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VEERAPPAN EPISODE

Politics of Connivance of Karnataka and TN Governments

As this article goes to the press, the high drama of abduction of Kannada matinee idol, Dhadha Saheb Phalke awardee Dr.Rajkumar by the notorious forest brigand and poacher Veerappan has snowballed into a big legal tangle dragging into its vortex even the Supreme Court. The controversy centres round the release of 56 TADA detainees, imprisoned by the police, 51 in Mysore and 5 in Chennai, as demanded by the brigand in exchange for release of Dr.Rajkumar and 3 others held hostage by him in the Sathyamangala forest bordering both Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. This episode, now over 40 days old, has put to shame all the previous and present Karnataka and Tamil Nadu governments, with the present incumbents moving heaven and earth to please Veerappan to release the kidnapped ones. That this villain is able to evade arrest and is at large even after innumerable operations by the police of both the states as well as by the BSF, has raised the question squarely whether there is any governance at all. Undoubtedly, it is as much true of the entire country be it Bihar, Assam, Maharashtra, U.P., as of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

The Background

Veerappan has acquired national notoriety for sandalwood smuggling and poaching in the dense forest for the last 2 decades. He has stolen ivory worth Rs. 12 crore (40,000 kg) and sandalwood costing Rs.100 crore. This outlaw and his gangsters have reportedly taken a toll of over 139 lives, apart from about 2000 elephants. His victims include 32 policemen and 10 forest officials. There are 134 cases booked against these criminals for murder, dacoities, kidnapping for ransom, terrorism etc. He 'rules' over a 6000 square kilometers territory in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. A whopping Rs.400 crore has been spent so far to 'nab' him.

After having failed to nab Veerappan independently, the Special Task Force (STF) comprising of police belonging to both the states was set up. Even the service of BSF was availed during the chief ministership of Veerappa Moily in Karnataka, which had to be later abandoned after losing a jawan and costing several crores of rupees to the exchequer. However, the Karnataka police has foisted various cases against 121 persons charging them to be Veerappan associates. While 51 are arrested under TADA and are languishing in Mysore jail the rest are treated under routine procedures and granted bail.

While the government and the police have been claiming successful cornering of Veerappan by capturing his associates, it was boasted that Veerappan was on the run and would be captured anytime. This tall claim of both the governments has been in the news for years now! It is in this background that the brigand has struck now and brought down both the governments to their knees.

The Kidnap Drama

Dr.Rajkumar, the 72 year old Kannada superstar had been camping in Gajanur, a tiny village of Erode district village in Tamil Nadu across the Karnataka border which also happens to be his native place, during the end of July this year. As reported it was just as when Rajkumar and his family members were retiring after dinner at night that Veerappan and his cronies arrived with rifles and took the actor and 3 others as hostages and walked away into the forest, on the night of July 30th, 2000.

This sudden development took the napping governments, particularly the Karnataka government by surprise. Indeed, it is not a real surprise since police intelligence had already reported even a year back that Rajkumar is an easy kidnap target of Veerappan whenever he visits Gajanur which is very close to the poacher's hideout. It is reported that though security was provided to Rajkumar in the initial few months, later it was neglected in view of the actor's reluctance to use the security cover. Whatever might have been the actor's compulsions to refuse security, though unfortunate and unwise as it has proved now, the government should have persisted with the same knowing full well the high risks involved. This lapse has, in fact, proved very costly now and the people of the state have been made to pay for the lapses.

The news of the kidnap came as a shock to the people of both the states and led to violence and arson by unruly mobs in Bangalore and some other cities in Karnataka. Schools and colleges were closed down for two weeks. Bangalore took a long time to limp back to normalcy. Since August first week, Section 144 has been clamped in Bangalore

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Central TUs observe Day of Action against blockades and sanctions

New Delhi, 1st September : Central trade unions AITUC, AICCTU, CITU, HMS, TUCC, UTUC, UTUC-LS and Bank/Insurance Employees Federation observed 1st September as Day of Action against imperialist blockades and sanctions. A decision to this effect had been taken at the International Solidarity Conference against Blockades and Sanctions held in

Congress organised by the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) in New Delhi in March 2000.

In the morning, a meeting was organised at the auditorium of Banga Bhawan, which was well attended by members of various trade unions and was addressed by representatives of central trade unions as well as the Ambassador of Iraq and the Yugoslav Consul. The house condemned the use of boycotts, sanctions and blockades by the imperialist powers, demanded their immediate withdrawal and adopted a resolution to this effect. The resolution is to be sent to the Secretary General of the United Nations. The resolution listed the inhuman effects of sanctions and blockades on the ordinary people of Cuba, Iraq, Yugoslavia, North Korea, Libya, Sudan, Palestine, southern Lebanon and Syrian Golan Heights. Immediately after the meeting, the participants marched to the American Center on Kasturba Gandhi Marg waving placards and banners and shouting slogans against US imperialism. Police barricaded the road much ahead of the Center. Comrade K. L. Mahendra, President of WFTU addressed the protesters. A delegation went to the American Center and handed over a copy of the resolution addressed to the American President.

On behalf of the UTUC-LS, Comrade R. K. Sharma was a member of the Presidium of the meeting at Banga Bhawan and placed the resolution for discussion. Comrade R. Rajesh spoke on behalf of UTUC-LS. In his address, he described it as a historic day since the Indian working class, from a united platform, was expressing its solidarity with the working classes and ordinary people of countries under direct

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The Kidnap Highlights Rising Crime in Country

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City and reinforced police force is guarding sensitive areas, particularly inhabited by Tamil minorities. Cinema halls opened for shows hardly a week back but there are very few viewers, while the entire film industry engaging 5 lakh employees has come to a standstill. The kidnap has affected trade and commerce leading to a huge loss of revenue which is yet to be estimated. The business houses have been expressing their worry over the fate of Rs.27,000 crore foreign investment in the state, considered as a 'feather in the cap' of the new chief minister, S.M.Krishna.

