

Lessons from victory over Defamation Bill

Proletarian Era

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Thanks to the mighty movement launched by the entire Press community symbolising the broader movement against the draconian 'Defamation Bill 1988,' the victory came in its wake in no time : in the face of stiff resistance movement by the toiling people in general and the people associated with the Press in particular, Mr. 'Clean', who boasted of the Bill as having nothing to do with the freedom of Press, has ultimately been forced to retreat by withdrawing the 'Defamation Bill' unconditionally. Giving his instant reaction to the Press, our beloved General Secretary Comrade Nihar Mukherjee extended warm congratulation to the "people in general and journalists in particular for launching such a mighty movement against the Defamation Bill that has compelled the Central Government to withdraw the Bill totally and unconditionally."

In the midst of jubilation and rejoicing which the journalist brethren are sharing among themselves, no one should harbour any illusion that the victory has been made possible not out of love of Rajiv Gandhi for democracy and the Press freedom. The Prime Minister who just before withdrawal of the Bill defended it stoutly claiming "need for it" and that "we are totally convinced that the Bill is needed. . . . We are proceeding on the right line", it would be naive to think that in recognition of people's genuine apprehension and honouring wide-spread public opinion Mr. Rajiv Gandhi withdrew the Bill! Apart from dissension and protests from even some Congress leaders seeking withdrawal of the Bill, spontaneous support of the people who came forward in thousands and stood by the movement led by the journalists, mounting discontent among people of every walk of life against the anti-people policies and measures of Rajiv-Government made him panicky with a prospect of volcanic eruption bursting forth particularly at a time when the Lok Sabha polls are knocking the door. The Rajiv Government utterly failed to read the people's mood. They had estimated that some of the journalist people would just indulge in a few day's show of movement and then keep quiet. They took it for certain that the spontaneous support could not withstand the thrust of

the brute force. Herein lies their miscalculation. They failed to understand the degree and depth of the people's disillusionment and disaffection with them. They failed to understand the intensity of force that can be generated to take a shape of concerted efforts of the Press community in particular, who stood like 'one man' without budging an inch from seeking total and unconditional withdrawal of the Bill.

Amidst the dark clouds looming over the horizon the message that brought forth for the people are : No room for despondency ; united struggle is the only way out ! If you want to live with head erect with honour and dignity, there is no other course left than to intensify countrywide movement of all Left, democratic and Opposition parties and forces.

By forcing Rajiv Government to withdraw the Bill a significant victory has no doubt been achieved. But at the same time it would be a folly to think that the threat is over. As it is sequestered by public opinion, the administration may retaliate by use of anyone among its hosts of black laws lying in its accused, thanks to propitiate withdrawal of the Bill, the onus of proof that no defamation was caused remains upon the accused, thanks to proviso in the ill-famed 'Disturbed Areas (Special Court) Act.' Naturally, the draconian character of the Bill remains intact inasmuch as the proviso of the Evidence

Act has been turned upside down whereby as soon as a trial appears against the alleged accused, he is deemed to be a guilty person and the onus of proof lied with him. This runs counter to the democratic process (Contd. on page 3)

SUKINDA IN RETROSPECT

Two-month long mines workers' movement in Sukinda Valley created a distinct chapter, a solid milestone in the trade union and mass movement in Orissa and the whole country as well. In this Rajiv regime of 'Supertechnique' for superprofit the authorities tried mechanisation of mines in Sukinda Valley but failed as a result of a unique resistance movement launched by the Party.

It may be mentioned that Sukinda, the poorest region of the State is rich in chromite deposit claiming 90 per cent of the ore found in Asia. The Tatas, Ferro Alloys Corpn., Mishrilal Mines and Orissa Mining Corporation (OMC) are the owners of these mines. A conservative calculation would reveal that more than Rs. 200 crores is the annual income of these owners leaving the workers in a miserable economic plight.

