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Panchayat Elections in West Bengal

Reign of Terror by CPI(M)

It is now admitted by one and all that the much trumpeted free, fair and peaceful elections of the bourgeois democracy in our country have been reduced to a farce for a long time. This is also known to all that the results of the elections are determined not by people's verdict, but by muscle power, media controlled by the administration and monopolists and above all by the money power of the monopolists and the black marketeers. It is also not unknown to any one that the CPI(M) has been vying with the Congress, the BJP, the Janata Dal and other regional parties in this respect. Some states including Bihar were in the forefront so long, but the role of the CPI(M) in last Panchayat elections has pushed West Bengal in the forefront in this diabolical game.

Being totally isolated from the people, the CPI(M) got a jolt in the Lok Sabha elections, and after this jolt the CPI(M) made desperate attempts to retain their hold over the Panchayats. For this reason the CPI(M) resorted to wanton murders, assaults, booth capturing, large scale stamping of ballot papers, debarring genuine voters from voting through intimidation by firearms, rigging in counting, compelling the presiding officers in

changing the results of the elections at the point of revolvers so on and so forth, and in this nefarious acts the CPI(M) nakedly used the police and the election offices. In the past there has not been so many murders, assaults and intimidations in the elections, and so many demands for repolling have been raised in the Panchayat elections. It is not only the opposition parties but even the constituents of the Left Front have not been spared by the CPI(M) in the matter of murders, assaults and intimidations.

Our party, the SUCI has been conducting mass movements against the anti-people policies of the Centre and the states for a long time. In West Bengal also the party has developed powerful movements against the anti-people and non left policies of the CPI(M)-led Left Front Government. At the call of our party two successful Bangla Bandhs were held on 3rd September 1990 and 3rd February 1998, and a sizable section of the cadres of the CPI(M) at the lower level participated in these bandhs. The movements for various educational demands including demand for reintroduction of English

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CENTRAL BUDGET BY BJP

Pro-Rich and Anti-Poor Bias Exposed

A BJP-led government at the Centre has placed the two budgets — Rail and General — on 29th May and 1st June respectively. With the country having so far been ruled by non-BJP governments (not counting the 13-day long BJP government 2 years back) some expectations were generated among a section of people centring round the BJP's maiden budget. Those who were misled by the systematic and orchestrated campaign by the ruling class and the media in favour of the BJP government as, if this government will surely deliver the goods, can see for themselves how baseless has been this claim. A little examination of the budget reveals that this government too has framed an out and out anti-people budget like its predecessors.

The main feature of the rail budget are : tickets of all classes including platform, will now cost more ; the lower and middle class daily passengers in particular will be hard hit as fares of even local and suburban trains have also been raised, as also the cost of monthly tickets ; steep rise in Calcutta metrofare, rise in freight for some commodities. Combined effect of all these cannot but be harmful. Although the additional revenue of Rs. 450 crores will be collected in this way, there are only meagre budgetary allocations for pending or new railway extension project.

In return for higher fares what the passengers expect to get ? Raise the question of improvement of passenger amenities and you will get a big no. Trains run late by hours even by days. Is there any security for a passenger travelling by rail ? Is he not at the mercy of the anti-socials and dacoits ? Added to this is the ever rising number of railway accidents due to poor maintenance and administration. As a result, people are forced to get into a train with practically no safety and security for their lives. Then why this fare hike ? The railway is not a losing concern, rather every year it makes profit. The hike of fares which is planned to generate an additional revenue will be at the cost of the passengers but will not benefit them in the least.

While tabling the General Budget the Finance Minister said, "I have recalled to myself the face of the poorest and the weakest man I have seen and made sure that this budget is of use to him."

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Students' Movement in Indonesia — A Review

The recent political upheaval in Indonesia once again underscores the historical truth that brute force and oppression are not the ultimate deciding factors but it is the people who determine the course of history. Indonesia gained independence by defeating the Dutch imperialists in 1949 and soon became an important member of the nonaligned nations. Through a history of long struggle leftists and communists came to wield considerable political power in Indonesia, and under Sukarno Indonesia developed close ties with the socialist states of Russia and China. Sukarno was a leading figure in the historic Bandung Conference. He followed an anti-imperialist line and nationalised many foreign owned plantations and industries. The imperialist powers got alarmed at the popularity of the communists and in 1965 with the active support of USA General Suharto usurped the state power through a

military coup. A blood bath followed and 1.5 million communists and communist supporters were butchered by Suharto's army.

Suharto virtually eliminated all opposition and ruled Indonesia for 32 years with an iron fist, though the facade of a constitution and a ceremonial parliament was maintained.

He ruthlessly suppressed political critics and used harsh subversion laws to imprison opposition leaders. One could be jailed simply for publicly criticising the government. There was no freedom of press, and newspapers which published critical articles were banned. The Indonesian Communist Party was outlawed and until early nineties Indonesians applying for jobs had to provide documentary evidence that they had no links with communists. The country's largest independent labour union was suppressed and no working

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US Imperialism Fishing in Troubled Waters of Indonesia

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class movement was allowed to grow. Suharto was rewarded by the USA for his staunch anti-communist stand with generous economic and military aids.

In Suharto's regime only two opposition parties were officially recognised. Those who tried to set up unofficial ones were imprisoned. Candidates could stand for election only after they were vetted by government officials who also scrutinised the party politics. Large scale intimidation of voters and rigged elections allowed the ruling Golkar party to win with thumping majority. The two opposition parties, United Development Party (PPP) and the Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI) were allowed to participate in the elections, but had to remain content with securing only a token percentage of votes. The Parliament was reduced to a rubber stamping institution.

Suharto encouraged foreign investment and the multinationals flooded in to invest in key sectors like mining, heavy industries, infrastructure etc. The entire national economy came to be controlled by Suharto's family and a few of his close friends. Businessmen who wanted to get ahead in Indonesia had to get close to a Suharto kin. The practice of getting a member of the Suharto family involved in one's business became a time-honoured key to success. A new vocabulary was coined to describe the phenomenon — crony capitalism. Rampant corruption and nepotism flourished in Indonesia. Suharto's family staked claims to virtually every part of the economy from agriculture and industry to mining, petrochemicals, telecommunications, banking, real estate, transportation and infrastructure. They were showered with a veritable treasury of government concessions, tax breaks, monopolies and lucrative financial deals. One of the notorious scandals is the National Car Project of Suharto's youngest son Tommy. He won a deal to build a so-called national car, the Timor. Actually the car was fully built in South Korea and imported to Indonesia free of taxes and duties which others had to pay. As a result Timor sold for half the price of cars manufactured locally by other companies.

