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KARGIL — AN EYE-OPENER

During the Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's recent trip to Washington, a joint statement issued by him and the US President Bill Clinton on July 5 last recorded their agreement to take "concrete steps" for restoration of the Line of Control (LoC) in Kashmir in accordance with the Indo-Pak Simla Agreement. President Clinton urged in the statement "immediate cessation of hostilities once these steps are taken." The "concrete steps" are yet to be spelt out and the modality and time frame not yet announced. The Indo-Pak skirmishes in the Kargil sector along the LoC continue meanwhile although on a low key. While Pakistan urges immediate talks on the Kashmir issue, India maintains that there is no question of any talks or stoppage of its military action till the last Pakistani intruder is driven out from this side of the LoC. It is not yet known when the clashes would finally end but they seem to be on the way out. The Election Commission has announced the dates of election to the Indian Lok Sabha in September-early October. There have been many developments centring round the Kargil conflict, many a thought and question have arisen. Let us examine some of them.

Role of Vajpayee & Nawaz Sharif Governments

Reports in newspapers have it that the Indian Government got the first inklings of armed intrusions by the Pakistani troops along with the Mujahideens across the LoC right from the beginning of this year. Perhaps Delhi was initially

reluctant to quere the pitch of the Lahore Bus Diplomacy that was on, an exercise undertaken jointly by the Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee and Nawaz Sharif with covert US blessings. With the fall of the BJP-led Government on the Lok Sabha floor, however, the issue was brought to the forefront. Not only did the BJP-led ministry, now continuing as a caretaker ministry till the next parliamentary polls, order launching of all-out attacks for restoring status quo ante along the LoC, but the leaders of the BJP and its associates in Government and outside, especially those of the BJP, whipped up national jingoism bordering on war hysteria. Earlier, Defence Minister George Fernandes had declared on May 15 that the Pakistani intruders would be evicted in 48 hours. On May 16, he had reasserted that the army had cordoned off the area entirely and the Indian objectives would be realised within the next two days. On June 1, he had even offered safe passage to the intruders for moving out of India. On June 2, Vajpayee repeated the safe passage offer provided there was a plea for it and laid down that "passage" must mean "total withdrawal from our territories." But on June 3, a spokesman of the external affairs ministry in Delhi ruled out safe passage for the Kargil intruders and asserted that Vajpayee had been misquoted and the defence minister had been quoted out of context on the issue! The talk between the two foreign ministers Jaswant Singh and Sartaj Aziz in Delhi on June 12 proved abortive with Singh rejecting outright

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Call of 5th August

Inexorably days pass to bring back the year around, to bring back the 5th of August in our life, reminding of the fateful evening in 1976, when passed away our leader, teacher and guide, Comrade Shibdas Ghosh. For us, the activists of the SUCI, every day is an important day, every moment is important to intensify the class battle, the battle against capitalism that is dragging the whole human civilization towards destruction. But 5th of August is a day, more important than any other day in our life, that brings to our mind the great life struggle of the great leader, the foreranking Marxist thinker of this age, who taught to live and die with heads high, not to lead a mean life, and the only way to lead an honourable life is to plunge in the task of revolutionary transformation of society.

Comrade Shibdas Ghosh who based his greatest creation, the genuine revolutionary party SUCI on the teaching of Lenin: "Fewer, but better fewer", taught that only exhausting the higher humanist values is it possible to acquire the values of still the higher stage, that is of communism. No other attempt can save man from present degeneration caused by the economic-political system of capitalism-imperialism, the gravest enemy of mankind.

And the gravest danger that stands before the socialist movement, weakening it from within, is neo-revisionism and reformism, against which the great leader of the proletariat waged a lifelong relentless battle to free Marxism from distortions and effacement. While applying the revolutionary scientific philosophy on our soil in course of building up and developing the SUCI, it was Comrade Shibdas Ghosh who concretised Marxism-Leninism on Indian soil, developed, elaborated and enriched many aspects of it and also brought many other aspects to a new height at this particular stage of the present era of "Imperialism and Proletarian Revolution" enunciated by Lenin. He also provided a newer and concrete understanding of Marxism-Leninism in course of dealing with the problems that appeared not only in the political and socio-economic fields, but also covering all aspects of life and epistemology, science and philosophy, ethics, morality, culture, art-literature and aesthetics in the post-Lenin period.

Comrade Shibdas Ghosh's penetrating scientific analysis of how revisionism, serving in essence the cause and interest of the decadent

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Anti-war demonstration by workers in Pakistan

Like the rulers of other bourgeois countries, the rulers of Pakistan are creating war situation and are pushing common people into fanatic jingoism. They make people believe it to be patriotism, to misdirect people's attention from severe economic crisis, unemployment, price rise etc. Workers and people in that country have taken to the streets demanding economic improvement, instead of war, food instead of bomb. Like all bourgeois rulers Pakistani rulers, too, are trying to smash the movements.

18th June was the world protest day against nuclear weapon. All Pakistan Federation of United Trade Unions (APFUTU) took preparations for a big demonstration and procession on that day. Their main demand was "NO NUCLEAR BOMB, WE WANT FOOD". But several days before the programme of 18th the police, on 14th June, raided the union

buildings at night. Anticipating the move, the executive of APFUTU had gone underground. Police failed to find them in the days before 18th. They ransacked union offices, burnt records and confiscated equipments. The police entered the union office as well as Imtiaz Labour Hall at midnight of 17 and 18th and tried to find out the leaders. When the police failed to achieve this object they became revengeful and ravaged the offices, taking away computer with accessories, video camera, Fax machine, banners, CTV, etc. They also burnt the office records.

Ignoring the police onslaught the union executives wearing masks and veils, joined the thousands of people mobilized in Gujarat town (near Islamabad by the side of the Jheelum) on 18th. The demonstrators broke through police lines and shouted slogans against the government

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Limited war useful to rulers of both countries

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the Pak proposal for curtailing Indian air strikes and artillery fire. On June 13, during a visit to the Kargil front Vajpayee declared that India was ready for war. Not to be outdone, Fernandes now told the intruders to surrender or die. The BJP general secretary Govindacharya, at a press conference, advocated a bigger army operation to annex the whole of Pak Occupied Kashmir (PoK). On June 18, at the daily press briefing, the Indian army spokesman hinted that the army might take the battle inside the PoK. On June 19, Vajpayee, on a trip to Dhaka, the Bangladesh capital, repeated his vow to drive out all the intruders. On June 20, speaking at Jammu, the BJP leader and the home minister Advani said that Islamabad needed to be taught a lesson, through a comprehensive defeat, for trying to raise the Kashmir issue at international fora. On June 23, at Lucknow, Advani called Pakistan a rogue state and threatened that it would have to pay a stupendous price. On June 25, at Patna, Vajpayee threatened Pakistan with dismemberment by saying "I don't know what it (Pakistan) intends to lose this time as it lost Bangladesh in its third war against India." (quoted from *The Statesman*, June 26, 1999). And now, in Paris, Fernandes said in an interview to the French newspaper *Le-Figaro* that he genuinely feared a nuclear attack on India from across the border.

