes while failing to give bare necessary amount to the people who have lost more than one lakh of their beloved and all their belongings. A memorandum was submitted through ADC in absence of the Governor. A photo exhibition was organised.

Kerala

Trivandrum: 20 Dec.: A memorandum was submitted to the Governor. A photo and press-clipping exhibition was organised, which was inaugurated by Dr. N A Karim, the former Pro-vice Chancellor, Kerala University. Comrade. B. K. Rajagopal, captain of the relief team that went from Kerala to Orissa for three weeks, also spoke. The exhibition watched by thousands of people continued for two days. Similar programmes were held in the districts of Kannur, Kozhikkode, Trichur, Ernakulam, Alleppey and Kottayam.

Protest demonstrations and various other campaign activities were held there.

Maharashtra

Mumbai: The Thane Unit of the party organised a demonstration at Azad Maidan, Mumbai V.T. on 27 December. The memorandum was handed over to the Governor. The demonstration that ended as meeting was addressed by Comrades Anil Tyagi, Y K Kulshrestha and Om Prakash Maurya.

Nagpur: Nagpur Unit of the SUCI threw its whole strength behind collection of relief materials and cash for the victims of the super-cyclone hit Orissa. Many poor workers, peasants, agricultural labourers donated a day's wage for the victims.

MP

Jabalpur: The Jabalpur District Organizing Committee of the party organised the exhibition and protest meeting on 19th December. A procession started from Kanchghar Chowraha and ended with a street corner meeting at Ghamapur. The memorandum was submitted to the AC, Jabalpur by Comrades U P Biswas, Bhabani Ghosh, Chandra Patra, R N Verma and Nilima Roy.

Bhopal: A memorandum was submitted by a delegation led by Comrade. J C Barai, member of Coordination Committee SUCI, MP. Since the Governor was out of station, the memorandum was received by the ADC, with whom the delegation discussed the 14 charter of demands.

Bihar

Patna: a mass meeting, photo exhibition and fund collection for relief were organised on that day too. Comrade Amriteswar Chakraborty, Secretary Bihar State Committee, on behalf of the party, submitted the memorandum.

Tripura

Agartala, 20 Dec.: An Exhibition and street corner meeting were held at Kaman Choumabhani. The memorandum was submitted to the Governor. The meeting was addressed by Comrades Babul Banik and Subrata Chakraborty.

Haryana/Punjab

Chandigarh, Rohtak: The party units of Haryana and Punjab jointly organised a photo exhibition in Chandigarh which attracted thousands of people. There was strong resentment that in spite of unlimited help sent by people from

all over India the condition of Orissa has still not returned to normal. They condemned the indifferent attitudes of the both the Central and state governments in providing relief, and deep appreciated for the relief work done by our party. On the same day, a party delegation led by Comrade Anoop Singh, member State Organizing Committee SUCI

and Comrades Roshan Lal and Omprakash, both leader of the party, submitted the memorandum to the Governor of Haryana.

Comrad Amrinder Pal Singh, in charge SUCI Punjab State and Comrade Inderjeet Singh also submitted a memorandum to the Governor of Punjab.

Demonstrations were organised at district headquarters too on 20 December, at Gurgaon, Rewari, Haruaul and memoranda were submitted to respective Deputy Commissioners. A photo exhibition was also held at Gohana Stand and Deputy Commissioner Office, Rohtak. Comrade Ramphal, member State Organizing Committee SUCI, addressed the people there. A similar exhibition was organised at Gurgaon on the same day.

West Bengal

Calcutta, 20th December: A photo exhibition was held in front of Esplanade Metro Station. A public meeting was also organised at the same place comrade Sadananda Bagal, member, West Bengal State Committee presided over the meeting while Comrade Kartick Saha, member, West Bengal State Committee and Comrade Amitava Chatterjee, a leading organiser addressed the gathering.

This Day was also observed in different districts of West Bengal.