The Indonesian people were squeezed under the pincer attack of national and international finance capital. There was enormous concentration of power and capital in the hands of a few and the people were being increasingly pauperised.

But even within the dictatorship of Suharto demands for democracy grew and gained strength. The people's demands for democratic rights were articulated in 1996 by Megawati Sukarnoputri, leader of the PDI and daughter of the popular first President of Indonesia, Sukarno. Democratic movement started to crystallise around her. Her rising popularity alarmed Suharto who engineered the ouster of Megawati from the PDI leadership and brought in his lackey Surjadi to lead the PDI.

During the parliamentary election in May 1997 Suharto's party, Golkar resorted to large scale intimidation, bribery and electoral malpractices. Opposition parties were denied permission to address rallies, to organise street

meetings, processions and car caravans. Megawati boycotted the elections. There was widespread discontent throughout the country, which took the form of confrontation of people with the security forces during the pre-election rallies, leading in many instances to violent clashes. The exceptionally bloody campaign claimed several hundred lives. In the rigged election Golkar won by a record 74% votes. In March 1998, the new rubber stamp Parliament made Suharto President for one more term. But even this massive parliamentary majority could not save Suharto.

When the wave of globalization and liberalization swept across Southeast Asia from the nineties, massive influx of foreign investment artificially stimulated the Indonesian economy. There was an apparent boom and accelerated economic growth and prosperity. But the bubble soon burst and in August 1997 the Indonesian economy crashed along with that of other Southeast Asian countries. In an earlier article in the Proletarian Era (April 15, 1998) we had discussed threadbare the dynamics of the economic process and analysed the reasons of this collapse.

Within three months from August to October the stock market index in Indonesia fell from 723.5 to 483.4. During this period the exchange rate of the Indonesian rupiah had fallen by about a third. Commercial lending rate became above 30% and thousands of labourers were laid off and many companies closed down. In the early stages the Suharto government took same measures to fight the crises. It widened the rupiah's trading range to prevent a currency collapse. Several reforms were instituted to assure the foreign capital, e.g., limits were lifted on foreign ownership of listed companies; an end to several trading monopolies was announced and the government postponed spending on public work projects. But both the rupiah and the stock market continued to plunge despite these measures. The dollar exchange rate which was 2,390 rupiah before the crisis went to 11,000 rupiah in January 1998. 200 out of 228 companies listed in the Jakarta stock market went bankrupt and the government closed down 16 banks because of insolvency. On top of it prolonged drought and raging forest fires devastated agriculture, hurting production and increasing prices. Millions of workers lost their jobs and the devaluation led to fantastic price rise of the essential commodities. A citizen's 10 years savings were wiped out in 3 months.

Unable to tackle the crisis, in October 1997, Suharto called in the IMF to bail him out and received the promise of \$ 43 billion as aid. But the negotiations were shrouded in secrecy and IMF conditionalities were not made public. But it was assumed that they included taking stern steps against corruption in government, dismantling monopolies of Suharto's family and cronies, unrestricted entry of foreign capital etc. Before his Presidential election in March 1998, Suharto made a show of flouting IMF conditionalities — in the budget the economic growth rate was shown

as 4% ; instead of curbing governmental expenditure it was increased by 32% ; subsidies on fuel and food grains were retained. But it became clear later on that to get \$ 43 billion IMF rescue package Suharto had to agree to some stiff conditions : (a) a new budget was to be drawn up taking economic growth rate to be zero and inflation to be 20%, (b) to lift food and fuel subsidies in stages starting from April 1, 1998, (c) to close down sick and unprofitable state-owned units within 1998, (d) to cut back the concessions given to National Car Project, (e) to abolish the special concessions given to national heavy industries and introduce free competition, (f) to lift all controls on foreign banks, (g) to reduce import duty on agricultural produce.

Submitting to these conditions meant losing economic sovereignty. It also meant higher taxes, lower social spending, price rise of essential commodities, worker lay-offs and overall pain and hardship for the poor and working class. Its impact on the economy has been shattering and people took to the streets to protest against the government's measures. The students whose job prospects were dashed by the economic crisis staged near daily protests throughout April, demanding ouster of Suharto.

In May the IMF announced the plan for disbursement of \$ 1 billion out of the \$ 43 billion package and Suharto announced his economic programmes according to IMF's requirements. The fuel subsidies were rolled back, sending petrol prices up by 71% in one day and Kerosene prices by 25%. The social discontent boiled over and the price rise led to food riots and looting of stores and banks. An attempt was made to give an ethnic colour to these demonstrations but it did not succeed. In the university campuses in Jakarta, Borneo and many other places the students staged militant demonstrations. The flashpoint was reached when police opened fire on peaceful protesters at Jakarta's Trisakti University, killing six students. The National Commission on Human Rights also protested against the police firing. The students gathered in a peaceful vigil and vowed to continue their protests until Suharto decided to step down. The funeral for the dead was followed by massive popular agitation ; it is estimated that nearly 1200 people were killed during this period. The foreign businessmen started to leave Jakarta and many embassies announced plans for the evacuation of their citizens.

To pacify the populace Suharto announced plans to reshuffle the cabinet and make some reforms. This did not satisfy the students and pro-democracy agitators. Thousands of students encircled the Parliament and pressed their demand for Suharto's ouster. Many former Suharto loyalists, former ministers in his cabinet, a faction in the ruling Golkar party and a group of ex-generals joined the demonstrators in the call for his resignation.

The Speaker of the Parliament issued a statement that "for the sake of national unity and cohesion the President, in a wise and sage way, should resign."

The economic downslide went on unabated and the rupiah's value came down to an

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Indonesian People not to Relax Vigil

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unprecedented low of 17,000 to the dollar. But Suharto still clung on to power and said that he would reshuffle the cabinet and would relinquish power only after holding a general election.

But this was not enough and the students hung on to their occupation of the Parliament building. Within the army, Suharto's main prop, at least a section of the military commanders wanted Suharto to go. This, of course, they did so that movement is not transformed to one against the class and the capitalist state. Eventually Suharto resigned and the Vice-President and Suharto's close ally B. J. Habibie took over as the new President.