All this is not to suggest that Pakistan played the role of an innocent lamb. Far from it. That the Pakistani army not only sponsored but actively organised the large-scale armed intrusions across the LoC is clear as daylight. Pakistan has been guilty of not only organising the intrusions but subsequent blatant denials of any involvement in the operations, unilateral resolve to revise the LoC to its advantage and repeated threats for a fight to finish. Nawaz Sharif even threatened India with more Kargil like situations. On June 30, Pakistan religious affairs minister Raja Zafarul Haq told the Senate that "The use of nuclear weapons is the right of the country if its security is in jeopardy" (report in *The Statesman*, July 1, 1999).

BJP & Congress trying to use conflict to make petty political gains

The reason we have narrated the war-like postures and utterances of the BJP leaders in some detail is to bring out in a nutshell the kind of jingoism they have tried to whip up. Would it be wrong to assume that this was done to gain the maximum political mileage for the BJP and its allies with the coming Lok Sabha polls in view? It may be recalled that when the BJP-led ministry started functioning as a caretaker one, the opposition parties clamoured that this caretaker government should limit itself to routine work and desist from taking any substantive steps, because they were worried that the BJP might put such measures to use to further its election prospects. At that time the BJP retorted that the government could not have its hands tied up thus; even if a government is called a caretaker one, it must have the right to deal with any new situation, involving important decision-making like, say a national emergency, as it saw fit. We find that the BJP

Government is now exercising that right with gusto. One feels tempted to ask if all this is just coincidence!

Is it not a fact that to both Nawaz Sharif and Vajpayee, a limited war could be useful in home politics? Egged on as he was by the hawks in the army, administration, the militant Mujahideen organisations and the opposition parties who had viewed the Lahore Bus Diplomacy as a sellout to India, Nawaz Sharif could make use of a war-like situation or even limited war to emphasize his credentials as a strong ruler not cowed down by the Indian military might. That Vajpayee has gained immensely from the Kargil skirmishes is there for all to see. Not to be outdone, Congress and the other opposition parties too immediately started a competition as to how best the Kargil issue could be exploited to serve their narrow political interest. It may be recalled that before the last Lok Sabha poll, when the Congress was suffering from a leadership crisis, it could devise nothing better than catapulting Sonia Gandhi into the presidency as a booster, a reversion to the earlier "dynastic rule" of the Congress, clinging to the legacy of the Nehru-Gandhi family as the only hope. Now Sonia Gandhi resorted to gimmicks like visiting army camps and hospitals, doling out gift packages to jawans and donating blood to show how very patriotic she and her party were! The Congress and the other opposition parties started clamouring that they be taken more into confidence, that the matters of importance and the decisions should be discussed with them beforehand. Pranab Mukherjee, on behalf of the Congress, even floated the idea of a National Government to tackle the emergency lest the BJP usurped all the credit for waging the "heroic" war. But the BJP turned down the request curtly. The opposition, especially the Congress, have been asking for a special session of the Rajya Sabha to discuss the Kargil situation, that they could try to corner BJP for alleged failure of military intelligence to detect armed Pakistani intrusions in time in a forum where the BJP and its associates do not command absolute majority. But the BJP Government has so far not given any commitment to this. The issue here was not at all that of propriety or whether a question of such grave import should be discussed in the Rajya Sabha on principle as per democratic norms. The opposition have demanded the Rajya Sabha session in order to put the BJP at a disadvantage whereas the BJP has cunningly bypassed the issue so far to avoid the discomfiture. Both the sides are out for petty political gains. In a democratic set-up, it is the duty of any responsible government to call the Rajya Sabha session to discuss Kargil. Why is BJP dodging the issue? What is it afraid of? The BJP has been placing the issue in such a manner as if the total credit of meting out a crushing defeat to Pakistan would be to its credit. Anybody who is saying anything in criticism of the BJP, is liable to be branded by it as acting against the national interest. Right from the Congress to the CPI(M) and the CPI — all the parliamentary opposition parties cannot but laud the war efforts of the Government because none of them can afford to look less patriotic

than the BJP in view of the coming Lok Sabha elections.

A discerning mind can perceive that all the parties in the BJP government and in the opposition, patriots alike, now crying hoarse in defence of "national interest", are really fishing in troubled waters, trying to create a war psychosis in election interest to the maximum that their present relative positions in parliamentary politics permit. We may also recall that during the earlier Indo-Pak wars and the 1962 India-China border conflict, it was the Congress that, being in government, tried to whip up jingoism and posed as the champions of national interest, putting the opposition at disadvantage.

The US role

There is no doubt that the USA has played and is still playing a significant role actively in between India and Pakistan over the Kargil issue. Kashmir problem has been with us ever since independence. From the very beginning, Pakistan has been trying to internationalise the problem by inviting mediation from outside, whereas all the predecessor Indian governments have been steadfastly opposing such mediation, maintaining that the Kashmir problem could only be solved bilaterally. Vajpayee Government does not want to be held responsible for a departure from that practice of long-standing of opposing international mediation. That is why it asserts again and again that whatever the USA has been doing over Kargil, does not amount to US mediation. But the developments indicate precisely that, although the USA has not declared that it is mediating.

From the very beginning, both Nawaz Sharif and Vajpayee were having telephone talks with US President Bill Clinton and also exchange of letters with him with the object of securing US support. It came to light on June 18 that on the eve of the G-8 meeting in Geneva, the Indian National Security Adviser Brajesh Mishra had been there. He handed a letter from Vajpayee addressed to Bill Clinton to his US counterpart Sandy Berger. The letter reportedly sought the President's support in piloting a G-8 stand favourable to India. In the event, President Clinton obliged Vajpayee. Immediately thereafter, General Anthony Zinni, C-in-C of the US Central Command and Gibson Lanpher, a US Dy. Asstt. Secretary of State, visited Islamabad for talks. From there, Lanpher proceeded to Delhi and had talks with Indian foreign ministry officials and also Brajesh Mishra. On June 27, Niaz Naik, a former Pakistani foreign secretary came to Delhi, as the special envoy of Nawaz Sharif and had talks with the Indian side including Prime Minister Vajpayee. By June 30, it transpired that already on June 18, Vajpayee had sent R.K. Mishra, an Indian journalist, as his envoy to Islamabad with a letter to Nawaz Sharif. He had been accompanied by Vivek Katju, joint secretary in the ministry of external affairs in charge of matters relating to Pakistan. It was Niaz Naik who had been instrumental in organising this contact. Therefore, Naik's visit to Delhi on June 27 was a return trip, so to say. This phase

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US mediation for stronger foothold in South Asia

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involving Zinni-Lanpher-Niaz Naik-R.K. Mishra-Vivek Katju has been variously described in the Indian press as the beginning of hush hush diplomacy or Track II diplomacy. It went on amidst jingoistic war cries from both India and Pakistan. Throughout, the Indian Government asserted that no third party mediation was even contemplated. On June 28 Vajpayee assured an all-party meeting on Kargil that there would be no "secret deals" with Pakistan, nor would any third country be allowed to mediate. The hush hush diplomacy went on for a few more days behind the scene with the Government spokesmen remaining tight-lipped, divulging nothing, and culminated in Nawaz Sharif's trip to Washington where on July 5, after talks with President Clinton, the joint statement was issued.