Veerappan's Demands

Before entering into the question of why such an impasse has been created that a hardcore criminal can dictate terms to governments, let us look to the brigand's demands. Unlike in the past two decades, this time the uneducated villain has mysteriously raised political demands. In an audio tape sent through mysterious channels that found its destiny in Tamil Nadu CM Karunanidhi's hands and subsequently in Karnataka CM S. M. Krishna's hands, Veerappan demanded: release of 56 TADA detainees jailed in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, compensation to the victims of police atrocities committed against tribals during 'nab Veerappan' operations, compensation to the families of those dalit victims who fell to police bullets during caste riots in Kambalapalli in Kolar districts (Karnataka), release of adequate cauvery waters to cater to needs of Tamil Nadu farmers, installation of the long stalled Thiruvalluvar (Tamil revolutionary poet) statue in Bangalore, compensation to the victims of cauvery riots in Karnataka, speedy withdrawal of the stay brought by Karnataka government for the functioning of the committee appointed by NHRC to probe police excesses during anti-Veerappan operations, to declare Tamil as the second official language in Karnataka, etc. Though some papers reported that a huge ransom amount was also on the list, both the governments have been denying the same. All through it is widely suspected that two extremist outfits TNL (Tamil National Liberation Front) and TNRT (Tamil Nation Retrieval Troops) and even LTTE are behind these demands.

Sensing the sensitive and emotive nature of the demands, the Karnataka cabinet met regularly to deliberate upon the demands. Mr. S. M. Krishna airdashed to Chennai several times to discuss the matter with his Tamil Nadu counterpart Mr. Karunanidhi. Mr. R. R. Gopal, editor of Tamil magazine *Nakkeeran* was chosen as the government emissary to negotiate with Veerappan. It may be recalled that this very Gopal had acted as emissary on earlier occasions too and has been working as the conduit between the government and Veerappan. Mr.Gopal has so far met Veerappan thrice and returned with further messages or clarifications sought by Veerappan.

So far as the demands are concerned, the governments response, reportedly, has been: both Karnataka and Tamil Nadu governments have set up a fund with contribution of Rs.5 crore each to pay compensation to the victims of police excesses in nabbing Veerappan; process of identifying and distribution of compensations to Cauvery and Kambalapalli riots is on; constitutional obligation

towards linguistic minorities is being adhered to; sharing of Cauvery water is being carried out as per the decisions of the commission with the CMs headed by the PM; while Thiruvalluvar statue will be installed in Bangalore, Sarvajna's (12th century A.D. Kannada philosopher-poet) statue will be installed in Chennai; steps to withdraw stay against NHRC Committee will be taken up.

While Veerappan sought few more clarifications with regard to the fulfilment of the above demands, what has been working as the major hitch in release of the hostages, is the demands for release of TADA detainees.

The Question of TADA Detenues

As already mentioned elsewhere in this article, 51 so-called associates of Veerappan have been languishing in Mysore jails for over 8 years without speedy trial. Ever since 1997 NHRC activists have been alleging that most of them are innocent agricultural labourers picked up from the villages. Many of them are women and some are aged above 70. Yet they have been charged under TADA.

Today, it is a well established fact that all over the country, TADA is a black Act to harass innocents while the real criminals move about with impunity. Public outcry against this Act forced the then Central Congress government in 1995 to allow the TADA Act to lapse.

However, the Karnataka government applied TADA against associates of Veerappan even when Veerappan does not fall under the general category of a terrorist and could have been easily tried under the existing laws under IPA, Arms Act, etc. But the deaf and stubborn government did not even budge to the remarks of NHRC. Rather the government brought a stay in March, 2000 to the NHRC Committee (appointed in 1999) probing police excesses and refused, so far, to release the detainees.

Was it not a gross violation of human rights and natural justice to imprison not only innocents but also hardcore criminals without a fair trial for over 8 years? Is it not that the state which is to guard people against crime itself stands as a criminal?

However, at last, the government withdrew TADA against these detainees not for change of heart but out of eagerness to secure release of Dr. Rajkumar. When the detainees were about to be freed on bail, Mr. Abdul Kareem, a retired DSP and father of the slain sub inspector of police Mr. Shakeel Ahmed, appealed to the supreme court against this move of the government. Subsequently, the supreme court granted stay and hence the release is held up. This has brought a stalemate since Veerappan issued threat through emissary Gopal that the hostages would not be released until and unless all the TADA detainees are released.

Danger of Fratricidal Bloodbath

Throughout the entire episode, overtones of fratricidal animosity and violence have cast their shadow. Particularly in Bangalore, where there is a sizeable number of Tamil speaking minority, apprehension is writ large that they will be targeted by chauvinists soon after the release of Rajkumar for the sins of Veerappan. Though saner voices are appealing repeatedly for peace and calm, this threat cannot be ignored. Memory of the gruesome attack on Tamils during the 1991 Cauvery riots reportedly aided and abetted by the then state government is still fresh in people's mind. Various Tamil

organisations in the state have openly condemned the kidnapping and denounced Veerappan to be the voice of Tamils. They have unequivocally declared that even when many of the demands raised by Veerappan are genuine, yet they do not share the mode of their fulfilment. Yet it is gratifying to note that majority of the Kannadigas in the state do not identify themselves with the chauvinists at all. It is also to be noted according to press reports, after the Supreme Court stayed release of the detainees, general mood among the people is in favour of the law, not the outlaw.

People's Questions

In the backdrop of the present happenings, once again questions have resurfaced in mass mind regarding political connections of Veerappan — which political bigwigs are behind him? How is it that such an ordinary criminal who carries Rs.50 lakhs on his head as reward continues to evade the police and governments? How is he carrying out smuggling of sandalwood and ivory without the backing of the powers that be? How is it that when an ordinary journalist like R. R. Gopal is able to meet him, dine with him, take photographs and shoot video films, the massive police network of the two states is incapable of going anywhere near him? What is the nexus between Veerappan, granite-sandalwood-ivory lobby and political powers in the game?

Nobody is willing to buy the government's oft-repeated version that Veerappan is evading arrest on his own. Things have gone too far. People like to know the truth. Nothing less than an impartial enquiry into the whole gamut of the issue will unearth the truth. Of course rescuing Rajkumar and 3 others is the issue of paramount importance presently but the matter does not end there. People are demanding the whole truth.

Larger Question of People's Security

The present episode of kidnapping has brought the larger question of people's security to the fore once again. Discerning people are already acquainted with the miseries wrought in people's life by the policies of liberalisation and privatisation. People's sufferings have been mounting alarmingly on all fronts — be it prices of essential commodities, unemployment, education, culture, health, etc. Added to all these is the growing menace of crime especially those indulged in by the underworld enjoying support from powerful business-political nexus. There is a rise in the crime rate starting from chain snatching, robbery to dacoities, murders, kidnapping for ransom, flesh trade and what not. All these go on unabated and under the nose of the administration. While people are bled white and thousands of crores of people's money is spent on police and intelligence, security remains a far cry. Nobody feels safe and secure today.