All India Save Education

Tamil Nadu

All India Protest Day was observed on 10 Dec. 99 against all out communalisation, commercialisation and privatisation of education by All India save Education Committee (AISEC). A protest demonstration was organised by Tamilnadu State Unit at Saidapet, Chennai. Students, women, youth who participated in the demonstration raised thunderous slogans condemning the sinister design of the Union government heeded by the BJP to saffronise education history media with ulterior motive of striking a blow to moral, ethical and cultural ethos of the country. Demonstrators protested against replacing the presidents of key departments like ICHR, ICSSR, NCERT, Prasar Bharathi with person who are having definite 'Hindutva' ideological leanings. They also demanded of the Central government to scrap the anti-people national policy on education (NEP) and immediate allocation of at least 10 % in central budget for education.

Andhra Pradesh

AP Save Education Committee, in a press conference on 6th December, protested Chief Minister Chandra Babu Naidu's view that social sciences are unnecessary, as they cannot fetch jobs.

The press conference was addressed by Prof. P. L. Vishweshar Rao, General Secretary, Osmania University Teachers' Association and Chinmoy Goswami, General Secretary, University of Hyderabad Teachers Association.

The Save Education Committee organised a seminar on 12th December '99 at Ravindra Bharati, Hyderabad on 'Importance of Social Sciences', attended by a large number of people from academic world and addressed by historians, university teachers and others. In one voice the speakers condemned the damaging view of the Chief Minister.



SUCI activists of Mumbai-Thane unit observing 'Save Orissa Day' on 27-12-99

All India Protest Week observed by AIMSS

West Bengal

At the call of the AIMSS over 2000 women from different districts violated law on 21st December in Calcutta which was part of the All India Protest week against custom of dowry, torture on women, flesh trade, obscenity in media, price rise, fundamentalists' attack on minority community people, communalisation, privatisation and commercialisation of education, etc. At first a meeting was held at Subodh Mullick Square, from where a fervent procession marched to Rani Rasmoni Road to break the police barricade.

Before it, throughout the protest week since 15 December, meetings, processions, group meetings, etc. were held in different districts.

Bangalore

The Bangalore district of AIMSS organised a protest demonstration as part of the 'All India Protest Week' against obscene movies and literature, particularly against the movie UPENDRA in front of the Himalaya Theatre, on 15th December at 10.30 a.m. An effigy of UPENDRA, representing perverted behaviour was burnt in presence of hundreds of women, students and common people who shouted slogans, 'Ban Upendra Movie' etc.

On this occasion, veteran freedom fighter Sri Satyavrata, addressing the gathering, said: The increasing number of obscene movies have only business motive in making films.

The State Secretary of AIMSS, Dr. H.G. Jayalakshmi, who also spoke against the obscene movies and the Censor Board, which passes such films. These anti-social ideas as in UPENDRA should be fought tooth and nail by our women, students and youth.

Comrade Prathibha Kumari, Vice-President of the Bangalore district, presided over the protest demonstration.

Bihar

Patna, 21 December: The Bihar AIMSS violated law against rising atrocities on women, dowry deaths, women infanticide. A well

decorated procession started from the historic Gandhi Maidan and proceeded towards the Dak Bunglow Chowk, where Comrade Shyamali Mukherjee said that several political parties and women's organizations were talking as if 33% reservation alone would solve all problems of women. She stressed: We are not against reservation. But we feel that the reservation is not enough to solve the problems of women.

Women in large numbers from different



A view of protest march before Nagpur Assembly House on 22nd December '99 organised by SUCI, AIDYO, AIDS0, Paper Kamgar Sangathana and Shiram Sarkari Shakkur Karkhana Shramik Sangathana demanding, inter alia, opening of the sugar mill, punishment of the owner of the Malu Paper Mill, abolition of contract labour system, job permanency and minimum wage, etc. It was led by Comrades Madhab Bhonde, Sanjay Sonekar and Rabi Sakhre.

districts participated in the law violation. Comrades Sadhana Kumari, Lily Das, Chandana Banerjee and Alpana led the law violation.