USA has arrived as the mediator

Call it by whatever name, the US effort on Kargil issue amounts to mediation although veiled for the time being. However much may Delhi play it down, the USA has arrived as the mediator, at least on the Kargil issue, if not on the whole Kashmir question. It should be remembered that the BJP, and its predecessor Jan Sangh, have all along constituted the right reactionary force in the Indian body politic, have been pro-American politically. So, it has come naturally to the BJP to seek help of the USA and the other major imperialist powers on the issue. In its bid to pressurize Pakistan and to gain maximum political mileage from the hostilities, it has invited support from the imperialist countries, especially the USA, and brought the matter to such a stage that the path to internationalization of the Kashmir problem has been opened up, the very thing that Pakistan had desired for so long. Again, the war came handy to the BJP politically, but it would not do to have a long drawn out war still unresolved at the time of the coming poll, particularly in the face of blatant "heroic" assertions that Pakistan would be taught a fitting lesson in a matter of days or weeks. Given the terrain and logistics, it is not in the power of the government to put a swift, victorious end to the strife if Pakistan proves to be intransigent and escalates the military operations. Only US intervention could achieve this.

Be that as it may, the fact remains that the USA has arrived in strength in this country politically and diplomatically. The Vajpayee Government will no doubt flaunt the support of the G-8 countries headed by the USA as a major diplomatic achievement and claim the credit that this support shows how the correctness of the Indian stand has been driven home to the powerful countries of the international community. But the reality is something else.

Why USA supported India on Kargil ?

It is not that the USA is a peace-loving country and so it took initiative in containing and stopping the Kargil conflagration. Far from it. As the leading imperialist country and pursuant to its grand imperialist design, the USA indulges

in international brigandage every other day and thinks nothing of unleashing murderous attacks on other countries and regions trampling upon their sovereignty at will, Iraq and Kosovo being the two latest instances. It is also untrue that the USA has provided strong support to India on the present issue out of love for the Indians or because of the correctness of the Indian position. Prior to the present conflict, during the long history of the Kashmir problem, the US conduct has been generally marked by a strong pro-Pakistan tilt. The reason is that during the era of "cold war", while Pakistan was a willing participant in machinations engineered by the US war mongers against the socialist bloc embodied in SEATO and CENTO with the object of currying favour of the USA vis-a-vis India, successive Indian governments, being actuated by aggregate interest of the ruling Indian capitalist class which they served, maintained a posture of neutrality between the imperialist and the socialist blocs with a view to gaining trading advantage and aid from both the camps and to achieve better leverage and manoeuvrability vis-a-vis both — a policy in consonance with the need of the aspirant Indian bourgeoisie which was much stronger, more mature and higher in stature than the Pakistani bourgeoisie.

But with the end of the "cold war" and dismantling of the Soviet Union and the East European socialist states, a sea change has come about. The world has become "unipolar" with the USA as the undisputed super power. With this, Pakistan's edge over India in the matter of securing US support, has disappeared. India has emerged as the major power in the region economically and militarily. For quite a few years past we have had occasion to note in a number of articles in this organ the growing perception and appreciation of the US administration about the rising stature of India as the major power in South Asia. And in the context of the present globalization, India offers a very large market, source of raw materials and vast pool of trained personnel for joint exploitation by the imperialist multinationals in league with the big Indian industrial and business houses which Pakistan can never hope to match. Addressing the US-India Business Council in the USA towards end of June '99, the US Congressman Benjamin Gilman said, "India's economic growth and US investment to help spur that growth should be at the top of our national agenda. India's vast pool of English speaking professionals offers our nation critical resources in our efforts to stay competitive and to remain the world leader in the high tech industry. We need to offer India a security and economic partnership." (*The Statesman*, July 4 '99) There is reciprocation from the Indian side too. A sign of the collusion is the report that the Indian government will not raise any issue that can embarrass the USA at the coming WTO meet later this year.

Strategically too it makes good sense for the USA to bolster up an India friendly to it as a counterpoise to China in the Asian arena and to strengthen its position in India in the bargain, taking advantage of the conflict.

Moreover, in the post-Pokhran II-Chaghai situation, any escalation of the conflict would make it impossible for the USA to get India and Pakistan to sign the CTBT which the USA considers to be strategically necessary. So, the

USA had to throw its weight for an early cessation of the hostilities.

It is because of such compelling geo-political-economic-strategic reasons that the USA, and along with it most of the other G-8 countries desired a prompt end to the military operations and have strongly supported India in the present dispute and for nothing else.

China too has sensed the danger in having a US-backed strong India as a neighbour. That is why it has not sided up with Pakistan on the Kargil issue, remained neutral and repeatedly advised restraint to both the sides and a bilateral solution without mediation or intervention by a third party.

Grave danger of US inroads into India

It is saddening that although the USA has thus made inroads into the decision-making process in the Indian affairs, there is hardly any realisation in the country about its grave implications. The Indian people have had a long anti-imperialist tradition right from the days of freedom struggle against British Imperialism. But today, when the arch imperialist country USA that is continually engaged in launching imperialist onslaughts from country to country has come to have a decisive say in Indian affairs, there are hardly any protests. Rather, there is a feeling of basking in the "glory" of enjoying US patronage. Long emasculation of the politics in the hands of the parliamentary parties serving the ruling class and lack of democratic mass movements are responsible for this. It is the so very "patriotic", "swadeshi" BJP that has today brought the hated US imperialism into an important role in this country betraying the anti-imperialist tradition of the people, but there is no voice of the intellectuals raised in protest against this alarming development! There were so many protest demonstrations against US machinations and attacks on Cuba, Iraq, Kosovo, etc., throughout India over the years, but when the US entry on the Indian scene itself is becoming a reality, there are hardly any protests! This shows how far jingoism and war psychosis can cloud the vision, make one blind.

BJP's jingoism based on Hindutva

On the one hand Vajpayee has been trying to don a mask of reasonableness while it has fallen upon Advani and Govindacharya to play the hawks and incite the people. Both India and Pakistan have bandied about threats of a nuclear war. How irresponsible! The well-meaning people of both the countries should ponder: Is nuclear war a child's play? The BJP has whipped up national jingoism on an unprecedented scale. Any other parliamentary party, being in government in such situation, would also have whipped up jingoism in narrow political interest and to serve the ruling class by diverting people's attention from the real, burning problems in their lives. But jingoism based on Hindutva, Hindu religious fundamentalism whipped up by the BJP is more dangerous because it is majority communalism and carries within it the seeds of a country-wide communal blood bath.