The role of American imperialism throughout this episode was fishing in the troubled waters of Indonesia. Throughout the period Suharto's autocratic rule it was solidly behind him. He was propped up as a bulwark against communism, and Indonesia was projected as an example of economic progress in the capitalist way of development. When the economic crises first hit Indonesia, USA appeared with a package of economic, political and military help. Suharto had served them well for more than thirty years and the US concern to protect Suharto was understandable. But America soon realised that Suharto's position is indefensible before the strong tide of popular movement. It was worried that the surge of the mass movement would not only depose Suharto but would dismantle the capitalist system and establish people's power. It was in the interest of world imperialism to sacrifice Suharto and install someone else in his position who would serve imperialism equally well. We have seen this happen in Vietnam, in Philippines and at many other places. When the democratic movement refused to compromise on the issue of Suharto's ouster, President Bill Clinton said that democracy must be part of Indonesia's future and it is up to Indonesians to decide the fate of their leaders. In an interview he announced, "We have felt all along that ultimately to build a stable modern economy and to avoid this crisis, there would have to be some way for the government and the President to deal with all elements of society on some sort of democratic basis."

The US Secretary of State Ms Madeleine Albright urged Suharto to perform a "historic act of statesmanship" and open the way for democracy after 32 years of rule. After Suharto announced his resignation President Clinton welcomed this move, saying it "provides an opportunity to begin a process leading to a real democratic transition for Indonesia." USA stands ready to support Indonesia "as it engages in democratic change." "We urge Indonesia's leaders to move forward promptly with a peaceful process that enjoys broad public support."

This American concern for democracy is indeed ironic. During the 32 years that Suharto ruled as a despot, ruthlessly trampling human rights and murdering democracy, the United States was solidly behind Suharto, portraying him as an efficient, able, far sighted ruler who brought order to Indonesia. Not only in Indonesia but throughout the world the United States supported dictators who were their lackeys ; and paid no heed to

democratic norms. It is indeed strange to hear words on democracy coming from a power which pays least attention to democracy and is the greatest violator of human rights in its own country and in other countries. Its sole intention is to impose hegemonistic control over these countries. Wherever in the world there is civil war, military coup, genocide we find America involved in these.

It is not yet clear how the final acts would unfold in Indonesia. In his new cabinet President Habibie has kept several key members of Suharto's cabinet, but has dropped those who were cronies or family members of the former leader. He has also ordered his own relatives to resign from government. Members of Parliament appointed through nepotism have been asked to voluntarily step down or face the humiliation of being forced out. A few political prisoners have been freed. Habibie has promised sweeping political reforms and to hold elections next year after new electoral laws are enacted to liberalise Indonesia's tightly controlled political system. The government also took up some measures for taking back some of the wealth illegally accumulated by Suharto and his family during his 32 year rule. How genuine from the people's point of view are these measures becomes clear if we note that Habibie has so far resisted the demands for a thorough investigation into Suharto's misdeeds and for putting him on trial for economic crimes.

Even one of Habibie's close advisors resigned saying that the pace of reform is too slow and urged Habibie to hold elections soon.

At present though relative calm prevails in the capital of Jakarta demonstrations demanding reform and targeting corrupt local leaders are continuing to erupt across Indonesia.

In their struggle for establishing a just society free from oppression and exploitation the Indonesian people have won a victory in the first stage through ouster of autocrat Suharto. But the way ahead is hard and long.

The people should not be fooled by the apparently progressive steps which Habibie is taking. Till recently Habibie was very much a part of the Suharto regime and he is compelled to take these steps now under the pressure of mass demonstration. But the army is strongly linked with the government. And the "dual function" of the army defined during Suharto regime is still operative, which gives it a decisive say in political as well as military affairs of the state.

The people should not relax their vigil so that the situation which brought Suharto to power is

not repeated and the old system is not brought in through the back door.

The Indonesian people should press on in their demand for complete democratisation of the polity. Though some tentative steps seem to have been taken, full restoration of democratic rights are still a long way away. People's struggles for political reforms are not to rest till all political parties and groups are given their democratic right to work freely among the masses. The ban on the communist party is still not lifted. Many of the members and supporters of the old communist party (PKI) have still to live in other countries, seeking asylum, political prisoners of the PKI are languishing in jails and the communists are not permitted to propagate their views or take up organisational work among the masses.

The people should not be lured by the promise of Habibie to soon hold the elections. Even if elections are held there is no guarantee that it will not be a sham one with the results determined by the power of money and muscle. Democratic mass movements is the only safeguard for protecting the people's rights. The students and youth of Indonesia have played a glorious role in this movement and have been in the vanguard. But the movement for democracy is to embrace all sections of toiling and progressive minded people. Only such a mass movement can thwart the attempt of reestablishment of an autocratic rule.

The Indonesian people should not forget that it is the capitalist system which is at the root of the economic ills plaguing their country. The collusion of imperialism and national monopoly capital brings in dictatorship, trampling democratic rights. No amount of capitalist planning, increase of productivity, free market economy, globalization, export oriented industrialization can rid capitalism of its inherent crisis. Even if the country gets over its present economic problems, if capitalism persists, the people will be plunged into greater crisis in the coming years. For the people of Indonesia the only way to emancipation is building up militant democratic mass movements against monopoly capitalism, combining with the struggle against imperialism and its stooges.

The primary task at this moment is restoration, preservation and extension of democratic rights and building up of broad, powerful, protracted democratic movements conducive to emancipation of the toiling people. Last of all it is to be borne in mind that today nobody who has taken shelter in the lap of imperialists or suffers from anti-communist bias can be a fighter for democracy.

Protest against insufficient drinking water at Sagar, M.P.

On 25.5.98, the Sagar district organising committee of the SUCI organised a protest demonstration against inadequate drinking water in the area. Daily supply of drinking water at a definite time and abolition of additional water tax were demanded. A 10 member delegation including Comrade Ram Avatar Sharma, the Secretary of the district organising Committee submitted a

memorandum to the district magistrate. Being annoyed for slogan shouting, the district magistrate threatened legal action against Comrade Sharma. The demonstrators were terribly annoyed at this arrogant attitude of the district magistrate and it became clear to them how the administration paid scant regard to the just demand of the people.