Such is the state of affairs not only in the two states of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu but all over the country. The Central NDA government headed by the BJP cannot absolve itself of its responsibility in the failure to check the growing crime. Rather it has indulged in this game. Take the recent episode for example. The Central government did not even lift its little finger when the BJP's ally the Shiv Sena was openly threatening to set Bombay on fire, if criminal proceedings against its chief Bal Thackeray were taken up based on the findings of the Sri

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Day of Action against blockades and sanctions

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attack of US imperialism. With the fall of the Soviet Union, the imperialists had made false proclamations of peace in the world. A myth was propagated that under the paradigm of globalisation there would only be economic competition in the marketplace. Despite the best attempts of the IMF-World Bank and the WTO, this myth could not become reality. The imperialist nations, led by the US, launched vicious economic and military attacks on some developing countries and also displayed extreme rivalry with each other. This was only to be expected, because the global marketplace is shrinking due to growing poverty and unemployment, which are a direct product of the very policies of globalisation, liberalisation and privatisation. The imperialists are, therefore, trying to seize the markets of each other while zealously protecting their own markets through exclusive regional trade blocs, non-tariff barriers and hidden subsidies. Inter-imperialist rivalry remains the root cause of war, as pointed out by Lenin long ago. The US attack and sanctions on Iraq are meant to control its oil reserves and prevent Russia and France to have access to them. A few days ago, US forces under NATO command took control of a giant public sector mining and industrial complex in Yugoslavia, under the pretext of stopping pollution. Therefore countries like Iraq, Cuba, Yugoslavia are facing the direct attack of the imperialists and the working class and ordinary people of these countries are bearing the brunt of military attacks and economic sanctions. The United Nations too has become but a rubber stamp of the imperialists. The Secretary General himself had justified military intervention in sovereign nations to "protect democracy". The Indian working class, while expressing its solidarity with the people of these countries, is itself under imperialist attack, but with a difference. The ruling class of India, led by the BJP Government, is becoming a junior partner of the US imperialists. This is the purpose behind the Clinton visit to India and the forthcoming Vajpayee visit to the US. The Indian ruling class is opening up its market to imperialist capital in return for a share of the world market, since the Indian market is not enough to satisfy the thirst for profit of the Indian monopoly capitalists. The BJP Government is also militarising the economy and entering into a military alliance with the US imperialists hoping to become a regional superpower. For the capitalists, this tie-up with the US means increased profits; for the Indian working class, it means ever-increasing poverty and unemployment as the government continues with its policies of liberalisation and privatisation to benefit foreign and Indian capital. Indonesia should serve as a warning. Once propped up by US imperialism in order to fight communism, the Suharto military regime was able to develop capitalism under imperialist protection. But the imperialists did not hesitate to stab Indonesia in the back, taking advantage of its high short-term debts and recession in export markets. The shattering of the Indonesian economy has driven

up unemployment and poverty to new heights and thus the working class pays the price for Indonesia's alliance with imperialism. Hence this Day of Action is more than just a programme of solidarity; it is a recognition of US imperialism as an enemy equally of the Indian working class. The need of the hour is a militant anti-imperialist peace movement, which the working class alone can lead.

In his spirited address, the Ambassador of Iraq, Mr. Salah Al-Mukhtar pointed out that the death of 2 million Iraqi people out of a total population of 23 million was nothing but genocide. The original conditions to lift the embargo on Iraq like redrawing the border with Kuwait and destroying certain weapons had been complied with in 1992 itself. Yet the sanctions were being continued on one pretext or the other. No less than four senior UN officials, of agencies like UNDP and the World Food Programme had declared the oil-for-food programme to be a failure and had demanded that the sanctions be lifted. In 1998, the US illegally bombed Iraq after clandestinely directing UN weapons inspectors to leave Iraq on grounds of Iraqi non-co-operation with them. After eight years of sanctions and weapons inspections of 7500 suspected sites, including universities, mosques and national monuments, Iraq was now being asked to either open up its oil sector to foreign investment or start weapons inspections completely afresh. The Ambassador reminded the audience that Iraq had kicked out Anglo-American multinationals decades ago and nationalised its oil sector. To loud applause from the house he declared that the fight of the people of Iraq was therefore a fight for their pride and dignity, it was therefore not just Iraqis defending themselves but a defence of all peoples of the world who cherish these values. This fight was going to succeed soon and result in the lifting of the embargo on Iraq as already 70 US Congressmen and 50 British MPs had written to their governments to cease all attacks and lift sanctions and the blockade.

The Yugoslav Consul, Mr. Zoran Claric said that Yugoslavia was a founder member of the non-aligned movement and was once a country with a very high standard of living. After the fall of the Soviet Union, it was no longer useful to the US and became a target of US intrigue. Interference in Yugoslavia's internal nationality problems led to civil war and fragmentation. NATO was only a façade for what was essentially an American attack. Mr. Claric said that while NATO's so-called "smart bombs" missed all Yugoslav military targets, destroying only dummy tanks and planes, the brunt of the attack was borne by civilian installations. A country of 10 million people would have to work a 100 years to restore its damaged property. Even after Yugoslav withdrawal from its own province of Kosovo, sanctions continued.

The meeting was presided over by Comrade K.L. Mahendra. It was also addressed by Comrades Tapan Sen-CITU, Ashok Ghosh-UTUC, D. D. Shastri-TUCC, Ramanand-AIBEA and Dev Ganguly-WFTU.

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Krishna Commission report. The Union Home Minister refused to deploy additional police force to aid Maharashtra government on one pretext or the other. Such being the record of the BJP, a BJP Union Minister from Karnataka had no qualms to declare recently that if his party was in power in Karnataka, it would have dealt differently in handling the Rajkumar kidnap issue. He said this in spite of the fact that his party has been party to all decisions taken by S.M.Krishna government upto now, particularly at the all-party meetings called by S.M.Krishna. Is there anything left to be expected from this ?