The growing influence of the military

We note with concern another dangerous developing feature. All along, Pakistan has had a

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People's real war is against poverty

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pronounced tendency towards military dictatorship with the military having a strong and even decisive say in the affairs of the state. The latest glaring example has been when the Pakistani army top brass strongly advised Nawaz Sharif not to give in to any pressure and compromise with India, come what may. But India has although been lauded as the world's largest democracy where the army obeys the elected government. But this time, the military affairs and the military have come to the forefront. The daily press briefing by an army Colonel and an air force group Captain have been accorded prominence on TV, in press and other media. Journalists, so-called defence experts and strategic analysts and retired army officers including Generals are penning series of reports and articles and conducting deliberations on TV to show why must India immediately reequip its armed forces with costly, more sophisticated military hardware on a massive scale and how the country can neglect this only at its grave peril. General Roychowdhury, the former Army Chief told Star TV in an interview on June 13 that India should cross the LoC. On June 18, the Colonel in his daily press briefing, casually hinted that the army might take the war inside PoK. The three service chiefs jointly demanded that the forces be allowed to cross the LoC. On June 23, the army chief General Malik declared: "There is need for us to look beyond Kargil."

Role of Indian industrial-bureaucratic-military complex

The BJP Government may have thought all this would be helpful in promoting jingoism and war hysteria but the risk is that it will make the role of the military pronounced in public affairs, politics and even in social life, with all the attendant dangers for the people. It is no secret

that in all imperialist-capitalist countries, it is an industrial bureaucratic military complex that wields real power from behind the facade of parliamentary democracy, India being no exception. In India, the big corporate houses guide this complex, directing and controlling every sphere of life. War is an endemic necessity in all capitalist countries in the present era, the most advanced and the relatively backward alike. In order to mitigate the crisis in capitalist production, the ruling capitalist class through its subservient governments, resorts to militarisation of the economy in order to artificially stimulate it with military orders. It needs war from time to time, not necessarily full scale war but limited war, partial war or even warlike situations to effect release of the arms stockpile. This is the overriding necessity and design of the ruling class which the party in power implements. It is just that the political interest of the ruling parties may coincide with this class design.

With the rapidly growing privatisation of defence industries in India, bigger and bigger shares of the profit from military orders are being pocketed by the big corporate houses. Already, for the last few years, it is being said that economic affairs should be decided by the economists alone. And now, with the present crisis, views are already being aired that the decisions on military affairs should best be left to the army. If this idea gains ground it will not only strengthen the current tendency of bureaucratisation of the administration, further strengthening the industrial-bureaucratic-military complex, but the stepped up war effort can only delight the big corporate houses heading the ruling capitalist class because of the superprofits generated by bleeding the people white. The foreign imperialist multinationals producing war equipment too would make huge profit. What has this got to do with people's interest?

Anti-war demonstration by workers in Pakistan

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and price rise of essential commodities. The demonstrators held a protest march that passed through Chowk Fawara, Kabuli Gate, Chowk Pakistan, Prince Cinema Chowk, Jail Chowk and reached District Courts Chowk. There in front of Deputy Commissioner's Office the APFUTU (women wing) was holding hunger strike since morning as a protest against nuclear explosion by Pakistan and India. At the rally symbolically bread was garlanded with slogans "We want bread, not nuclear bomb," "Nuclear bomb's dangerous for human life", "We don't want another Hiroshima and Nagasaki in our country, we want peace and harmony." APFUTU leaders then addressed the protest rally, which was stormed by 300 to 400 police commandos using tear gas, and making indiscriminate lathicharge on male, female workers and school children alike without any provocation. Many executive members of the APFUTU were arrested along with 50 activists. The following day 50 activists were released on bail, but the executive members have been transferred to a district jail. Police are reported to have brought charges of damage to the territorial integrity of the country, which is punishable by the death penalty. One released trade unionist reported with deep grief and sorrow

that "the executive members have been tortured..."

The trade union leaders who did not get bail were Choudhry Riaz Ahmed (President), Mohammad Shakeel Janjua S.V.P. Pirzada Imtiaz Syed, (Secretary General), Aiyub Ali Khan, Haroon H. Rasheed (Secretary International Relations), Muhammad Noveed (President Bone Crushing industries Labour Union).

The cases will be heard in the Supreme Court. As workers are unable to meet the legal defense costs, APFUTU has appealed for international solidarity action and financial contribution.

It is natural that this news will not have any space in Pakistani media. In that country mainly the fanatic jingoism of the warmonger Pakistani rulers as well as the fundamentalists is getting wide coverage. The movement news of democratic, conscious anti-war, anti-nuclear people there do not come out in our press either. Indian media too try to show as if all Indians are for war and the government. But poor people actually do not want weapons and war, they want job and food. Fighting all conspiracies of the ruling class to bring disunity through fundamentalism exploited people of both countries should be united and build up democratic mass movements on burning problems of life.

Shameful role of official Indian leftists

It is not surprising that the branded bourgeois and petty bourgeois parties headed by the BJP and the Congress are all for the increased militarisation. But it is a matter of deep regret when we find the parties who call themselves communist and even Marxist and swear by the people's interest waving red banner, the CPI and the CPI(M), totally identifying themselves with the stepped up war effort in the name of national interest that can only profit the ruling capitalist class and the imperialist multinationals. At the chief ministers' meet in June, Jyoti Basu, the West Bengal Chief Minister, and a CPI(M) politbureau member, fully supported the Centre's war efforts. In Delhi on July 7, Jyoti Basu urged the Centre to fight on to the finish and said: "The armed forces also have our total commitment and support." (*The Statesman* July 8) Such pseudo Marxist leaders of the ruling Left Front in West Bengal, usually at loggerheads with Congress over bickering in parliamentary politics, offered support to retired General Shankar Roy Chowdhury as a candidate for the Rajya Sabha jointly with the Congress! And then Roy Chowdhury promptly obliged them by attending a gathering organised by a RSS-BJP backed organisation in Calcutta on July 6 to commemorate birth anniversary of Shyamaprasad Mukherjee, the founder leader of Jan Sangh!

Does this not reveal the basic unity of purpose of the CPI(M) with the Congress and the BJP in the interest of the ruling class, their differences in parliamentary politics notwithstanding? Is not Jyoti Basu acting as a mouthpiece of the monopolists, we request the rank and file of the CPI(M) and the other left parties to ponder.

An appeal to the people

It is the common people of the country that shed blood in war, but does it benefit them any way? While the war continues, there is a flood of adulation for their heroic deeds. But after the war is over, they are forgotten and forsaken. Will the war lessen the pang of their hunger, their privations? Will the war re-open the multitude of factories that lie closed down or reduce the unemployment problem, provide shelter over their heads or make for better education, more schools, drinking water, better health facility and hospitals? Far from it. Already, Defence Minister George Fernandes has assured us that the war preparedness will have to be stepped up considerably. The huge additional cost of this increased war efforts, as well as also the costs of frequent elections thrust upon them, as always, will have to be borne by the common people in the form of even more increased taxes and soaring prices. While the monopoly war merchants reap super profit from this, the plight of the common people, whose sons die on the battle field, would even worsen. Even their elementary problems would remain unsolved. Jingoism, the war psychosis that is whipped up by the imperialist-capitalist rulers, the monopolists and their faithful political parties may benefit them, but has it any relation with the people's interest? It is their war, their war effort. Is not the people's real war against poverty and deprivation? Should not the people ponder and take lesson from this?