Panchayat Elections in West Bengal

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from the primary level is on the threshold of taking a more powerful and wider form. Being alarmed at this the CPI(M) leadership has been hatching out plans to wipe out the SUCI, the only struggling left party in West Bengal for a long time, and with this aim in view murdered 81 militant leaders and cadres of our party, assaulted and seriously injured 759 comrades besides destruction of innumerable houses, large scale looting and burning, with the help of CPI(M) backed anti socials and the police. The CPI(M) adopted all possible nefarious means so that the SUCI could not win a single seat in the assembly or the Panchayat, but it failed in this heinous design again and again. In order to defeat the SUCI in the recently held Panchayat elections the CPI(M) made understanding with the Trinamul, the Congress and the BJP, besides armed assault on the leaders and cadres of our party. Even before the Panchayat elections a member of the Murshidabad district Committee of our party was targeted for murder. Though his life has been saved, he lost one of his hands by a bomb thrown on him. One comrade of Nadia district and two Comrades of South 24 Parganas district were murdered, besides other innumerable assaults. Lastly Comrade Odud, member of the Nadia district Committee and a teacher was murdered in the police camp with the direct help of the police on 29th May last.

In order to snatch two assembly seats in the South 24 Parganas from our party, a reign of terror has been released in the area under the leadership of Kanti Ganguly of the CPI(M) with the backing of the police of Jaynagar and Kultali. This Kanti Ganguly enjoyed more clout than that of a minister and roamed the entire area with a batch of antisocials, being surrounded by police

guards. These antisocials were previously under the patronage of the Congress. Now they are patronised by the CPI(M). These selected members of murder squad, roam with bombs, guns, rifles, and other lethal weapons, and they attack and assault on the cadres and supporters of the SUCI and the general people. They murder, rape and carry out arson and loot, but they are protected by the police. But when the unarmed people, being exasperated resist them, the police come to their rescue and arrest the unarmed people. If the people go to the police station to lodge complaint, the police instead of taking action against the culprits arrest those who have dared to lodge complaint. Again these antisocials impose fine on these people for daring to go to the police, and forcibly extract the money from them. People are observing that those who murdered 7 comrades at Maipith in '89, 5 comrades in Bhubaneswari in '97 and comrade Amir Ali Halder the revered veteran peasant leader, are roaming fearlessly in front of the police. In this way Kanti Ganguly has created a reign of terror in this region. All these have repeatedly been intimated to the Home Minister but to no avail.

Prior to the Panchayat elections our party demanded armed police guards for booths, which were identified as disturbed ones, for ensuring free and fair elections, to the election Commission, the Home Secretary, the D.G., the DM and the S.P. All of them assured us of taking positive measures in this respect. But on 28th May the polling date no arrangement has been made for armed police guards on those booths, only two Home guards with lathi were posted at each of these booths.

In the meantime when Kanti Ganguly realised that the SUCI will win more seats by massive support than in the past, he brought false charges of murder against the SUCI just 4 days before the

date of poll, launched a propaganda offensive against our party on this false charges and created a reign of terror in the area.

By snatching a few seats by this heinous design by totally reducing the election to a farce Kanti Ganguly is claiming of making inroads into the fortress of the SUCI. Threats, intimidations, looting and large scale oppressions are going on even after the election. But the party of the poor and the down trodden can not be wiped out in this way. We want to assert that this heinous politics of murder, threat and intimidation of the CPI(M) is tarnishing leftism and helping in increasing the strength of the right reactionary forces.

On 2nd June, Comrade Provas Ghosh, the state secretary of the Party narrated the entire episode in the last Panchayat polls and demanded the following in a press conference in Calcutta :

- 1) Repolling has to be done in all booth where there have been irregularities.
- 2) An impartial enquiry is to be instituted by a former justice of the Supreme Court, for reducing this election into a farce through murders, threats and partisan attitude of the Election Commission.
- 3) An all party meeting is to be convened with the aim to checking the partisan role of the police and deteriorating law and order situation.

It is to be noted that despite such a large scale terror tactics, murder and intimidation our party secured 399 Gram panchayats, 61 panchayat Samitis and 5 Zilla parishads seats in the last Panchayat elections in the West Bengal.

Anti-nuclear demonstrations in (clockwise from top left) Patna, Chennai, Bangalore and Trivandrum on 1st June, 1998



All India Anti-Nuclear Protest Day Observed Throughout The Country

At the call of the Central Committee of the SUCI All India Anti-Nuclear Protest Day was observed on 1st June '98 in different parts of the country to protest against the nuclear explosions conducted by India and Pakistan. Reports received so far are given below.

GUWAHATI, ASSAM

In response to the call of the Central Committee to observe the 1st June '98 as All India Anti-Nuclear Protest Day, the Assam State Committee of the party staged a sit-in-demonstration against nuclear arms race and creation of war-psychosis. A three member delegation under the leadership of Comrade Kalyan Chowdhury, Secretary of the Assam State Committee met the Governor of Assam at Raj Bhawan, Guwahati and submitted a memorandum addressed to the Prime Minister of India opposing the nuclear arms race.

BANGALORE, KARNATAKA

The Karnataka State Committee of SUCI today held a protest demonstration against the nuclear tests and arms race and war hysteria generated by the Indian and Pakistani nuclear tests in the region. Hundreds of people shouted slogans, demanding "Jobs, NOT BOMBS", "PEACE, NOT WAR", "STOP WAR HYSTERIA", attracting public attention at Mysore Bank Circle today morning at 10 a.m.

Comrade K. Radhakrishna, State Secretary, SUCI addressed the gathering. Comrade S. Simhadri, member, State Committee SUCI also spoke, condemning the tests in both the countries. A memorandum opposing the nuclear arms race was submitted to the Governor of Karnataka to be forwarded to the President of India.

HYDERABAD, ANDHRA PRADESH

As per the call given by the Central Committee, the City Unit unitedly with MCPI, CPI M.L (Janashakti) organised a protest rally from Nampally Railway Station to Rajbhavan and submitted a memorandum to the President of India through the Governor of Andhra Pradesh.