In this background came another threat, that is, the mine owners started mechanisation ; Tatas completely mechanised its mines, OMC did it partly substituting human labour to the extent of about one lakh. But they got stiff resistance from the U T U C (LS)-led Sukinda Upatyaka Mines Workers' Union (SUMWU) while the INTUC

and a Janata-led local unions had allowed machines to come in. Against this the Party organised a historic padayatra of about 5000 workers and peasants in 1986 in an attempt to develop an allout movement against the labour-killing devices there.

On 3rd July, '88 OMC and Mishrilal Mines brought machines to Kalarangi and Sarubil mines respectively. But the workers instantaneously resisted the move resulting in the return back of machines by the Mishrilal Mines. But the OMC did not. Then started a glorious battle with a blockade of ore transportation for a fortnight. All the repressive measures of the government having failed the OMC declared an illegal lock-out throwing 2000 workers out of job. Hence SUCI gave a call for to-

tal ban on transportation affecting 31 mines. It inspired the working people of Orissa who came out with fraternal support giving momentum to the movement.

The government and TISCO combined together to crush the movement and about 17 platoons of Armed Police were deployed. But the workers struggling hard for years pledged rather to die but not to give up movement. So the OMC conceded and a tripartite agreement was signed on 5th September and on 6th the movement was called off.

But the government following the agreement unleashed a reign of terror with promulgation of 144 Cr.PC and prohibitory orders on Com. Mayadhar Nayak, the General Secretary of the SUMWU and Com. Debendra Sahoo, another SUCI leader. The police started raiding the villages, and hunting and torturing the workers day and night arrested about 100 SUCI activists and supporters and denied them bail. And this (Contd on page 3)



A portion of the vast gathering in Cuttack on 23rd September, the Sukinda Day.

IN STATES

ORISSA

Adivasis against deforestation

At the call of AIKKMS, thousands of peasants, workers, youths, old men and women from Keonjhar, Mayurbhanja, Sukinda demonstrated on 22nd Sept. '88, in front of State Secretariat, Bhubaneswar, demanding to stop eviction of people from the forest area, ban cutting of fruit trees by SFDC, stop plantation of trees in recorded lands, stop destroying the forest on plea of tea and coffee plantation and to lift 144 Cr.PC from Sukinda area and withdrawal of prohibitory order on Com. Mayadhar Nayak.

The processionists carried red flags, festoons, banners, placards and the Adivasis with their conventional bows and arrows and axes. A well decorated procession started from the railway station by 3 PM and proceeded with the drum-beating of the Adivasis and marched through Master Canteen, Rajmal Chak, Rajpath, Patel Marg to PMG Chak. The demonstrators reached the Secretariat by 4 p.m. where the police barricade obstructed their way. The demonstrators demanded to meet the Chief Minister. But the Chief Minister pursuing the anti-Adivasi policies instead of coming to the demonstrators himself sent his Secretary who received the memorandum on his behalf.

A meeting was held there presided over by Com. Kapilendra Mangaraj, a veteran peasant leader of Mayurbhanja district. Com. Balaram Sahoo, Secretary, All India KKMS, Orissa State Committee, delivered his emotional speech to the demonstrators. He accused the State Government of heinously planning to evict thousands of Adivasi people from their living places for generations together in the name of protection and development of forests, and on the other hand through SFDC and other projects it is cutting down the forest and plundering the forest wealth. He strongly demanded that the Government should stop eviction of Adivasis taking prompt measures for their healthy living and called the people to build up firm and sustained movement for achieving their just

and genuine demands. Com. Sambhunath Naik, MLA, Com. Raghunath Das, Puri District Secretary, SUCI, and Com. Bajuram, AIKKMS organiser, Thakirmunda area, addressed the gathering and Com. Rabin-dra Behera, SUCI organiser, Balasore district read out the memorandum to the demonstrators. The demonstrators took a pledge to develop strong mass movement forming village level people's committees for fulfilment of their just and legitimate demands.

DELHI

Protest Against Indignity

ON WOMEN

Hundreds of demonstrators including a large number of women staged a demonstration at the Delhi Police Headquarters on 19th September against the inaction of the authority to take steps against the guilty policemen who outraged the modesty of women in Shastrinagar and where the anti-socials in connivance with the vested interests are terrorising the residents.