Call of 5th August

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bourgeois ideology, which gradually had been eating into the socialist movement, might ultimately bring a severe setback to the socialist camp, has pathetically come true in connivance with imperialist machination.

Socialist movements all over the world, suffering a jolt and anti-war militant peace movement severely weakened in the wake of the setback of dismantling the socialist camp, the imperialists with US imperialism at the fore, trumpeted for a 'unipolar' world and claimed that there would be no more war, peace would prevail and people's suffering come to an end. They projected themselves as protagonists of peace, a claim that goes completely against the stark reality. The Leninist teaching, that imperialism generates war, was always upheld by Comrade Shibdas Ghosh. In clearly explaining the understanding of the Leninist enunciation of law of inevitability of war, it was Comrade Shibdas Ghosh who showed, since the end of the 50's, that the danger of both outbreak of war and possibility of preservation of peace were equally real. But after the dismantling of socialist camp the Central Committee of our party showed, following the teachings of Comrade Ghosh, that in this period of serious sweep of forces of reaction — the danger of war increased manifold and there had been a shift in the balance of forces. The shift was in favour of capitalism-imperialism, tottering though on its last leg, and against the forces of socialism, peace and progress.

The vindication of Leninist teaching as elaborated by the Central Committee, SUCI, was clear and simple, more vividly than before, when the US-led imperialists imposed the barbaric war on Iraq. More and more wars followed, local and partial. It cannot be otherwise as peace means death for imperialism. In the attempt to stave off their crisis, capitalism-imperialism cannot but resort to militarisation of economy and spread war tension for artificial stimulation of their otherwise sagging market.

Right now the erstwhile Yugoslavia has been a victim of imperialist intrigue and NATO bombing. Nobody can say for certain this sovereign country, or for that matter any other sovereign country will not be attacked by the USA again any day on this plea or other.

Here in India, right at this moment, as a result of the skirmish along the Indo-Pak border, masterminded by the ruling classes of both the countries, with all the parliamentary parties riding the bandwagon and the media fanning up, war tension is gripping the mass mind. The ruling class purposely is instigating mass hysteria of war, striving to poison the mind of the Indian people against the entire Pakistani people. In such a situation all the parliamentary parties are vying with one another to show how 'patriotic' they are, with an eye on the coming elections. This is actually intended to artificially stimulate the sagging Indian economy and more so, to establish itself as the regional big power in this subcontinent under the leadership of the aspirant Indian bourgeoisie.

The urge of the ruling class to further modernize military is being trumpeted before the

exploited masses in full force. People though remain unaware that this urge can materialise only at the cost of more suffering, more deprivation in their life. But on the part of the ruling class and its defenders, escalation of war is justified and necessary. In more than 50 years of independence, this is what our people have got — ever swelling military and police budgets, relatively ever diminishing budgets for education, health, environment, housing, food, etc.

Today, after Kargil tension, things have come to such a pass that poor people are made to believe as if sophisticated arms, ammunition, artillery, and even modern missile technology they need more than milk for children, provision for drinking water, education for their wards, denying the teachings of history that only organised and patriotic people and not the mercenary army can really defend the independence and sovereignty of a country. Curiously enough, the border, they say, is in danger, although crores of rupees are flooding to strengthen security forces, civil and military intelligence, besides RAW and some such organisations.

It is known to all that the ruling classes of both the countries have gone nuclear by this time, resulting in escalation of arms race and danger of war. All this, coupled with the recent situation in Kargil in particular, has paved an additional ground for the intervention of US imperialism to have a strong foothold in South Asia.

Imperialism at present, in the absence of a socialist camp, has become tremendously aggressive, and US imperialism in particular is spreading its tentacles in all directions of the world. Sensing this grave danger, our party, the SUCI, armed with the thoughts of Comrade Shibdas Ghosh, initiated the formation of the All India Anti-imperialist Forum in 1995, known abroad as the Calcutta initiative, which along with the Anti-imperialist Forums in other countries is organising consistent struggles against imperialism, which are growing in span with time passing. When the All India Anti-imperialist Forum was formed in Calcutta, nobody could anticipate that the necessity to build up strong anti-war militant peace movements with communists forming the core, involving all peace loving, democratic minded people would become so urgent, so important. Particularly now, after NATO bombing in Europe, it may be noted that activities of anti-imperialist forums in Europe are getting more and more momentum. It proves the correctness of the step of initiation of anti-imperialist struggle, which is a historic necessity in today's background of growing imperialist aggressiveness.

Comrade Shibdas Ghosh warned of another danger, fascism. All capitalist-imperialist countries take resort to it at present and encourage religious fanaticism, blindness, superstition, racial antagonism with a view to destroying the unity of the toiling people. Indian capitalist state is no exception. Comrade Shibdas Ghosh showed fascism is a peculiar fusion of technological aspects of science and spiritualism, that hinders the very process of scientific reasoning, that ultimately dehumanises the whole society, when there will not be anybody, who can exist as a true

man. In the hands of the ruling class this acts as an anticipatory move to prevent revolutionary upsurge of the working class for all-out emancipation. Indian capitalism with the help of its parties resorts to constant improvement of technology, with a view towards constant sophistication of production process, otherwise at the present stage of monopoly it will be unable to survive. Also in the footsteps of the Congress, presently the BJP is speedily foisting Hindutva based communal jingoism among the masses, with the purpose of moulding a fanatic bent of mind of the people. BJP is able to do this taking advantage of the absence of democratic mass movements in the country. Comrade Shibdas Ghosh in his lifetime warned time and again how the absence of critical judgement among the people creates a blind fanatic mind which may smoothly accept even the most reactionary thoughts constantly fed by the media and other sources and is easily directed against all progressive movements, until and unless they are organised in a protracted and conscious battle against the forces of reaction.

This is a critical situation. And now at the end of July as everyday passes and 5th August comes nearer, as we see again and again how the teachings of Comrade Shibdas Ghosh are vindicated in the background of national and international crisis, we realise with greater conviction that the only way out is to develop mighty protracted democratic mass movements on the edifice of higher ethics and culture. This is the very call of 5th August. But this can be achieved in greater and greater extent, if we do not fail to respond to the call of the Central Committee, led by Comrade Nihar Mukherjee, to lead the elevation and rectification struggle without relent. The present society has many chains to drag us back from this noble struggle, but the cultivation of the teachings of Comrade Shibdas Ghosh gives us that strength, that tenacity, that purposiveness that will enable us to smash those chains.

The clarion call is for the two-fold struggle — the struggle to build up mass and class struggles on legitimate demands and along with the dauntless struggle to steer clear of the influence of all vices of the present day decadent capitalism which try to infiltrate us always, for attaining the standard of a higher communist which Comrade Shibdas Ghosh expected of us to attain.