Tripura

Agartala, 21.12.99: Observing All India Protest Day the Tripura Unit of the AIMSS organised a well decorated procession. At IGM Choumuhani. The leaders of the organisation, took part in civil disobedience and courted arrest, including Comrades Shibani Das, Shukla Chakraborty, Shima Acharyya, Meena Dey, Kalyani Das and Shephali Bhowmik.

The AIMSS observed All India Protest Week from 15 to 21 December. As a part of this programme, the Tripura State Unit submitted

a memorandum addressed to the Prime Minister, through the Governor of the State.

Rohtak

AIMSS in Haryana observed protest dharna in various districts of the state at Deputy Commissioner's offices and their delegation submitted memorandum addressed to Mr A B Vajpayee, Prime Minister through the respective Deputy Commissioners. At Rohtak Comrades Kanta and Mamta Rani led the delegation of MSS.

At Rewari Smt Kavita and Meena Devi led the delegation. At Gurgaon Comrades Promila Lathar, Kumari Ajit Kaur, Sushma Nandi, Sunil, Sudesh led the delegation.

A delegation led by Bharpai, Kala Devi submitted the memorandum at Narnaul.

At Sonapat Com. Phoolpati, Darshna Devi and Krishna Devi led the delegation.

Chennai

The Chennai AIMSS observed protest week

from 15.12.99 to 21.12.99. Propaganda meeting and seminars were conducted at Bharathi Women's College, on 16.12.99. Door to door intensive campaign and street corner meetings were conducted. A protest demonstration was held on 21.12.99 near State Guesthouse. Hundreds of women from all sections gathered at the spot demanding exemplary punishment to the culprits responsible for atrocities on women. They also condemned rehabilitation works for the super cyclone-hit people of Orissa etc. At the end a delegation submitted a memorandum to the ADC in absence of the Governor.

Brutal attack on SUCI workers at Binjharpur, Orissa during Dharna

Jajpur, 30.12.99 - A massive dharna was staged under the banner of SUCI Binjharpur local Committee at Binjharpur Tahasildar Office, Orissa, on 30.12.99 demanding financial help for the people whose houses have been damaged in the last super cyclone and flood and who have been deprived of any aid till now.

Towards the close of the Dharna hooligans of local Congress and BJD at the instigation of the Tahasildar, quite unexpectedly, rushed out from his office and attacked the peaceful participants of the Dharna with iron rods, lathis and other weapons. Many people were severely beaten and wounded including women and children. Two of the suci workers namely Comrades Achyat Pradhan and Arta Jena fell victim to their wanton attack. They instantly fell down on the ground senseless. They sustained serious injuries in the head and were removed to the Hospital at Jajpur. Although the police were present on the spot they were silent spectators and had not taken any step till now.



A view of protest march by AIMSS, Bihar, in Patna on 21.12.99

MEXICO**Students achieve glorious victory written in letters of blood**

3 lakh students in Mexico recently ended a five month long strike demanding withdrawal of exorbitantly enhanced tuition fees and the government's agenda of economic reforms. The students called off their strike as the government promised to accede to their demands. Never before did a student strike run so long in Mexico or Latin America: hence it was unique.

Savage repression and torture was let loose on the students to put down the movement. Students — more than a hundred — died martyr's death. 30 thousand students have been arrested. The movement attained a new dimension with martyrs laying down their lives as various sections of the working people rallied in support of the movement. This united movement was a bitter pill for the Mexican ruling class as well as US imperialists. The impact of this movement thrilled the hearts of the exploited people in the whole of Latin America who came out with solidarity strikes. Internationalism assumed a new magnitude.

In Dec 1994 the devaluation of Peso, the Mexican currency, threw 9 crore of working people into an acute crisis. Their purchasing power fell by 40 per cent. The government instead of trying to save the working people, slashed — on the plea of financial crisis — 80% of the Budget allocation on welfare programme work like health and education and social security and this aggravated the hardship of the people. But the government came forward to save the industrialists and bank owners by forming a Bank-Saving Protection Fund with \$6500 crores in 1995. This fund led to a gain of \$1100 crore

for 304 corporate houses and bank owners of Mexico. These steps of the government disillusioned the working people and the students about the economic reform programme of the government.