United Democratic Movement Alone Can Guarantee Safety to People's Life

It only needs to be all the more reiterated here that only a mighty upsurge of people's movement can guarantee safety and security to people's life. Rather absence of such a movement and backing of bourgeois and petty bourgeois parliamentary parties are giving free handle to the criminals to rule the roost. It only shows that people can no more depend upon the rotten and corrupt administration of the decadent capitalist system to check crime; it is the last thing to be expected. The system itself not only shields but generates and nurtures criminals. People's movement and organisation are the only way out.

So also it is all the more necessary at this stage to emphasise the fact that people's unity has to be guarded like apple of an eye. Brigands or criminals have no caste or creed, they have to be isolated and fought by all communities unitedly. Any attempt to pit one community of people against another is going to be counterproductive to people's cause. People of all communities should close up their ranks and together rebuff all attempts to bring cleavage in their ranks, particularly at a time when the anti-people policies pursued by both the Central and state governments are wreaking ruination in their lives.

5th August Observed in Durg, MP

Comrade Shibdas Ghosh Memorial Day was observed in Durg. In the morning of 5th August 2000 comrades garlanded the portrait of Comrade Shibdas Ghosh, the founder General Secretary of the SUCI and an eminent Marxist thinker of the present era. On the occasion fluttered the red flag was hoisted, Comrade Shibdas Ghosh badges were worn and the song on the great leader sung. On 6th August a meeting was held at the party centre in the evening. Students, teachers, youth and workers of the Vilai Steel Plant listened to Comrade Badsha Khan about the life and struggle of the great leader and teacher Comrade Shibdas Ghosh. He recounted how with a handful of compatriots, Comrade Ghosh, pressed on against a world of odds, succeeded to the fulfillment of the historic responsibility of building a genuine communist party on Indian soil and formed the SUCI on 24th April, 1948.

The meeting also solemnly remembered Frederick Engels, the great Marxist stalwart who passed away on the 5th August, 1895.

CHECK FLOOD AND SOIL EROSION IN MURSHIDABAD**Brutal police oppression on peaceful movement**

On 24 August last, the police resorted to brutal lathicharge and teargas shelling on thousands engaged in peaceful law violation organised by 'Banya O Bhangon Protirodh Committee' (flood and erosion resistance Committee) before the district Collectorate. The old, the women and the journalists were not spared. As a result more than one hundred people were injured many of whom were seriously. 73 people were arrested and tortured in thana lock up, throwing to the wind the Supreme Court ruling and all civilized norms of human rights. As a result many persons, including many senior citizens were severely injured. Comrade Khadija Banu, President AIDYO, West Bengal, was severely beaten up. She was lying unconscious on the floor of the lockup without any medical help. Unbailable cases were instituted against many of the arrested persons, who include senior citizens. The day of condemnation was observed on 25 August throughout the district. On 26 August the AIDS0 observed students' strike in the district with complete success.

The law violation programme on 24 August, was a higher phase of the movement demanding effective measures against recurring flood and widespread soil erosion caused by the Ganga, the Padma and the Bhagirathi in Murshidabad district, West Bengal. Due to soil erosion vast areas of land in Jangipur, Akherigunj, Dhulian and Jalangi have been swallowed up by these rivers. Over 78000 acres of land were eroded by the rivers between 1947 and 1972. Just between 1988 and 1994, 15,233 families have lost their homesteads and agricultural land, their only means of livelihood. Many thousands of middle and lower middle class people are now rootless refugees.

Every year many of the affected people die in floods, from contaminated drinking water, from enteric diseases and from snake bites. Every year at the height of monsoon rains boulders are dumped along the rivers on the plea of controlling flood and soil erosion. But during dry season no action is taken. In the rainy season the boulders sink out of sight in no time into the swollen river. Thus every year the political leaders,

administration, anti-socials and dishonest contractors/traders amass huge wealth from such so-called flood control measures.

In this situation the people find no alternative but to organise protest movements. Protest demonstrations, dharmas, blockades and law violation movements spring up despite brutal police repression. The children and the adolescent, too, joined hunger strike in protest. Through such bloody path of struggle has emerged the people's own instrument of struggle in the 'Banya O Bhangon Protirodh Committee'.

On 17 July last, the police resorted to firing, teargassing and indiscriminate lathi charge on the peaceful demonstrators. As a result Comrade Noiruddin, a volunteer of the Pratirodh Committee became a martyr and three others sustained serious bullet injuries. Many others were injured seriously in lathi charge. The special force, RAF (Rapid Action Force) let loose a reign of terror. The houses and shops were ransacked and the people were beaten up mercilessly. Pregnant women were not spared. An undeclared curfew was clamped down in the area.

Comrade Aimul was shot in the eye. Comrade Chand Mahammad with bullet wound in the throat is struggling for life in hospital bed. On 19 July the people of the whole district spontaneously observed a Bandh declared by the Protirodh Committee and the SUCI, bringing all activities to a standstill in a fiery outburst of hatred towards the administration and the government.

The spirit of resistance daunted the administration, and the District Magistrate was forced to announce in an all party meeting that boulder pilching during the rains would be discontinued and taken up during the dry months. Thus a partial victory was wrested through pressure of movement.

But the other demands were yet to be realised. So law violation programme on 24 August was organised with remaining demands like implementation of scientific measures against soil erosion after preparation of a master plan, protection of afflux embankment etc. and with the added demand for adequate compensation to the family of the martyr, Noiruddin and of others injured in police violence on 17 July.



Police lathicharge the peaceful law violators at Berhampur, Murshidabad on 24th August last

Hindusthan Cables Retrenchment in the name of VRS

On June 1 last, 94 workers of the Hindustan Cables (Rupnarainpur Unit, W.B.) were retrenched illegitimately in the name of VRS without their consent. The notice was issued on the night of May 31. When the workers came to work on the next morning, 94 of them found themselves retrenched. Intense discontent has been generated among the workers at this inhuman and undemocratic step. The big TU organisations like the CITU, AITUC, INTUC and HMS have virtually made no protest against this step. Although all the retrenched workers were members of one or other of these organisations, these unions surprisingly remained silent. Their such "golden silence" in response to this so-called "golden handshake" offered by the government has raised many a question among the workers. Is secret collusion with the authorities the real reason of this strange silence of these unions? It is only the Hindustan Cables Men's Union affiliated to the UTUC-Lenin Sarani that has taken the initiative to protest against the measure through gate meetings, street corner meetings, leaflet distribution and demonstrations and has called upon the workers to build up united resistance movements against this autocratic step of the authorities.