The toiling millions all over the country has only this way that leads towards emancipation. Fighting out all conspiracies to bring disunity hatched by the capitalist class and its many parties with different hues, SUCI, stands alone as the party of the proletariat, which tells the people the reality that change of government through elections, or for that matter any government ruling the roost cannot solve people's problems. SUCI, therefore, is holding aloft the banner of uncompromising protracted mass struggle. To lead this struggle ahead, people's committees are to be formed, which in course of sustained powerful movement, will give birth to people's alternative political power.

This will be the real tribute on this occasion of 5th August, grasping the teachings he handed down to us.

Grave Problems Before Bank Employees

The 13 lakh bank employees are in grave danger. Their job security has been attacked, service conditions are being attempted to be drastically changed – all hard-earned rights and achievements won through heroic struggles in the past are being snatched away.

Crisis in Bank Employees' Movement

In such a situation, the crisis in leadership of their movement, persisting for long has now come to a head.

The general bank employees could not realize that all their unions have a common unity as to basic approach and outlook to pro-monopoly finance capital, the Narasimham Committee recommendations or any bourgeois class policy reflected through IBA-government combine. And that they were united to meet the demand of the IBA-government combine as a condition for charter settlement and for this to get themselves committed to whatever understanding reached on settlement arrived at in the course of 7th bipartite talks. The employees on the other hand, true to their understanding thought that unity of all the unions being a rare object, will be of immense help to realize their just demands by putting up a mighty united resistance to the banker-governments offensives and a reasonable wage revision.

Soon, however they realized that this rare specimen of unity of all the unions committed the gravest of mischiefs of massive computerization in the banking sector through the 6th bi-partite — the present one is just to help the banker-government combine to gather the fruits through the two sets of Narasimham Committee recommendations. Those were given acceptance by these leaders getting in return graceful acknowledgement in their service and applaud from the Committee itself at its Second Report of 1998.

As to their own demand in the charter for a 56% increase in wages on the basis of the central government employees demand and subsequent award of 5th Pay Commission, the story is pathetic to say the least. At first much time was wasted over secret talks for reaching an understanding, threat and announcement of strike subsequently withdrawn etc., IBA's refusal to industrywise settlement on the score of sickness of weak banks, plea for different rates of wage revision on the basis of individual banks' profits etc. The uncertainty of an industrywise uniform wage revision was kept on from sometime. Crisis in banking sector, for what reasons remaining undisclosed, being harped on by the IBA, faithfully circulated by the media was for misleading the popular feelings. The leadership had to put up the show of their existence by calling strikes twice which were observed with 100% success. Next came the stage of going for indefinite strike as per the leadership's own declaration. To avoid this, both agreed to sit in talks. But in the meanwhile precious time was allowed to the bank managements to go ahead with the common programme of implementing all the vicious anti-employee steps and measures, prescribed by the Narasimham Committee. The

leadership's most treacherous role was on two counts. First, the underhand deal with the IBA-government combine so that the latter can go ahead with their onslaughts unprotected let alone resisted by united strength of employees. Secondly, the propaganda of the IBA-government combine that the bank employees were the best-paid and therefore deserved no further revision in wages in violation of the 6th bi-partite agreement and that it was not possible particularly in view of endemic nature of sickness in the industry went unchallenged by classification of facts and action programmes by the bank employees. Thus, the bank employees were deliberately made victim of lack of popular support and sympathy; a great obstacle to realisation of their demands and on the reverse, a positive help to the IBA-government combine. The situation was fully exploited by the IBA-government combine. Confusion and despair were spreading deep and wide among the bank employees. And in such a situation the demand for 56 p.c. wage increase came down to measly 12.25% — 8.5/9.5% for wage increase and the rest to fund superannuation benefits according to insiders.

The crisis in Indian banking industries vis-a-vis the role of the established leadership

Debates have been kicked off among the intellectuals as to the reason and depth of crisis in our country's banking industry. While agreeing to the natural outcome of general nature of crisis resulting in down turn in the economic situation in the context of global crisis of moribund capitalism reflected in banks it would be advisable to go on facts and not subjective theorisation.

The Financial Express at its Financial-Express — Banks Ranking Industrial Survey (FE-BRIS) Special, 1998 comments :

"It is widely recognised that a large part of the Indian Corporate sector cannot stand up to the chill wind of competition. Banks have been funding those corporates for decades, and if the corporates godown bank balance sheets will be splattered with red in the process."

"The wayout", it goes on, "is for banks to finance new ventures and companies which will, over time, offset the drag of the older, sticky loans to uncompetitive companies. Unfortunately, when there is a slowdown in the economy, there is not only a dearth of new projects and companies but the process of decay of the older companies is also accelerated." (pp.4-5)

The NPA (non-performing asset) in Indian banks has assumed staggering figure of Rs. 46,000 crore.

In a separate article titled : 'The Politics of Non-Performing Assets' in the same issue of the journal, it has been admitted : "Most Indian banks continue to have NPA that are well over 50% of their net worth. And NPAs will continue to increase." Why ?

Is it because the experience in Asia as well as in Russia of bad bank lending and financial fragility that has become a prominent source of worry worldwide ? Facts tell otherwise. Indian

banking system as the facts show is not so fragile as its south-east counterparts since the loan to GDP ratio in India is much lower – about 20% against 80 - 90% in the Asian countries. Loans constitute only about 42% of Indian banks balance sheets compared to Hong Kong (62%), Philippines (55%), Singapur (61%), Malaysia (69%) and Thailand (78%).

By the way, it may be mentioned that Mr. Tarakeswar Chakravarty, General Secretary, AIBEA in several speeches to bank employees in Calcutta said in so many words that while the banks in south-east Asia, Japan were burning it could not be expected that Indian banks will not be burning. By this he was giving justification to closure of branches, retrenchment of employees through the cover of VRS, redeployment and other onslaught of the management on the plea of sickness of banks as also non-realisation of NPAs. The facts give lie to his propaganda in support of the IBA - government combine.

It may be added that as much as 45% of Indian banks' assets are deployed in government bonds and deposits with Reserve Bank of India in the form of Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR) which are zero-risk assets. The balance 13% of the assets comprise money market instruments fixed and miscellaneous assets which carry very little risk. The very low level of loans to total assets considerably lowers the risk profile and enhances the provisioning capabilities of banks." (*Financial Express*)

So the NPA assumes importance so far as the sickness of banks are concerned. That the so-called weak banks like the UCO, UBI, Allahabad Bank all are showing operating profit and net profit in some in recent showings proves that apart from the general problem of recession worldover and consequent downturn in industry being reflected in the banks' health there is no other additional reason like that in south-east Asian markets or Japan and elsewhere.

Now, as to the so-called problem of NPA, we need not make any comment. We prefer rather to quote the views of the President of IBA, Narasimham Committee, Senior Economist, Bank of Baroda, Vice-President, ICICI Bank etc. to help the readers to come to an unbiased judgement.