At Rajbhavan

after the conclusion of the rally Comrade. K. Sridhar, Secretary, State Organising Committee, SUCI, Comrade Chandra Sekher, city Secretary, MCPI, Comrade G. Vijay Kumar, CPI ML (Jana Shakti) addressed the gathering. They condemned the Governments of India and Pakistan for their mad arms race, which definitely goes against the interest of the people of both India and Pakistan.

TRIVANDRUM, KERALA

On 1-6-98 SUCI workers took out a march to Rajbhavan and submitted a memorandum to the President of India through the Governor of Kerala against nuclear weapon productions, tests and mindless arms race by the central government.

Traversing the thoroughfares of the city, the demonstration led by Comrades C. K. Lukose, A. Jalaluddin and V. Venugopal reached the Rajbhavan at 12.30.

The governor keen to receive the delegation of SUCI in person, allotted a visiting time on 2nd June. The memorandum was submitted on 2nd June when he gave a patient hearing to delegation led by Comrade. C. K. Lukose.

PATNA, BIHAR

ON 1ST JUNE LAST, A memorandum on behalf of the Bihar State Committee, SUCI, was sent to the President of India through the Governor of the state to protest against nuclear tests by the Government of India & Pakistan.

The memorandum submitted by a three member delegation headed by Comrade. Amritheshwar Chakraborty, Secretary, Bihar State Committee urged the President to put a check on the anti-people policies of the BJP Government, and take steps so that the money of the public exchequer could be spent for implementing pro-people measures.

Before submitting the memorandum, a well decorated procession was taken out in the city by the Patna Unit of our party and several street corner meetings addressed by Comrade. Arun Kr. Sing, member, Bihar State Committee, Comrade. Shiblal Prasad and Comrade. Kabindra Pandit were organised near Gandhi Maidan (Biscoman Bhavan) Patna Junction and Mithapur market.

CALCUTTA, WEST BENGAL

Under the auspices of the West. Bengal State Committee a massive and well decorated protest rally was organised in Calcutta on June 1 last. The rally paraded through different streets and assembled at the crossing of Chowringhee Road and Lenin Sarani where two replicas of the atom bombs of India and Pakistan were burnt. Later a memorandum was submitted to the President of India through the Governor of W. Bengal, and also to the President of Pakistan through the Pakistani High Commissioner. The memorandum interalia stressed the urgent necessity of stopping nuclear explosions and arms race between the two countries where millions of people are suffering from lack of food, drinking water, health care, housing and education. The memorandum also urged both India and Pakistan not to fall prey to the design of the US imperialists

BHUBANESWAR, ORISSA

A large protest rally was organised in Bhubaneswar on this day. The rally was led by Comrades Binapani Das, Udhav Jena and Chhabi Mohanti, all state committee members. A memorandum was submitted to Governor's Office as the Governor was away in Andhra Pradesh.

CHENNAI, TAMIL NADU

Our party conducted an hour-long demonstration at Mint today morning. This demonstration was part of a concerted countrywide programme of protest to condemn the series of nuclear tests conducted recently by the governments of India and Pakistan.

In the demonstration it was expressed that the capitalist economies in both countries were in deep crisis and militarisation of the economy was being seen as a solution. Common people, long denied basic necessities of civilised life like food, shelter, medical treatment, drinking water, education and employment, were liable to resort to movements and both governments were also plagued by problems of instability. The explosion was done to divert people's attention from these issues.

The nuclear tests were used to further fan up national jingoism and war psychosis on both sides of the border, heightening war tensions and vitiating peace in the sub-continent.

The SUCI called upon the people of both countries to raise their voice of protest against the nuclear weapons policies of both governments.

Press clipping

Mass Rally by Baluch Students Against Bomb

Islamabad, 28th May (UNI) : ... Baluchistan, the desert capital of Sind province was rocked yesterday by protest demonstration against explosion. The Baluch Students called for this protest demonstration. The Baluch students' organisations have become more and more vocal against the decision of Pakistan for nuclear explosion in answer to Indian explosion, because Pakistan government selected Baluchistan for nuclear explosion. Pakistan decided the site at the Chagai mountain range of this province for explosion. A few days ago three Baluch youth hijacked a plane of the Pakistan International Airlines in protest against the decision to conduct nuclear explosion at the Chagai mountain range. Though they were arrested, their protest was against explosion.

(Source : *Pratidin*, a Bengali daily dated 29/5/98)

CENTRAL BUDGET**BJP Following Footsteps of Congress and UF***(Contd. from page 1)*

With this and other similar utterances as introduction in his speech he proposed the budget. The budget proposals include the following : urea and petrol will be dearer by Re 1 per kg and Re 1 per litre respectively, subsidy on nitrogenous fertilizer will be cut from Rs 6,600 crores to Rs. 6,000 crores, postal charge is increased, corporate tax structure will remain unchanged, excise duty will be higher for many products from which government plans to earn additional Rs. 5,000 crores, thrown open to private Indian companies, profitable Public Sector Units like IOC, VSNL, GAIL and CONCOR will be disinvested by selling out upto 74% of their equities, Indian Airlines will be disinvested upto 51%, military budget will be up by 14%, i.e. by Rs. 5,101 crores, fiscal deficit of 5.6% of GDP i.e., Rs. 91,025 crores.

The government itself estimates that the inflation rate will increase to 6.5 to 7%.

Does the minister honestly feel that these proposals would brighten the face of "the poorest and the weakest" man of the country whom he remembered while placing the budget ?

On the next day under the pressure of the opposition the minister had to cut the hike in urea price from Re 1 to Re 0.50 but the way this government handled the issue of price-hike of petrol is shameless. Following the budgetary announcement of rise of Re 1 per litre of petrol, which came into force at midnight of 1st June, the consumers had to actually pay around Rs 4 per litre extra throughout the 2nd of June. On the following day under the protest of the opposition, the minister posed to have no idea regarding combined effect of hike of price and excise duty on actual price and was forced to limit the total price hike to Re 1 per litre. But meanwhile the government has cheated the citizens of a huge sum of money which the minister now pleaded inability to refund. Is this not a sheer fraud on the people ?

The government hiked the price of inland letters used by the common people by 50%, but lowered the duties on pagers and cellphones which are used by moneyed people. This is another example of this government's concern for the poor.