United Students' Movement for Teachers' Cause in Bihar

Nearly two years have passed since the college and university teachers' all India cease work movement demanding revised UGC pay-scales, was ended and an agreement was signed by the Union Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) and the All India Federation of College and University Teachers' Organisations (AIFUC-TO), but still the new pay-scales have not yet been implemented in about fifty per cent of the states. Of these states, the teachers of Bihar and Orissa have been in the midst of an indefinite movement from August last. While in Orissa the teachers of non-government colleges were denied the effect of the revised benefits of pay-scales, in Bihar the Rabri Devi government keeps mum on implementing the provisions of the above agreement for all category of college and university teachers. Due to this obstinacy on the part of the two state governments, students have been the worst sufferers.

In Bihar all the left and democratic organisations have already lent support to the teachers' legitimate movement. Among the left student organisations AIDS0 took initiative to organise a united students movement to pressurise the government to concede to the demands of striking teachers and open the universities. The left student organisations which included AIDS0, SFI, AIFS, DSU, etc. organised a protest demonstration in front of the residence of Mr. Saba Ahmed, Minister-in-Charge of Higher Education at Patna on 30th August last. At the instigation of some of the leaders of the ruling party, RJD, police suddenly pounced on the peaceful demonstrators and started indiscriminate lathicharge. Many demonstrators sustained serious injury. AIDS0 activists Brijnandan Bharat was not only severely lathicharged, he

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All Bengal Students' Convention against Onslaught on Education

AIDSO, West Bengal State Committee organised all Bengal education convention against abnormal fee hike, donation system in admission, privatisation-commercialisation-communalisation of education at College Square, Calcutta on 1-2 September 2000. Following the steps of all out privatisation and commoditisation of education by the BJP led government at the Centre, the CPI(M) dominated LF government of West Bengal has already caused havoc in the field of education while mouthing slogans against BJP's policies. Tuition fees are being hiked in colleges and universities after directions from the state education ministry. A corrupt practice of giving donation for admission in schools and colleges against receipt or without receipt have become part and parcel of the education system in the state. Already above a dozen private engineering colleges have sprung up where the investors' sole objective is to extract money. Though these engineering colleges lack the minimum infrastructural facilities, Rs.1-3 lakh is being claimed for admission to those colleges in a clandestine manner. Members of the AIDSO in the state have been in the course of movement against all these issues for over a year. Movement has spread throughout the length and breadth of the state. Students resorted to deputation, demonstration at institutions, road blockades, gherao of college authorities, demonstration before state Assembly, all Bengal protest day and ultimately an all Bengal students strike on 24 July 2000. Under the pressure of the movements, many colleges, schools and even in a university

concerned authorities were forced to withdraw the circular of fee hike and even return the money taken as donation.

To give a bigger shape to this movement against the attacks including those by the central government, the state committee of the AIDSO held the all Bengal convention. More than 10 thousand students participated in the open session on 1st September, the student Martyr's Day of the food movement of 1959 despite the rough

session which was presided over by Comrade Debasish Roy, President of the State Committee. On 2nd September 2610 delegates attended the delegate session, which was inaugurated by Professor Gourishankar Ghatak, a noted geologist. A student Action Committee Against Fee Hike was formed in the convention with Comrades Navendu Pal and Mridul Das, members of the State Secretariat of AIDSO as Joint Secretaries of the Committee. The convention



A view of Open Session of the Students' Convention on College Street, Calcutta on 1st September, 2000

monsoon. Comrade Chandidas Bhattacharya, member of the All India Committee of AIDSO besides some other teacher leaders spoke in the

took pledge to go all-out against all attacks on education coming from both the Centre and the state.

Mass Movement in UP

The UP State Committee of the SUCI has taken up a programme of mass movement in the state at the grassroots level against the anti-people policies of the government. For this purpose block level deputations and dharnas were organised in different blocks of Jaunpur and Sultanpur by the party and before the District Magistrate of Jaunpur.

Chanda, Sultanpur

The Chanda local committee organised a protest demonstration before the BDO office of Pratapur Kamaicha on 30 August 2000 on the demand of solving the burning problems in people's life including local problems. The colourful procession of the people of Chanda locality from Dhakapur Power House to the BDO office was marked with the participation of women even with children in good number.

A memorandum was handed over to the BDO and a meeting was held at the BDO office campus which was addressed among others by Comrades V.N. Singh, Secretary, UP State Committee of the party, Dinesh Kant Dubey, member, State Committee, Jagannath Verma, Secretary, Sultanpur District Committee.

Lambua, Sultanpur

Similar protest demonstration was held by the party before the BDO office, Lambua on 1st

September 2000. A memorandum was handed over to the BDO by a four-member delegation comprising Comrade Jagannath Verma, Comrade Brij Mohan Verma, Comrade Usha Singh and Dr. R. A. Misra. Before submission of the memorandum a mass meeting was held at Adarsh Vidyalaya Sagannathpur which was addressed by Comrade Jagannath Verma.

Badlapur, Jaunpur

The Badlapur Block Committee of the party also demonstrated before the BDO office and placed a memorandum with a 12-point charter of demands including local demands like withdrawal of fee hikes in hospitals and increased electricity charges. Comrade P. Viswakarma, member, UP State Committee of SUCI, Dinesh Kant Dubey, Jaiprakash Pandey, Triloki Nath Upadhyay addressed the gathering in front of the BDO office.

Maharajgunj, Jaunpur

On 28th August last the Maharajgunj local committee of the party organised a demonstration before the BDO office and submitted a memorandum with 11-point charter of demands to the BDO for taking effective steps immediately. After the memorandum was placed a mass meeting was held and Comrades Dinesh Kant

Dubey and Jagannath Verma addressed the gathering.

In all the demonstration programmes before the BDO offices, speakers appealed to the people to participate in and make the state level programme of mass demonstration before the Assembly in Lucknow on 26 September 2000 a success.

Jaunpur

Under the auspices of the Jaunpur District Committee of AIDSO a dharna before the office of the District Magistrate, Jaunpur was organised on 29th August 2000 to press important and urgent demands of the students community. At the time of the dharna a 14-point charter of demands including withdrawal of fee-hike at all levels, introduction of secular, scientific and democratic education, withdrawal of privatisation, commercialisation and communalisation of education, allotment of at least 10% of budget expenditure to education was submitted before the D.M. The memorandum demanded stopping of attacks on education from different quarters, particularly, from the ruling clique and government-administration. Before the dharna huge number of students marched in a procession from the city railway station to the D.M. office.