Mr Selvan, IBA chairman, in course of his speech at a recent global banking conference gave his view on NPA thus: "...fifty percent of NPA came from priority sector lendings. The balance from industry... the former could not afford to repay (even the jotedars! - Ed. P. Era) and therefore didn't. The latter could but won't for they know banks and bankers are helpless, given the law of the land."

A simple amendment in law providing attachment of property as is the usual practice applied by banks against common men is not done by the union government, whichever party or parties come to power. The UFBU leaders made it a point in their memorandum to the Verma Committee but never made it a public issue for the agitation of bank employees. Both IBA-government combine as also union leaders are all

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Bank Employees to develop new leadership from grassroots

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in defence of monopoly houses willfully defaulting in making repayment of loans allowing NPA to reach the staggering figure.

The Narasinhm Committee opined : "There is no point in hiding behind the recession. The health of the financial system depends on the quantum of non-performance assets. We can brush it under the carpet for short-term gains but, in the long run, the system will suffer."

The Narasinhm Committee in its first set of recommendations wanted Indian banks to adopt international standard for asset classification and income recognition. That's why so many clauses like Capital Adequacy, Transparency in accounts, changes in the ratio of SLR (Statutory Liquidity Reserve), CRR (Cash Reserve Ratio) etc. came to put further pressure on banks, resulting in many going sick.

To this retorted Mr P H Ravikumar, Vice-President ICICI bank : "Conforming to the international norms in asset classification is fine. But does our legal system conform to the global norms? How many years does an Indian bank take to settle a suit- filed account?"

But the leniency towards corporates of the monopoly houses mainly is best explained from bankers' side by Mr K C Chakravarty, Economist, Bank of Baroda. He makes a candid confession: "We should have courage of conviction. When the industrial sector is in trouble we need to show a lot of courage to support the industry". We hardly need to make any comment other than that this view is shared by the bank management-government as well as the union leaders of bank employees. They stand on the same line so far as defence of the crisis-ridden moribund capitalist class is concerned.

Class offensives and capitulation of leaderships

It was clearly indicated in the Communist Manifesto more than 150 years back that the bourgeoisie go on revolutionising the productive method and destruction of productive forces in their greed for maximisation of profit and for this sharpening of competitive edge in order to expand the market. This is particularly true at the time of crisis.

So, the removal of the old productive method on which depends the livings of millions of workmen means removal of the workmen. This historical truth is revealing itself in the banking sector. This is given admission to by the journal we have referred to earlier thus: "Hard times have their brighter side too. They force a recognition among those affected that since growth is far from assured, productivity and efficiency have to be tightened. The downturn in the business cycle is often the time for cost-cutting, down-sizing, and "implementing radical new ideas. It is time for reform".

The bourgeois onslaughts on the bank employees are coming in the concrete forms like closure of branches and merger of banks, downsizing of staff by means of VRS (Voluntary Retirement Scheme), CRS (Compulsory Retirement Scheme), ESS (Early Separation

Scheme), use of hi-tech technological devices to create further surplus, re-deployment, extraction of labour without compensation, multiple duties on the same day, extension of business hour, abolition of holidays, working outside and beyond business hour, increased workload, rationalisation, restructuring so on and so forth — all in the name of reform.

What is the attitude of the employees' traditional leaderships? Do they oppose this? Do they ask employees to combine in a mighty united struggle for resistance when their very existence is at stake?

No, far from doing so, they gave full support to these attacks and kept the employees away even from any agitation or movement on the question of realisation of NPA by simple legal amendment. They thus sided openly with the monopoly finance capital and its policy of globalisation - liberalisation-privatisation, the latest bourgeois prescription.

Mass versus class Bank

The leadership in order to mislead the bankmen in particular, and the masses in general, is propagating that the present 'reform' plan is indicative of a transformation taking place in banking industry from previous 'mass bank' to 'class bank' of the future. What do they mean by it if not giving approval to present reform programme however couched in fashion? Is it not a fact that when the banks were nationalised in 1969 they were hailing it as if it were a step forward to socialism? Was it really?

The fact is that Indian banks before nationalisation had few thousand crore capital base which rose to Rs 5 lakh crore. This was possible by bringing vast rural and semi-urban areas under banking for collection of small savings and capitalisation of economic activities for relatively freest, speediest and widest development of capitalism. Nationalisation bringing government guarantee along with it boosted up bank deposits to an annual growth rate of 20%, one of the highest in developing countries.

The moot question is, did nationalisation of banks hamper the interests of the monopolist class? Mr Pranab Mukherjee, the then Union Finance Minister had to admit that before nationalisation the monopoly houses used to corner 66% of bank advances which rose to 77% after nationalisation.

So, banks that arose out of the necessity of capitalist development is a class agency and remains so whether nationalised in form in a bourgeois economy or not. The question of squeezing of bank area is absurd. There are 65,000 bank branches throughout the country. There is a plan to computerise 75% of jobs of the branches by 2002 through technological device as also introduction of fully automated bank branches in urban areas as also making growing use of credit card in towns and cities. This will render redundant staff engaged in exchange counters for metallic and paper currencies. No doubt thousands of branches will be closed rendering huge number of employees redundant.

In the rural sector, the Rural Bank employees are working with their pay-scale still at the level of the 5th bi-partite settlement. The number of national banks will also be reduced. The people enjoying so long locality banking will no longer have that facility. The cost-minimising devices cause loss of jobs for the employees, deprive common people of easy access to bank but the monopolists are protected from paying back their dues by willful defect in law. And the leaderships support all these by keeping bank employees in the dark and immobilised.

Lenin's teachings to be remembered

Lenin has left for us important teachings on the role of bank, especially at the stage of monopoly finance capital. Lenin said : "Again and again, the final word in the development of banking is monopoly." He also showed : "As banking develops and becomes concentrated in a small number of establishments, the banks grow from modest middlemen into powerful monopolies having at their command almost the whole of the money capital of all the capitalists and small businessman and also the larger part of the means of production and sources of raw materials in any one country and in a number of countries." (Imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism). It shows the genesis as also role of banks in the capitalist economy.

Here is a picture of the role of bank organiser of the scattered capitalists into a capitalist system having the role of a controller of the same. This is evident in all the merger of big corporates where banks' role is predominant because of its backing to a particular monopoly house. Besides, Lenin also gave the pointer that with the development of monopoly finance capital, the role of bank will be on the increase further. In fact the Narasinhm Committee's recommendations for three Indian global banks of which SBI will be leading one and praising it for showing records of good return in currency trading in overseas markets are testimony to this. The global banks are the vehicles of imperialist capital and assume more and more the character of usurer capital. In the recent experience of the debacle in south-eastern countries the IMF was sending rescue packages to the countries in the form of loan with the condition that the governments of the recipient countries will have to bear the responsibility to pay off the principal and interests of the international banks from which capitalists of these countries took loan but could not repay. IMF was therefore playing the role of collector of loans of international banks. In that perspective the emergence of Indian global banks, prescribed by the Narasinhm Committee II is to be viewed.