The Finance Minister, by raising allocation to agriculture by 58%, claims to do a lot for rural India. A party having even a minimum idea of the plight of the landless, the poor and the destitutes of villages, should have known who have been or will be really benefited from the 'Swarna Jayanti Housing Finance Scheme', 'Regional Rural Banks', 'Kisan Credit Cards' and such other schemes — the landless daily wage earners or the rural bourgeoisie and the promoters ? It could have instead a positive scheme for employment of these rural poor people who get only 2-3 months work in a full year. But what actually his government has committed in the budget ? Although the Prime Minister assured to provide jobs to 1 crore of youth per year in its stead what has been suggested in the budget is nothing but various 'Self Employment Schemes',

'Wage Employment Schemes' etc. which has nothing to do with providing jobs.

In the budget there is no attempt to address the problem of severe recession in the industries. Lakhs of industries are closed or have become sick. The management in collusion with the government and the leaders of pet trade unions announce lockouts closures and retrenchment, violating all laws and throwing the workers out of job. Voluntary Retirement Schemes (VRS) of different names are used as tools at the hands of the management and the owners to pursue the policy of ruthless job cut. Cries of children suffering starvation resound in the surroundings of labour-bustees following the closure of industries, one by one. News of suicide of a retrenched worker after killing his son, daughter and wife for his inability to subsist, hit the headlines of the dailies regularly. The BJP-government the architect of a "New India", addresses the problem by proposing in the budget "attractive compensation and VRS packages for workers". Is it anything new or better from what the Congress and UF did ?

If any government seriously means to collect more revenue for development purposes, it should overhaul the direct tax structure applicable to corporate sector. But the successive governments at the Centre have been lenient and soft to corporate houses and as a result revenues through direct taxes continue to decline and this year the plan is to collect 2.9% of GDP through this as against 3.1% in the last year. This might earn patting from the corporate sector but little else. Simultaneously the government proposes a rise in excise duty ranging from 5% to 30% on various industrial products. Excise duty in fact is added directly to the price of industrial goods and so ultimately additional burden is to be borne by the people. It has been the policy of all previous governments to shield corporate houses from taxes and to burden the common people more and more. And the BJP government is no exception to this.

The proposal for blanket imposition of additional import duty of 8% is claimed by the BJP government as a 'Swadeshi' feature of this budget. The corporate sector is understandably jubilant at this announcement. But this would raise the cost of several imported raw materials which would hit the small scale industries hard. BJP's concern endearing itself to corporate houses is once more demonstrated by this.

The issue of disinvestment of profitable PSUs has been discussed in these columns on a number of occasions. This time they are going to disinvest upto 74% of the government holdings i.e. the government will not be in a position to keep its control over those PSUs. This is nothing but selling out government assets to the private industrial magnates, at the same time putting the future of workers of those PSUs at the mercy of the profit seeker private owners. We strongly opposed this anti-people policy whenever pursued earlier by any government and demand of this government to give up this ruinous policy.

Regarding opening up of the insurance sectors to private Indian companies, the BJP government has the dubious distinction of pioneering this. Due to the resistance from the trade unions affiliated to the opposition parties the earlier governments, in spite of repeated attempts, could not implement this. It is BJP government that has overruled the views of the opposition and announced this policy. Moreover, insurance is a highly profitable service sector the opening up of this to private business houses, demonstrates once more BJP's commitment to the corporate interests.

Another proposal is to invest 10% of the new accretion to provident fund in private sector securities. It may be remembered that the Finance Minister of the UF government, immediately preceding the present government floated a similar proposal which was turned down by the All India left TUs including UTUC-LS. They showed that workers of other countries had incurred heavy losses, where similar policy had been implemented. Given the uncertain prospect of private Indian industries who would guarantee that workers would not have to incur losses on such investment ? But to the leadership of the BJP interest of the workers has no importance.

The government claims credit for enhancing education budget by 50% which will be now Rs. 7,047 crores in total. But this is only 2.6% of the total proposal for expenditure, which is far below the 10% target as recommended by all Central Education Commissions. And moreover, the lion's share of it would be used up to keep the commitment of implementing the pay-panel's recommendations for enhancing the pay-packets of the teachers of colleges, universities IITs, IIMs & IISc. Then what fund would remain for improving education which suffers from acute financial crunch ? This paucity of fund would definitely accelerate private investment in the field of education. It is known that the Congress during the period of Rajiv Gandhi as Prime Minister embarked on a policy of systematically shaking off the financial responsibility of education. Now privatisation and commercialization have become the main thrust in the education policy of all successive governments. Education budget of BJP inspite of all tall claims, has not proved itself to be any different.

The military budget is increased by 14%, i.e. by a total amount of around Rs. 5,000 crores. But this is not all which is earmarked for military purposes. Added to it is the massive hike in the allocation for nuclear power which is Rs. 1,391 crores and 62% in space science which is Rs. 1,381 crores. Even a child knows that the bulk of these allocations will be used to augment military strength. It is known that after assuming power after passage of two months, through intensified test launching different missiles, successive blasts of nuclear and hydrogen bombs in Pokhran and mouthing provocative statements against the neighbouring countries, it has already created a war psychosis in this region and thereby triggered arms race and nuclear arms race with Pakistan.

(Contd. on page 7)

Appeal by All India Anti-Imperialist Forum

In the background of the situation created by nuclear bomb blasts by India and Pakistan, the All India Anti-Imperialist Forum issued an appeal which is self-explanatory. The text of the appeal is given below.

STOP THIS MAD NUCLEAR ARMS RACE : LET WISDOM PREVAIL

We, the peace loving people of India, feel greatly alarmed at the series of nuclear tests carried out by India and Pakistan. At the same time we are gravely concerned at the attempts of the rulers of both the countries to create mass hysteria and fan up national jingoism and nuclear chauvinism among the people with the ulterior motive of diverting their attention from the burning problems of their lives.

The Indian government, the first to launch the tests, tried to justify their action on the plea of national security and safeguarding the sovereignty and integrity of the country. This is a hollow argument. No new situation in matters of internal or external security has arisen today to justify an overriding necessity for nuclear arming of the country, particularly in this period of grave economic crisis when the ruling class is unable to provide the basic facilities of food, sanitation, health, education for the starving millions.