Comrades Jagannath Verma, Vice-President, AIDSO, Puspendu Viswakarma, State Convenor of AIDSO, Jai Prakash Maurya, R. R. Maurya, S. K. Pandey addressed the students.

AIDSO Karnataka Conference

The All India Democratic Students' Organisation, AIDSO, held its 4th state level students' conference on 24th, 25th and 26th August 2000, at Gulbarga. Amidst several odds and incessant rains affecting normal life in the state and Gulbarga city, more than 3000 students participated in the procession and open session of the conference. The well decorated procession echoed with thundering voices against educational problems and marched from Timmapuri Chowk passing through important streets of Gulbarga and reached Kotahri Bhavan where the open session was held at 11.30 AM.

The open session was inaugurated by Prof. K. Ramdas, a well-known rationalist, who, after deliberating on certain social and educational problems confronting students community, called upon students to intensify movement against present problems. Later speaking on the occasion as the chief guest, Comrade K. Radhakrishna, State Secretary of SUCI, dealt on the anti-people and anti-students policies of the state and Central governments and sounded a note of caution against the possible onslaughts on students and education. Comrade Pratap Samal, President, All India Committee, AIDSO who spoke on the occasion as the main speaker discussed comprehensively about the danger of communalism and other problems before the students' community and said how history text books in several states have been distorted to create a sense of false national pride among students. Comrade K. Uma, President of AIDSO, Karnataka, who presided over the function, explained the background of today's education in Karnataka state, where exorbitant fee hike was effected practically at all levels of education. Lastly Comrade M. N. Sriram, State Secretary of AIDSO spoke on some serious problems faced by the students of the state.

Earlier Comrade Chandidas Bhattacharya, Treasurer, All India Committee of AIDSO hoisted the flag and garlanded the martyrs' column.

Quotation exhibition was inaugurated by Smt. Shameem Surayya, Principal of Bi Bi Raza College, Gulbarga.

Delegate session was held on 25th and 26th August 2000, which comprised around 400 selected delegates from over 12 districts and it started with the inaugural speech of Comrade Chandidas Bhattacharya. The session thoroughly deliberated on several burning problems confronting students' life and resolutions against fee hike at all levels of education', poor

Secretary of the State Committee.

The new committee has also decided on a concrete future course of action. It has decided to spare no efforts in organising college level committees, take up mass and membership drive. It has decided to organise various kinds of protest programmes in different districts on 26th September 2000, which is declared as a save education day by the All India Save Education Committee.

The AISEC, has decided to collect crores of signatures throughout the country as a part of movement against commercialisation and communalisation of education. As a part of such efforts, AIDSO, Karnataka has also decided to



A portion of gathering in Open Session of the students' conference at Gulbarga on 24th August, 2000

infrastructure facilities in schools, colleges, and hostels', 'cultural degeneration' among others were unanimously adopted. Later a new state level council with a total number of 36 members was elected. Comrades N.M. Sriram and VNR Shekhar were respectively elected President and

collect lakhs of signatures from people belonging to all sections of the state. It has also been decided to organise hundreds of students from the state to Mass Dharna programme and convention against NCERT recommendations to be held on 24th and 25th November under the banner of AISEC.

BIHAR

School of Politics at Ghatsila

A School of Politics organised by the Bihar State Committee of the party was held at the Study Centre of Marxism-Leninism-Comrade Shibdas Ghosh Thought at Ghatsila from 23rd August to 26th August 2000. Nearly 300 activists of the state participated in the class which dealt with the fundamental principles of Marxism-Leninism and the thoughts of Comrade Shibdas Ghosh. The School started with the flag hoisting and the guard of honour to the memory of our beloved leader Comrade Shibdas Ghosh. Comrade Krishna Chakraborty, member, Central Committee placed the floral wreath at the feet of the statue of Comrade Ghosh. Then Comrade Ranjit Dhar, Central Staff of the party, Comrade Amriteswar Chakraborty, Secretary, Bihar State Committee also paid tribute to the departed leader. The song of Comrade Ghosh was sung by the party's music squad.

The School was conducted by Comrade Ashutosh Banerji, member, Central Committee and was assisted by Comrade Krishna Chakraborty and Comrade Ranjit Dhar.

In the first four sessions Comrade Banerji dealt with the basic principles of dialectical and historical materialism and in the last two sessions he discussed on the national and international situation and our task. Pointing out the impending grave danger of fascism, posed by the BJP and Sangh Parivar, he called upon the comrades to prepare themselves for being equal to the task of resisting it. Towards the end, Comrade Banerji appealed to the comrades to take more initiative and build up organisation and rectify and elevate themselves for taking the responsibility imperative on them.

The School ended with the 'Internationale' at the noon of 26th August.



Comrade Ashutosh Banerji, Krishna Chakraborti, Ranjit Dhar and other leaders on the dais (above), and a partial view of the participants in the School (below)

9 Left Parties' Memorandum to the Governor, AP

To
His Excellency the Governor of Andhra Pradesh
Hyderabad

Sir,

We would like to bring to your notice the brutal repression let loose by the state government on peaceful agitators on 28th August, the Black Monday, in the capital city. As you are aware the people of Andhra Pradesh are engaged in a peaceful movement against the abnormal power tariff hike for the last three months. The nine left parties have been mobilising public opinion on the issue and appealed to the government to relent. A memorandum was submitted to you also on June 24.

In the absence of any positive response from the government, the nine left parties developed the movement in a phased manner to reach the voice of the protesting people to the government which, throwing to the winds all caution and democratic norms and values, unleashed unprecedented repression pressing the state machinery, especially the police, into action. The incidents of 28th August, 2000, the day of Chalo Assembly programme, amply speak of the insanity and a strong desire to kill, obviously backed to the hilt by the state government.

Though the nine parties sought permission in advance for the Chalo Assembly programme the government, which denied it till late night of August 27, created an atmosphere of panic and terror throughout the state by an orchestrated propaganda that there would be violence on 28th August in Hyderabad and it would not be safe to take part in the programme. Thousands were stopped at the railway stations. Lorry and truck owners were forced to stop their vehicles. People were arrested

and threatened with dire consequences if they ventured to go to Hyderabad.