So long the government shouldered the major portion of the expenditure for education. But the Arnesto Jandillo Government withdrew 80 % of the subsidy on education, started privatizing education; at once tuition fees soared from 2 cents to 145 dollar, denying for good the light of education to youngsters from middle and lower middle class families. This fact infuriated the students community. They demanded education for all, withdrawal of the hike in tuition fee and fee for university entrance examination alongwith thoroughgoing education reform. As the government turned down the demands, the students were compelled to call a strike.

In order to organize an allout strike from 21.4.99 they formed a General Strike Council (C.G.H). The call of the strike was ratified by an assembly of one lakh students in the campus of the University of Mexico. On the third day of the strike three lakh teachers, students and guardians, an all time record in Mexico, brought out a procession as a token of solidarity with the movement. This procession led to total stoppage of the functioning of schools, colleges and universities.

The movement grew in momentum with the capture of the university building by the students and guardians. The message of solidarity from the students of other eleven universities of Mexico

was conveyed and 'Save Education Day' was observed in the whole country.

A pamphlet titled "The Road to Victory" published by the General Strike Council, declared that education is a birth right, not a gift or privilege. It demanded opening of the scope for education to all and to annul the proposal for privatization of power sector. The pamphlet also appealed to the employees of the power sector to join the movement.

To scuttle the movement the government proposed negotiation but backed out on flimsy pretexts. Exasperated the students vowed to carry on the movement without any negotiation.

Government threats to students now turned to repression. It took a toll of hundred lives by police firing. Tens of thousands of students were thrown into prison. The ruling party and rightist parties let loose armed hoodlums on students. They stripped and brutally injured hundreds of students on open roads. Female students were abducted and gang-raped, and found dead later. On a piece of paper lying beside the dead bodies was written that they were punished for taking part in the illegal strike.

A confidential report from CIA warned the Jaudillo Government that the movement, if it continued, may turn into a mass upsurge. Thus warned, the government proposed negotiation and bowed down. With a complete victory the movement came to a glorious end.

[Sources : *Sunday Times* and *Sunday Observer* (London) 26.9.99, *Workers' World* (Chicago) 30.7.99, *Time* 4.10.99 and *Frontline* 30.7.99]

All India Anti-Imperialist Forum Hails Seattle Protests

The Anti-imperialist Forum, Calcutta held a citizens convention on 7th January last at the Students' Hall, Calcutta to express solidarity with the agitators who demonstrated against WTO meet at Seattle. Professor Dhrubajyoti Mukherjee presided over the meeting. Prof Sunandya Sanyal, a renowned educationist, Comrade Manik Mukherjee, Vice-President AIAIF and Dr Tarun Mandal, a leading figure of health care movement, addressed the gathering. Dr. Anup Sinha, a noted economist sent a note. Prof. Sundanda Sanyal in his speech expressed concern at the infiltration of foreign capital in our educational system and warned that it would destroy our cultural fabric. Dr. Tarun Mandal stressed that WTO was a blueprint of the imperialist powers, the USA in particular, to reduce the rest of the world into their captive market. Comrade Manik Mukherjee showed how this body floated to mitigate clash of interests is hopelessly incapable of doing so.

Dr Ashoke Samanta moved the main resolution, which is given below.

Resolution

This meeting hails the unprecedented surge of public protest that marked the occasion of the WTO conference in Seattle. The all-powerful President of United States, the prime architect of WTO, had to face angry demonstrators. The Seattle police pounced on the demonstrators with ferociousness and finally emergency was declared in the city. In the end the US Trade Secretary Charlene Barshefsky called a Press Conference to reveal the collapse of the talks. The 135

delegations that came to the meeting left after four days of acrimonious debate not only without conducting the official business of agreeing on an Agenda, but openly ventilating their differences for all the world to see. The popular protest spread to the other side of the Atlantic. Thousands of people demonstrated in London raising slogans against imperialism and protesting against the decision to privatize the Railways. It was a day of gloom and disappointment for the imperialists. Their carefully hatched plan to carve out the world amongst themselves for unrestricted plunder met with a stiff resistance from the people and had gone awry.