The ruling class resorted to this desperate measure under strong political and economic compulsions. Internal squabbles and bickerings within the BJP led government formed through opportunistic alliance are making the very existence of the government precarious. The nuclear tests are undertaken for stabilizing government by silencing the bickerings within the ruling combination and the criticisms of the opposition. And if the mid-term poll becomes inevitable, the BJP and its associates could sweep the polls riding on the crest of national jingoistic euphoria whipped up by the nuclear blasts.

On the economic front this would provide them with the smokescreen for implementing speedy globalization measures for faster opening up of the Indian market, which is to the interest of the Indian ruling class also. They shrewdly guessed that whatever retaliatory postures the advanced capitalist countries take, they would not impose stringent sanctions because they have an eye on the vast Indian market. The Indian ruling class thought that these tests would help them to establish regional hegemony and be congenial to their aspiration to move towards a global power status. These tests would also be used to elicit public sanction for even higher expenditures for defense and even more militarization of the economy to stave off the crisis.

Predictably Pakistan responded to the Indian action by its own nuclear blasts. The Pakistan government had to resort to this desperate measure to stay in power, to curry favours with the military and to hold in check the rise of democratic movements. The Pakistani people's interest would also be jeopardized by this manoeuvre. It is part of a heinous imperialist

conspiracy to keep India and Pakistan at loggerheads.

We would also like to point out that any nuclear weapon, large or small, causes devastating genocide and radiation induced damage over a much larger area and for a greater duration than what is officially declared. All experiments and tests on nuclear warheads always cause radiation hazards.

When the vast majority of Indian people are groaning under the burden of illiteracy, unemployment, malnutrition, ill health etc., when education, research and development projects in many important areas are subjected to severe resource crunch, it is appalling to find that billions of rupees are being fed into projects like

these for mass destruction. The same is true for Pakistan also.

This series of nuclear tests are likely to trigger an arms race between India and Pakistan and create war tensions, vitiate peace in this region and damage the friendly relations with our neighbours. We are also concerned at the way national frenzy and national jingoistic feelings, communal chauvinism are whipped up on this issue. This would encourage fanaticism among a good section of the people and pave the way for fascism.

We appeal to the people of India and Pakistan to raise their voice of protest against preparations of all nuclear weapons and demand complete destruction of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction by all countries — once for all.

We call upon the students, youths, intellectuals and all well meaning people to stand unitedly and build up powerful, protracted movement against war psychosis and the mad race for nuclear weaponization at the cost of millions of oppressed, starving people of both the countries.

People must Resist Onslaught of Budget

(Contd from page 4)

This tension and arms race would help the Indian bourgeoisie to secure public support for militarization of economy. Militarization of economy is resorted to by crisis-ridden capitalist economy for gaining artificial stimulation. The present budget will also have the effect of stepping up of militarization of economy. The net result will be squandering away of huge amount of revenue which could have been allocated for welfare purposes like health, education etc.

But this budget offers alluring schemes and packages to NRIs, "so that they can contribute meaningfully to the development of India" and change its industrial scenario. They are the top 'patriots' in modern India as we showed in our discussion on the last year's budget how they, acting as the agents of the Indian capitalists, were secretly sending huge sums of their super profit outside and, taking advantage of India's NRI-policy again were taking back the money to India for further profit. Citing one recent example of one of this 'top-patriots', Mr. Chhabaria's contribution to the country's development (!) has been the selling out of Dunlop and Shaw-Wallace and siphoning out the money overseas, throwing the workers out of employment. The people like Chhabaria, BJP government expects, would come forward "to contribute to the flow of resources for the country's development."

To start with the budgetary deficit has been projected to Rs. 91,000 crores. According to knowledgeable sources the items and areas on which the government banks for earning the revenue are not at all promising. For example, the minister's calculation is based on a projected 10% further growth in industrial production. But given the present severe recession in industry as reflected in the report of the government's

Economic Survey 1997-98 which reveals sharp decline in industrial performance as 4.6% growth in the last financial year as against 7.1% in '96-'97 and 12.1% in '95-'96, there is a serious doubt, to say the least, about the feasibility of attaining a 10% industrial growth in the coming year. If the prospect of other areas be of a similar picture then what would be the fate of actual revenue collection? Chances are there that actual revenue collection will be much lower than the estimated figures. The consequence will be the rise of projected deficit which would lead to skyrocketing of prices and increase in the rate of inflation. According to the opinion of the experts the inflation will be 8-10% rather than 6.5%-7% estimated by the government.

Thus there is nothing 'Swadeshi' or pro-people about this budget. The whole object of the budget is to further speed up the process of privatisation, liberalization, opening up and globalization of the Indian economy to serve the interest of the ruling capitalist class at the cost of the common people who will now have to face even more severe onslaughts on their life and living through even higher degree of unemployment, inflation and the resultant erosion of real wage. The nuclear arms race between and war psychosis in India and Pakistan will make it difficult for the Indian people to rise up and protest. But rise up they must and organise themselves in countrywide protest movements in the coming days as there is no other way. This government's budget shows that its sole concern is for safeguarding the interests of Indian monopolists and not for the people afflicted by poverty, destitution and misery. It is for the common people to decide whether they would remain as passive onlookers or come forward boldly and unitedly to resist this onslaught.

CPI(M) murdered Comrade Abdul Odud

Comrade Abdul Odud, a valuable Comrade of our party, a leading organiser, member of the Nadia District Committee, West Bengal, was at last killed by CPI(M) murderers. He was on CPI(M)'s hit list for quite a long time. Attempts were made on his life time and again, even with police help, but the conspirators could not be successful owing to constant vigil by poor villagers and party activists. Comrade Odud was the apple of their eye, who must be saved, for who else would stand by the suffering poverty stricken people.

Odud and some of his friends, all sons of Baruipara village, under Tehatta police station came in contact with the SUCI in 1975, when they were students. They participated in meetings and processions, in various movements, attended political classes. Like all other comrades they too, with tearful eyes, took pledge to build up mass and class struggles on the demise of Comrade Shibdas Ghosh, the great leader of the proletariat, on 5th August, 1976

Then, during Congress regime it was a terrible reign of jotedars, userers and mahajans. Police, dacoits, anti socials all were under their control. They were the law, the rule. Poor villagers, peasants workers could not imagine even to protest against them. The jotedars used to poison common people with the venom of communalism.