The state government was bent upon, somehow, to prove that participation of the people was insignificant. Despite all these hurdles, created by the government and police, thousands of people including large number of women and old people attended the rally. Even before the head of the procession led by the leaders of nine left parties reached the barbed wire cordon on the road leading to the Assembly, police without any warning or caution and wielding their hightech lathis swooped on the leaders and cadres and surrounded them and mounted police stamped the agitators. Armed personnel of special armed forces, anti-riot, greyhounds etc. swung into action in a most barbaric manner. The assaults were so indiscriminate that even the women and old were not spared.

The mandatory procedure of warnings, water canons, tear gas etc. was not adhered to. All of them were simultaneously utilized in a most brutal manner with a view to maiming. Again, without any warning and indication the police resorted to firing. Here also the aim was not to scatter the people but to kill. Most of the bullet wounds are above the knee level, as it was found out later. In the entire savage episode two youth were killed and some more are battling for their lives in hospitals. 23 people received serious bullet injuries and hundreds were wounded.

Later on in the evening police resorted to unprovoked, unwarranted and indiscriminate lathicharge on the leaders of the left and Congress at the hunger strike camp in Old MLA quarters and caused grievous injuries to many. The police at the instance of state government resorted to lathicharge in 120 centres in the last three months resulting in

injuries to about 2200 people. According to government's own admission in the House 533 cases were filed and 25414 people were arrested during the agitation. While severely condemning this brutality of the police engineered by the TDP government led by Sri Chandrababu Naidu, we, on behalf of the nine left parties appeal to you to direct the Government

1. To institute a high power judicial enquiry by sitting High Court judge into the incidents of 28th August, 2000 during the Chalo Assembly march.
2. To sanction Rs. 5 lakhs as ex-gratia to each of the families of those killed in the police firing.
3. To provide adequate ex-gratia to all those who were wounded and medical reimbursement for their treatment.
4. To withdraw all false cases including cases under Cr.Pc. 307 foisted against the leaders and cadres of the left parties during this entire period of anti-tariff hike movement and
5. To advise the Government to roll back the anti-people power tariff hike.

Thanking You,
Yours sincerely,

Sd/-

Dr. Y. Radhakrishna Murty CPI (M) MP (RS)
Dasari Nagabhushana Rao CPI MP (RS)
S. Sudhakar Reddy — CPI
B. V. Raghavulu — CPI (M)
V. Venkataramaiah — CPI (ML) New Democracy
M. V. Prasad — CPI (ML) Janashakti
Gurram Vijaya Kumar — CPI (ML) Unity Initiative
D. K. Biswas — MCPI
E. P. A. Rasheed — SUCI
B. Bangarraju — CPI (ML) Liberation
K. Venkateswara Rao — ML Committee

'10,000 in US faced N-hazard in 1940s'

The Americans raised a hue and cry over the Chernobyl nuclear disaster but the US administration itself appears guilty of something much more serious. It is said to have secretly hired about 10,000 unsuspecting employees of private companies to process huge volumes of nuclear weapons material in the 1940s and 1950s.

According to the USA Today, which broke the story recently, declassified government records indicate that around the time of Manhattan Project, that gave the world its first nuke, 200 companies — big and small — were contracted to process and produce material used in nuclear weapons production. Thousands of people were hired and made to sign "hold harmless clauses", making the government not liable for anything.

The report says: "Thousands of workers were exposed to dangerous levels of radiation, often hundred times stronger than the limits of the time. Dozens of communities were contaminated, their air, ground and water fouled by toxic and radioactive waste." In fact, the workers were told what they were doing was safe.

The federal administrators and executives of the contracted companies were apparently in the know but not so the employees. "...Reports detailing the problems were classified and locked away," the report says.

Most of these companies were located in the

PRESS CLIPPINGS

This is Liberalisation and Progress !

"Out-of-job workers in suicide bid

As India was getting ready to celebrate its 54th Independence Day, a group of labourers who had gone without work for 19 months were preparing for their own "freedom" from hunger.

More than 100 out-of-work labourers of the Suraya Sugar Mills of Sardamagar, 15 km from here, silently brought cartloads of firewood into the factory to immolate themselves.

The administration stepped in on time and confiscated the fire-wood. More than 30 people were arrested.

Recuperating at the BRD Medical College, Bhagat says: "We have lost everything. Now the police want to take away the only we were left with — the right to our own lives."

Ram Dayal, Bhagat's son, says quietly: "My father had lost all hope. He thought this was the only way to attract the attention of the government towards the plight of mill workers." Ram had to discontinue school after the mill closed. "There was no question of going to school. There wasn't anything to eat at home."

industrial belt of the US — around New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, in big cities like Detroit, Cleveland, Chicago and St. Louis and some smaller communities such as lockport Carnegie and Joliet.

Quoting Dan Guttman, former Director of the

(Contd. on page 8)

When the owner, Arjun Lal Majethia, closed the factory following a family dispute, about 300 direct and 1,250 indirect workers were affected. As the months wore on without the workers getting any pay, they started pulling their children out of school. Many let their old parents die for lack of treatment because the need for food was greater than that for medicines. Driven by despair, the workers made an attempt at mass self-immolation twice.

But there are still some who cling on to the hope that the mill will reopen. One group has been going to the deserted factory everyday to sign the attendance register maintained by the time-keeper, Ras Behari. Though he is starving himself, Ras Behari continues to assure others that the factory will come to life soon.

Sixty-year old Byara Singh says: "It is embarrassing to narrate how we live now. Many have died and many are dying." Unable to keep up the facade of stoicism for long, he breaks down. His friend Bahadur tries to take over and fails. Soon the whole group of workers is weeping. "Why doesn't anyone listen to us? Why do we have to die like this?"

Deputy Labour Commissioner, Gorakhpur, Alok Srivastava, says, there is little anyone can do. "What can we do? The matter is pending with the Board of Industrial and Financial Reconstruction."