In fine the bank employees must bear in mind that neither the attacks come over them, nor the role of cooperation of the leadership of compromising forces between labour and capital are anything special for them. The nature as also particular problems are the same for the entire working class in the country. At the bottom lies the deep crisis of moribund capitalism the world

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On Bank Employees Problems and way out

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over and the latest policy prescription of finance capital of globalisation working to their peril. That is why bank employees' movement as that of others cannot be disjointed ones and all are to be oriented to anti-capitalist movement if any headway is to be made or the movement to be on the right track. The common people engaged in democratic movements against very many onslaughts of the same very crisis-ridden moribund capitalism must also regard the movements of bank employees or employees and workers in various sectors as part and parcel of their movements. This is for the simple reason that all these problems emanate from moribund capitalist order. That is why while the employees must exert their maximum zeal and energies for the protection of security of job, service conditions as well as living standard they are to bear in mind that they cannot have permanent solution to those and guarantee so long the same economic order remains.

The Ray of Hope

Amidst darkness lies the silver lining. The Bank Employees Unity Forum based on the revolutionary thoughts of Comrade Shibdas Ghosh, the eminent Marxist thinker of the era and guided by the UTUC(LS) has been consistently exposing the role of compromising leadership and urging upon employees to build up a new dynamic leadership of their own to carry forward the struggle in defense of security of job and service conditions — the rights won through heroic movements in the past. Today those are being tried to be snatched away by the managements with the silent approval of those whom they considered so long as their leaders. Support to globalisation is the real reason for the stand of the leadership.

Everywhere the employees are growing restive, and with anguished heart want to fight back. The Bank Employees Unity Forum's organisers and leaders are working overtime to give concrete shape of their resentment against treachery of leadership into concrete positive steps and actions. The UCO bank employees spearheaded by the Main Branch, Calcutta have come forward to stall restructuring and re-deployment. They have challenged the central leadership and are organising themselves. The Forum is in active touch with them. So, is the case of SBI employees in West Bengal. The bank employees in Panjab National Bank, Punjab and Sind Bank, UBI, Bank of India, Syndicate Bank to mention but a few are showing urge to unite them against the grave danger of VRS, hi-tech machines, re-deployment, increased workload without compensation etc. In all cases, the Bank Employees Unity Forum is helping them to organise. Meanwhile in UP, Punjab, Haryana, Orissa, in the southern states, altogether in 8 states the Bank Employees Unity Forum is active.

The established leaderships while doing nothing for the defense of employees accuse this move of politicising. If it is politics, it is surely the politics of the working class. Those leaders stand for the politics of moribund capitalist class. The initiative taken by the Bank Employees' Unity Forum is getting response from far and wide. Even where the organisers could not reach physically, the message has reached through leaflet and literature. Invitations are pouring in from there with willingness to join in resistance movement.

The National Coordination Committee of the Bank Employees Unity Forum was formed in New Delhi on June 23rd. Not only those

connected with the Bank Employees Unity Forum but like-minded leaders and forces joined and are still joining.

The National Coordination Committee has issued call to the bank employees to develop their new leadership from grassroots level in the shape of struggle committees, requested them to reject the 7th bi-partite settlement as a document of deception and falsehood. A new stirring among the bank employees is appearing slowly but steadily. This is the only silver lining amidst the darkness of capitulations and treachery of leaderships of established unions in banking sector.

AIDSO Fights Fee Hike in Karnataka

All India DSO has been fighting against fee hike in education in different parts of the country. In Karnataka when the Janata Dal led state government enhanced the tuition fees, examination fees and other fees upto 100% at the pre-university level, which came as a rude shock to the students, the state AIDSO strongly condemned this move. AIDSO held protest programmes in different parts of Karnataka, participated by large number of students.

Mysore

AIDSO Mysore unit held a protest demonstration on 22nd June '99. Students participation was impressive despite the fact that 1st year PU classes had not started. With thunderous slogans hundreds of students marched on the streets of Mysore boycotting classes from different colleges. Later a memorandum was submitted to the Deputy Director, P.U. Education Board.

Bangalore

On 24th June 1999 the Bangalore District Committee of the AIDSO organised protest in front of PU Board Head Office, Bangalore. Hundreds of Students from different colleges took part in the protest. Addressing the gathering, Comrade V.N.R. Shekhar, AIDSO District President, severely condemned the fee hike and urged the students to continue agitation till the hike was withdrawn. Comrade M. Umadevi, AIDSO, District Secretary, presided over the meeting. Later a delegation of AIDSO leaders and students led by Comrade M.N. Sriram, State Secretary, AIDSO, met the Deputy Director in absence of the Director. The Deputy Director assured the delegation that they will discuss the issue. Again on 25th June a delegation led by Comrade M.N. Sriram met the Education Minister for Primary and Secondary Education and submitted a memorandum. The minister assured the delegation that he would look into the matter.

Similar such protests were organised in Gulbarga and Raichur also.

Martyrs Sidho and Kanhoo remembered in Singhbhoom

30th June was the day, long ago, when the call for 'Hool', i.e., revolt against the British Government and local exploiters in the jungle of Bhagnadihi was given under the leadership of the great heroes and martyrs of the Santhals, Sidho and Kanhoo. In order to mark the day the 30th June is observed since then as 'Hoolmaha' or the day of the revolt. Thanks to a number of opportunist circles, attempt is on to degenerate the occasion into frivolous festivity or perfunctory rituals. In contrast the manner in which Sidho Kanhoo Disha Samity has been observing the day in the tribal villages is really remarkable.

On 30 June, 99 the 'Sidho-Kanhoo Disha Samity' organised at the village Vadika in Singhbhoom district, Bihar, a meeting in remembrance of the 'Hool Day'. The meeting was presided over by Comrade Madhab Sardar, Secretary of the Dumuria branch. The main speaker was Sitaram Tudu, member of the District Committee, SUCI and Secretary of the 'Sidho-Kanhoo Disha Samity'. Elaborating on the history of their struggle and character, he said, "Now streets and bridges are being named after Sidho

and Kanhoo, their statues built. But our conviction is that true and meaningful respect to them can be offered only by organising battles against exploitation and injustice". Explaining the term 'Diku' Comrade Tudu said: Diku is synonymous with exploiter. Diku is he who perpetrates injustice and oppression. In the Santhal revolt a number of non-tribals took part for it was a battle for emancipation from exploitation. Today capitalist exploitation, cultural degeneration of the imperialist countries and absence of ethics have struck root in India, particularly among tribal population. He called upon the youth to rally round the correct political leadership and build up organised movement.

On behalf of the Komsomol Comrade Pratap Tewari highlighted the courage and heroism of the great heroes and appealed to the youngsters to learn from them. The meeting was also addressed by Comrade Sujit Ray, a discharged worker from H.C.L. Copper mine for participating in democratic movement.

Before the meeting, sports events like archery, 'Haripeta' were organised in which both men and women participated.

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