After the collapse of socialist camp the bourgeois economists and the media hyped up the idea of a unipolar world under the unchallenged supremacy of the United States. However, in this era of intense crisis of world capitalism-imperialism, theirs is but a naïve hope that the WTO arrangement would cure the cancerous disease. This meeting emphasizes that the slogans of globalization and liberalization are but thinly veiled attempts to establish all round domination of advanced capitalist countries on the developing world. But the laws of history are inexorable - these very attempts would inevitably lead to intensification of conflict among the developed capitalist-imperialist countries and between the developed and developing countries. Each would fight to have its share in the pie. This is what we witnessed in the WTO Conference, which attempted to limit the internal conflict among the

capitalist countries to a manageable extent and to build up a single global capitalist market.

While America and European Union wanted to curb the competitive power of the third world countries by raising the issues of labour standards, quality of life of the workers and their minimum wage, EU and Japan were opposing USA on the question of agricultural subsidies, and US anti-dumping laws; and the third world countries were fighting to safeguard their own interests by playing one major industrial nation against the other.

This meeting notes with concern that such trade wars in the capitalist world have the potentiality to burst out into hot wars and we are indeed witnessing local and regional conflicts in different corners of the globe stemming from the conflict of interest of different capitalist countries.

It is heartening that while the internal conflict in the capitalist world was stalling the progress of talks, democratic people who are fighting against imperialist exploitation, against the hegemony of superpowers, against WTO and GATT converged in Seattle with a rare show of solidarity to stage a massive demonstration. Seattle became the focal point for international mass movement against WTO and the powerful multinational syndicates.

We note that among the people who came to protest there were various shades of opinion. On the one hand there were those with genuine anti-imperialist leanings who stood by the people of the third world countries in their struggle against

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Privatisation of Education Opposed

(Contd. from page 1)

education, especially the higher education, in order to minimise the number of educated unemployed. Comrade Ghosh referred to the central and the state governments' argument that those who cannot afford would not get minimum education. The governments had virtually declared moratorium on further increase of schools, colleges and universities. They were inviting foreign investments in education, encouraging job-orientation in courses and curriculum, advocating cult of old, medieval, obscurantist thoughts and ideas in education and what not! Recalling the teachings of our renaissance stalwarts like Vidyasagar, Rammohan, Tilak, Gokhale, Rabindranath, Saratchandra and others, he observed that the class in power was out to destroy any element in education that could generate love for truth, rationality and

a mind free from all religious tutelage and bigotry. Referring to the havoc caused in education during the fascist regime in Germany, Comrade Provas Ghosh, stressed that those who advocated Hindutva in this country were following the path of Hitler who had regimented the minds of German people as a whole. Describing the mounting crisis and all-out degeneration in every sphere of life he pointed out that it was an all-out attack of capitalism. In conclusion he recalled the teaching of Comrade Shibdas Ghosh, the great leader of the proletariat, from his speech delivered in the Cuttack Conference of AIDS0 and appealed to the large students mass gathered there to adopt Marxism-Leninism and Comrade Ghosh's thoughts as the guiding principles of life, which alone could save them from the present degeneration and lead them to the path of social progress.