(The Telegraph, 19.8.2000)

NORTH BENGAL TEA BARONS' BLOOD STAINED HAND BEHIND**Disappearance of SUCI organiser**

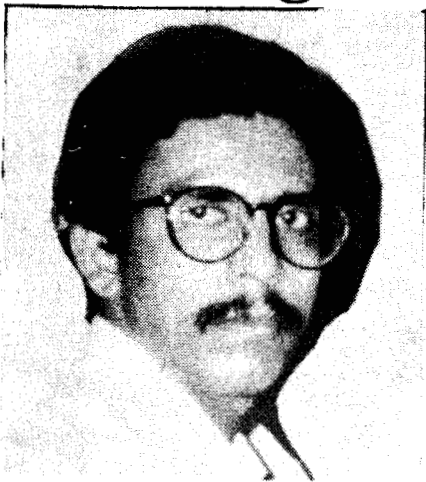
No trace of Comrade Tanmay Mukherjee for 18 days. Last seen on 28th August when armed criminals pounced him in a deserted evening near the river Sahoo bridge, 12 odd kilometers away from the Siliguri town.

Tanmay Mukherjee (32), a young undaunted comrade, a workers' leader, popular among all sections of people, is a victim of the vicious conspiracy of the tea estate owners and land mafia of North Bengal.

Media is so deliberate to blackout our party, that this news got literally no space, while it is busy to bring to limelight and virtually idealises the widespread violent clashes perpetrated both by the CPI(M) and Trinamool Congress, the latter an NDA partner.

But if not the media, it is the people, the workers who have spread the news of the murderous attack made on the young organiser, a dedicated soldier to the cause of tea plantation workers. Now it is the anguished question of countless men of Siliguri town, Darjeeling district and of the entire North Bengal — Is Tanmay yet alive? Is there any clue to him? At tea gardens bereaved workers observed tools down. They want back their dear leader.

For the last two years Comrade Tanmay dedicated himself to organise tea plantation workers led by the North Bengal Tea Plantation Employees Union. He has built a powerful union at Phulbari Tea Estate, which achieved Rs.40 as daily wage as against the usual Rs.20/22. This victory caused quite a stir among the workers of the whole area, who have been exploited and tortured long since. Workers started building up struggling unions as well as movements led by the SUCI. While the owners, their stooge unions and the land mafia got scared. This is the situation when the workers of the 'Deepa' Tea Estate started movement under Tanmay's leadership. On 24th August Comrade Tanmay led a workers' deputation to the manager. Instead of discussing on that very day the manager scheduled the meeting on 28th afternoon. It may be mentioned that the owner of 'Deepa' was a man of the Congress. He suddenly on 25th August installed another union led by the



Trinamool Congress. On 28th August in the afternoon when Comrade Tanmay along with Comrade Sukhlal Roy went to attend the scheduled meeting, they were made to wait for unusually a long time and when evening descended and it was almost dark finally were informed that the meeting was postponed. Both the comrades left the place. Around 7 in the evening at Rangolibhita suddenly many criminals pounced on the comrades, tied and blindfolded them, drag them two kilometers away close to the Sahoo River, while all along assaulted them mercilessly. There the criminals dragged the two in a canal, thrust them under water and savagely assaulted them alternately.

Even while terribly hammered, Comrade Tanmay requested the criminals to spare Sukhlal, as he was married and a father. Some criminals dragged Sukhlal away, while the others went on with the savagery on Tanmay. From a distance helpless Sukhlal heard Tanmay's cry and all of sudden it came to a dead stop.

Injured, and in a state of violent shock Sukhlal could not even inform anybody about it as the murderers not only were threatening him, he was virtually encircled. When Comrade Swapan Mallick, Secretary, Darjeeling District Committee, SUCI went to Sukhlal's house, only then he came to know of it and took him to the police station to lodge diary. Comrade Sukhlal told police the names of criminals involved.

From what took place it is clear that the authority of 'Deepa' deliberately promised a meeting on 28th August afternoon and made our

comrades wait till dark and then informed of the postponement. It is clear that the criminals were waiting as a part of the design.

The moment this news is known, Comrade Tanmay's inmates, locality people were engulfed in bereavement. Although police were given the names of the criminals, amazingly they arrested Comrade Sukhlal instead, the only eye-witness and victim of murderous torture. To this blatant act people ask — why did the police arrest Comrade Sukhlal leaving the diehard criminals? Did the owners influence the police?

A huge mass protest meeting was held at Bagha Jatin Park, Siliguri on 8.9.2000. Comrade Prativa Mukherjee, member, West Bengal State Secretariat and a mass leader was the main speaker. Thousands of people including tea plantation workers gathered there and raised slogans demanding arrest and exemplary punishment of the culprits.

Comrade Prativa Mukherjee, led a deputation to the SP, Jalpaiguri, who assured that investigation was on.

Although the tea barons and land mafia perpetrated the crime with the object to destroy workers' movement and their fighting spirit, it backfired. Workers of tea estates, far and wide, including 'Deepa' are coming forward with undaunted zeal to build up legitimate movements. They, along with people of other strata, are engaged in protracted movements so that the culprits are brought to book.

US faced N-hazard

(Contd. from page 7)

President's Advisory Committee on Human Radiation Experiments, the report says, "People were put at considerable risk. It appears the government knew that safety standards were violated, but there's been no effort to maintain contact with these people or look at the effects."

USA Today hired the Institute for Energy and Environmental Research (IEER) to provide an expert review of old radiation data on three contracting operations. And the reported findings were harrowing. Estimates say that workers in the riskiest jobs had 40 per cent more than the threat faced by the general population.

Arjun Makhijani, Director, IEER, is quoted as having said, "These exposures are unconscionably high ... at the high end of the estimated doses, workers' risk of dying from cancer was increased by more than 20 per cent; many of the workers would also be expected to have kidney damage."

(Hindustan Times, 8.9.2000)

Bihar Students' Movement

(Contd from page 5)

was slapped by DSP himself on his ear to that the screen of the ear has been ruptured. Police arrested 10 demonstrators including 6 of AIDS0. They were rejected bail and were implicated with false and fabricated charges like theft.

The comrades who were arrested are comrades Manoj Kr. Singh, Brijnanandan Bharat, Satyam, Sachidanand, Rajesh Ranjan, Sushil.

In protest of this barbaric incident next day, the 31st August, all the left and democratic organisations observed 'black day' by wearing black badges and holding innumerable meetings at different places. They called for a 'Patna Bandh' on 6th September last to protest the high-handedness of the police and the adamant attitude of the government which became a total success.



Protest March in Siliguri on 8th September, 2000

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