This group of young boys, newly connected with the SUCI, became an eyesore to Congress leaders and murderers-dacoits, sheltered by them. Pursuing the teachings of Comrade Shibdas Ghosh they started observing anniversaries of great men, revolutionaries and litterateurs. A new life arose among the students and youths of the area. New clubs and libraries sprang up, debates, cultural competitions, sports, etc., were organised. Everywhere environment started to change. Poor villagers began to protest injustice and started fighting for and achieving legitimate demands. Trouble by thieves-dacoits-anti-socials lessened to a great extent. Honour to womenfolk and respect to elders became ensured. The area became a place of communal harmony. Comrade Odud organised powerful movements one after another demanding wage increase for agricultural workers, demanding acquisition and distribution of 'khas' land, just share for the share croppers, determination of right prices for jute farmers and

waiving loans of poor farmers. Many of the demands were achieved. Rickshaw van drivers were also organised. In these movements Comrade Odud played an extraordinary role. Simultaneously, in the adjacent Dhawapara and Kulgachi mass movement and class struggle developed. Poor and middle class people of other villages, even belonging to other parties, were attracted towards SUCI. Comrade Odud connected all members of his family with the party, his home became a centre of the party. He gave his sister Ishmi to the party. It was his pain that Muslim womenfolk were backward. His dream was that his sister would become an ethical and struggling character

With the change of political scenario in west Bengal, CPI(M) came to power after Congress. The torturing headmen touts, anti-socials changed to CPI(M) camp overnight. The vested interests and the CPI(M)'s petty political interest merged together. They were after anyhow to crush the SUCI, for it was the SUCI, which had been leading movements against fare rise, price rise, unemployment, increased hospital charges, abolition of English and pass fail system at the primary level, etc. Under the leadership of Comrade Abdul Odud numerous students and youths and poor people participated in these movements. Moreover, as the SUCI was being gradually represented in school committees, cooperatives and panchayats, the CPI(M) become angry as it was loosing the scope to loot public money. Above all, in the historic 3rd February Bangla Bandh last, people remarkably participated under the leadership of Odud. All led to the increase of our party influence. People of villages, far and near, became attracted to the SUCI, even honest workers of the CPI(M) started contacting with our party. These made them furious. The CPI(M) Nadia District Secretary announced in an open meeting, "SUCI will be erased from these three villages". They failed to buy poor SUCI activists with money, lure of employment. People were embroiled in false cases, threatened by police, CPI(M) tried to start riot, but all in vain. Then they started murdering the SUCI leaders and activists. They killed comrade Joydeb in Dhawapara. In Baruipara the CPI(M) organised dacoity to kill Comrade Odud, but the bullet shot at him misfired. In '94

September they attacked State Committee member Comrade Khoda Box. Due to resistance first by womenfolk then by men, the murderers fled. That very night OC Satya Chaki (notorious for lock up killing) led police force and murderers, who surrounded Comrade Khoda Box's home. This time hundreds of women came forward and saved him. In '94 December they killed Comrade Giasuddin with the help of police. In '95 July the CPI(M) tried to kill some more comrades, looted a few hundred houses of the SUCI workers and supporters, set fire, turned 150 families out of the locality — their only crime was that the SUCI became victorious in all the panchayat seats in that village. In '96 August the CPI(M) criminals again bombed and fired at Comrade Khoda Box's home. His girl child had to be sent to hospital for injury owing to this attack. Very recently, before panchayat elections they killed Comrade Taizid, as he left CPI(M) to join us. In all cases of murder, loot and arson police directly helped.

In panchayat election CPI(M) resorted to all-out terror. On 25th May, at a local election meeting in the presence of a CPI(M) minister it was declared that Odud and some other comrades would be annihilated either before or after panchayat elections.

And on 29th May, the day after panchayat election, Comrade Odud was most brutally murdered. Around 10.30 a.m. he was dragged in the sector office, which had a police camp in the same building. He, along with two other comrades who tried to save him, appealed the policemen to save them. But the police left the spot allowing the armed CPI(M) antisocials to chop him, smash him, and fire him at point blank range. Two comrades, who tried to save him were seriously injured. Comrade Odud had thus become a martyr.

Comrade Odud is no more, but the shining example set by him in conducting class and mass struggle and his revolutionary life will act as beacon to the innumerable comrades. Real homage to Comrade Odud can only be paid by carrying forward the anti capitalist struggle to its logical goal, the task for which Comrade Odud, being inspired by the thoughts of Comrade Ghosh, struggled throughout his life.

Red Salute Comrade Abdul Odud

Press Clippings

Crop failures lead Punjab farmers to suicide

Chandigarh, April 20 : About 80 cases of suicides by farmers and agricultural labourers reported from five villages of Sangrur district in the last four or five years could only be the "tip of the iceberg" as death stalks the rural areas of the Lehra and Andan blocks in the otherwise prosperous district of Punjab.

The problem is rooted deep in the sense of frustration coupled with humiliation arising out of the ever-increasing debt in the rural areas, which has been caused basically due to crop failures, unemployment and exploitation by money lenders.

The area came under spotlight after the

reported suicides in Andhra Pradesh, due to consecutive crop failures. The issue was first raised by the convener of a human rights organisation, the Movement Against State Repression (MASR) Mr. Inderjit Singh Jaijee, who revealed that 23 farmers in Chotian village and 13 in Nangan village had ended their lives during the last four years. But the revelations were countered in a section of the media, which while quoting "official records", concluded that there were no suicide.

However, an extensive tour of a few of these villages, about 150 km from Chandigarh, revealed that death indeed stalked these sleepy villages of the State, which form the Banger region of Punjab. The culture and language of the area is akin to that in the neighbouring Haryana. The most common method adopted by the farmers for suicides is drinking pesticides and agricultural fumigants, which are available in abundance. Hanging,

drowning self-immolation and throwing oneself before a train are also resorted to by some.

(*The Hindu*, April 21, 1998)

A dog's life

Homeless people in San Francisco being offered the opportunity to spend a night in a warm room with television, Persian carpet and table — to keep stray dogs company.

Maddie's Per Adoption Centre — a well-supported charity — provides these comfortable rooms for its charges. The only thing they lacked was a human companion to make a fuss of them.

So an invitation has been put out to the city's 15,000 homeless people. A local methodist priest who organises several housing projects for the homeless said the pet centre rooms were much nicer than the rooms offered by various housing schemes.

(*The New Worker*, 27 March, 1998)

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