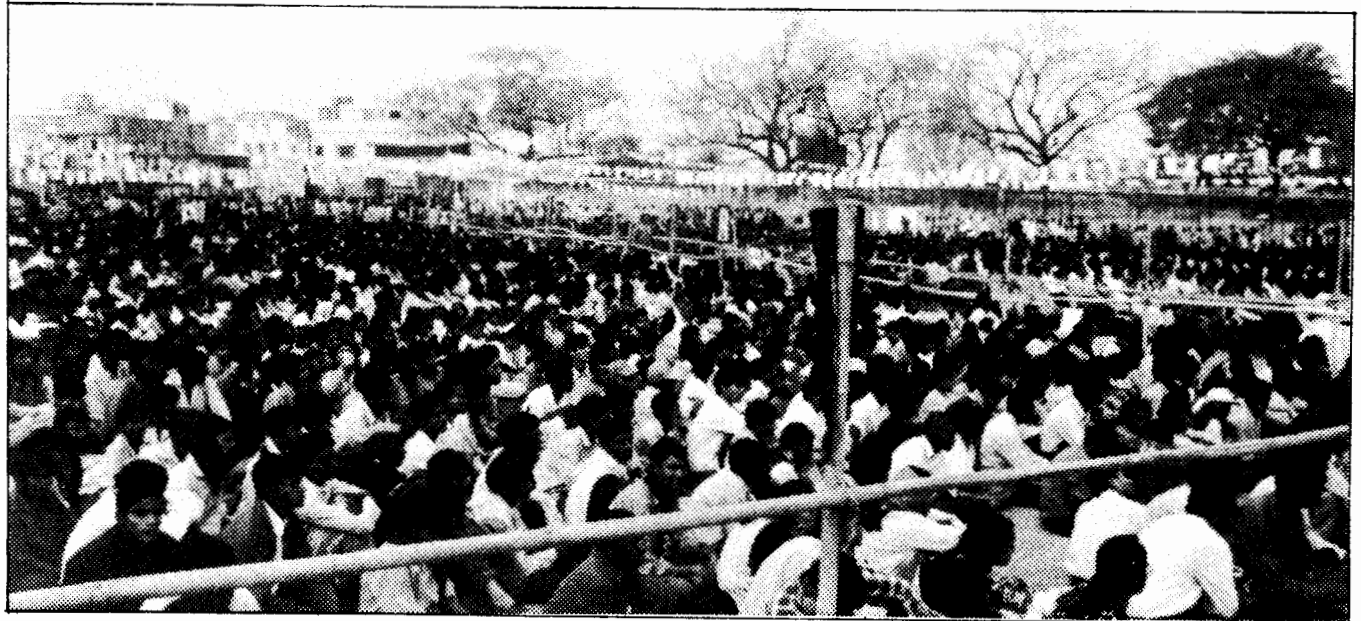
Prof. Sunanda Sanyal observed: AIDS0 is an extraordinary students' organisation. There is no such organisation seen in the country. Its leaders have clear perception regarding every aspect of education. The AIDS0 is the only organisation which consistently played its glorious role in the historical education movement from the beginning. Referring to the state of affairs in education in the state he pointed out that the system of education has totally collapsed in West Bengal. He expressed his confidence in AIDS0 saying that only the type of movements launched by this organisation could save education from collapse.

Prof. H. N. Prosad in his speech observed: Objective of education cannot be mere information-gathering. Information is necessary, but more important is man-making and character-building. Education would be proper when it instils virtues in learner's mind which make them sympathise with others' pain and work to heal it.

The meeting was presided over by Comrade Santu Gupta, President AIDS0, WB State Committee. At the outset the martyrs' column was garlanded by the leaders and song on AIDS0 was

presented. On the occasion of the Conference, the Purulia town was named after the great martyr of the national freedom movement, Birsha Munda. The entire town was decorated with beautiful wall-writings and huge colourful portals. About 20,000 students came in processions traversing

in the evening of 29th and a good number of them deliberated on the Secretary's Report, main resolution and resolution on the criminal negligence of the government towards the cyclone affected people of Orissa. A tape-recorded message of Prof. Sushil Kumar Mukherjee, who



Open Session : A section of the students' gathering

the main thoroughfares of the town.

On 29th a Seminar on "Privatisation, Commercialisation and Communalisation of Education" was held which was addressed by leaders of SFI, PSU and AIDS0.

About 3100 delegates and 700 observers participated in the delegate session which started

could not attend the Conference due to serious illness, was played in the beginning of the delegate session.

The delegates elected a 77-member strong WB State Committee of AIDS0 with Comrade Debasis Roy as President and Comrade Mahiuddin Mannan as Secretary.

AIRBUS HIJACKING

(Contd. from page 2)

others to declare so. They did not. It is known that Pakistan has been engineering cross border terrorism. Knowledgeable persons know very well it is the US imperialism that has been working as the high priest of international terrorism. Who can forget its role in toppling governments and murdering leaders by engaging CIA agents whenever it suited their interests. And the Indian government cannot claim its hands are clean. State terrorism is a regular feature both inside and outside in all capitalist-imperialist countries. And the US imperialism is surely at the top.

What is important to note is that the Clinton administration and the US Congress condemned the hijacking and keeping hostage 4 days after the incident. Even this delayed response of the US administration was considered satisfactory by the Indian government.

What is the role of the US imperialism when BJP tried always to project it as India's friend? The government requested the USA to put pressure on Pakistan in favour of India which it did not. The US imperialism on the other hand is trying to keep the two countries locked in conflict and take advantage of it as is its usual practice. We alert the people against this danger looming large.

We cannot but note the deplorable role of the parliamentary parties like the Congress, CPI(M), CPI, etc. They were called at a meeting convened by the government. They gave a blank cheque to the government for handling the whole situation. The question of security of life of the passengers

and their safe return at the earliest did not become a matter of deep concern for them.

It is clear that all these parties stand on the same line so far as defending the interests of the capitalist state is concerned.

After a fortnight India Government arrested from Mumbai 4 accomplices of the hijackers from whom 5 names and photos of hijackers were recovered. It again proves that these people were very much in India. But the India Government could not detect them even during the episode.

Before concluding let us sum up the 'ability' of the government. It failed to ensure security measures to make impossible the entry of hijackers with explosives and weapons within the aircraft. It failed to press into service military and intelligence services to stall the aircraft at Amritsar and secure release of the hostages hours after the hijacking within the national boundary. It could not save the life of a young passenger. The government boasted it would not surrender but ultimately it conceded the release of three prisoners in place of one, the original demand.

Now, the BJP government to cover up its guilt has started anti-Pakistan tirade. The Pakistan government on its part has accelerated anti-India feelings. This is causing further animosity between the people of both the countries.

We appeal to the people of both the countries to be wide awake to the serious danger staring in their face.

(Written on 8.1.2000)

Release Kargil Report in Full

— Nihar Mukherjee

Comrade Nihar Mukherjee, General Secretary, SUCI, in course of a statement on 9 January, 2000 said :

"We note with grave alarm that the report of the Special Committee on Kargil which was handed over to the Prime Minister recently has been attached with another note and a portion cut off reportedly prepared at the instance of an infamous bureaucrat. This practice is highly deplorable.

"We strongly feel that our people have a right to know what happened in Kargil and to reveal the truth.

"We demand of the government its immediate publication in full."

SUCI PROTESTS U. P. BILL

Comrade Nihar Mukherjee, General Secretary, SUCI, in course of a statement on 10 January, 2000 said :

"The UP Public Buildings Places of Worship Regulation Bill passed recently by a voice vote in the Assembly poses a great threat against the pursuit of religious rites by the minority community people — the Muslims and the Christians in particular. This time the plea of the Hindutva Brigade led by VHP-Hindu Jagaran Manch, etc. has been the mushrooming of mosques and madrasas in the Indo-Nepal border. According to this Bill the District Magistrates

have been empowered with such absolute authorities that they will enjoy the sole power to decide whether these places of worships or education can be built or should continue to stay or even demolished — it will depend on them on the specious plea that they may be used as hideouts by the "terrorists". Going by the track record of the Sangh Parivar it is clear that their outfits will let loose further attacks against the Muslims and the Christians, empowered as they are now with legal sanction. This once again nakedly exposes the menacing and heinous character of the Sangh Parivar showing at the same time how the BJP government is curtailing the fundamental rights of the citizen.

"We condemn this heinous move and demand revocation of this Bill to force which all left, democratic, secular parties and forces and well-meaning people must build up a powerful and mighty movement."

Rally at Bhubaneswar

(Contd. from page 1)

calamity nor did anything on war footing to meet the situation. Assembly election has been announced by the Election Commission which is highly condemnable.

He further said, when more than 1 crore 5 lakh people of the state have been severely ravaged by the cyclone and flood and when they are facing a life and death problem for rehabilitation and relief operation and when the need is to draw the pressing attention of the central and state governments, the Election Commission has directed the political parties not to participate in relief work and banned the circulation of information relating to relief work among the affected people and demonstrations and movements of these helpless people. This is most undemocratic, it tramples people's basic right and is intended to cover up the criminal negligence of the Central government in providing even the bare assistance to the affected people. It is a well-designed conspiracy, he said.

Comrade Dutta concluded his speech by calling upon the people to build up long term and powerful movements to realise their demands and reminded the audience that this mammoth rally was not an end in itself, rather the beginning of a

sustained and powerful movement for rehabilitation and permanent solution of flood, drought and cyclone. Among others, comrades Uddhab Jena, Dhurjati Das, Bishnu Das, Jagabandhu Baral, Bhimsen Behra, Surendra Mallik, Pradipta Ram, Sankha Majhi and Umakanta Rath addressed the meeting.

A 5-member delegation on behalf of the Orissa State Committee submitted a memorandum to the Governor of Orissa addressed to the President of India which contained 13-point charter of demands of the affected people.

The demands called upon the government to declare the situation in Orissa as one of national calamity, provide minimum Rs. 50,000/- per peasant family as assistance for repairing of damaged houses, seeds, manure and pesticide, to take up reconstruction and repair of educational buildings, provide work to all for the whole year, take up construction of cyclone shelters in villages in the coastal belt. The delegation to the Governor consisted of Comrades Binapani Das, Raghunath Das, Shambhunath Naik, Uddhab Jena and Dhurjati Das.

The meeting concluded with the call to build up more powerful movements in the coming days.

AIAIF Hails Seattle Protests

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political and economic exploitation, and on the other hand, there were groups whose objectives were to wrest concessions within the ambit of WTO by modifying some clauses, and there were also the spokesmen from the protectionist trade unions of USA like AFL-CIO who wanted stringent regulations to protect American industry from competition from third world countries. There were massive demonstrations from anti-imperialist forces, clogged streets, human blockades to prevent the delegates from getting to the trade meetings. More than 50000 people marched, sang, shouted slogans and made speeches.

This meetings condemns in strongest terms the brutality that the police resorted to in suppressing the peaceful demonstrators. They lobbed tear gas shells, grenades, pepper gas bombs, used rubber ball bullets, batons, stun guns and wooden pellets. They used irritant chemical weapons and unconventional gases which medically affected the demonstrators; arrested person were beaten and tortured in jails.

This meetings firmly believes that though the events of Seattle cannot be called a decisive victory of the progressive, anti-imperialist forces, they do put such forces in an advantageous position for bringing to the people that WTO is nothing but an attempt of international bourgeoisie, particularly the strongest of them, to avoid chaos in their trading wars, to parcel out shares of the world market among themselves. Nonetheless such attempts are bound to fail because of the inherent inner contradiction of capitalism. It throws a great challenge to all progressive forces for building up worldwide movement against capitalism-imperialism with broad based unity of progressive, democratic and anti-imperialist forces.

This meeting salutes those who unfurled the banner of protest and hails the voice that is raised against WTO inside the bastion of imperialism. This protest is to be strengthened into a militant movement against capitalism-imperialism and be united with anti-imperialist forces all over the world.



A portion of the huge march at Bhubaneswar on 11th January, 2000 (another picture on page 1)

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