The programme was jointly organised by the Delhi State Unit of the All India Democratic Youth Organisation, (AIDYO), Indian Welfare Association, Nav-yuvak Sudhar Samiti (NSS) and Indian Women's Welfare and Anti-Dowry Association (IWW & ADA). The demonstrators, assembling at 10-30 A.M. on the day at Firoze Shah Kotla Ground marched towards the Police HQ raising slogans against the police authorities of Sarai

Rohilla Police Station, antisocials and vested interests.

After reaching the HQ a 5-member delegation comprising Comrade Harish Tyagi (AIDYO), Shivrinarayan Sharma (NSS), Ms. Puspa Gupta (IWW & ADA), Sm. Krishna Sharma (IWW) and Satprakash submitted a memorandum addressed to the Commissioner of Police.

In his absence, the delegation met the Additional Commissioner of Police (Ad. CP) and demanded that the policemen involved in outraging the modesty of women and misbehaving the residents of Shastri Nagar must be brought to book and given exemplary punishment.

Later on the demonstrators were addressed by Com. Harish Tyagi who called upon the people to continue the movement till the demands were achieved.

WEST BENGAL

Police torture on woman

That the CPI(M)-led 'Left Front' government in West Bengal is no exception to the 'police raj' was evident from a recent incident of brutal torture and illegal confinement of a hapless woman in the Bhagabanpur police station of Midnapore district.

In the dead of the night of 5th September the OC of the said PS suddenly entered the house of the Kaida Bibi, mother of 5 children, and started beating the woman and took her to the PS and raped, beat and tortured her with the burning portion of the cigarette all over her body. The only fault of the woman was that her husband was allegedly involved in a theft in Calcutta and was wanted by the police. She was confined for 40 hours in the lock-up and was released after a false declaration given by a CPI(M) panchayat member that she was be-

ing sent back home quite normal. She had to be hospitalised at Contai and she in spite of intimidation sued against the police in the Contai Court on 23rd September.

The MSS unit of Midnapore district took up the matter very promptly as soon as they got the news and met the poor woman and on 27 September took her to the DG of police accompanied with Com. Prativa Mukherjee, President, Com. Gayatri Das Gupta, State Secretary and Com. Lekha Ray, Secretary Midnapore district, MSS. The leaders demanded judicial probe into the incident, exemplary punishment of the policemen involved and adequate compensation to Kaida Bibi.

The DG assured them of inquiry and steps against the OC.

Students March Against Language Policy

The All Bengal Students' Struggle Committee on 30th September in Calcutta organised a 20-thousand strong well-decorated demonstration which marched to the Writers' Buildings, the State Government headquarters, to submit a memorandum addressed to the chief minister demanding re-introduction of English at the primary level and cancellation of the unscientific and harmful English syllabus in the secondary level.

Earlier the students coming from schools, colleges and universities of different districts assembled at the foot of Vidyasagar's statue at College Square where Com. Chandidas Bhattacharyya, the chairman of the committee, presided over the vast student gathering there.

Therefrom the students proceeded towards the Writers' Buildings and reached Esplanade East.

A 5-member deputation headed by Comrade Bhattacharyya went to call on the chief minister

who even refused to meet the deputation let alone accept the memorandum. The student leaders called upon the people, especially the students community, to frustrate the anti-people education policy of the CPI(M)-led 'Left Front' government.

MSS Protest Week

(We hereby publish the rest of the MSS news received so far.)

MAHARASHTRA

The Maharashtra unit of Mahila Sanskritik Sangha observed the Protest Week from September 1 to 7 in a befitting manner in spite of heavy downpour throughout the week.

The MSS leaders and organisers in Nagpur took up different programmes in different localities of the city.

On September 1 a street drama titled *Mulgi Jhali Ho* was staged in Jhansi Rani Chowk in which so many new women participated as actresses, director and script-writers. The women created wide response among men and women alike. The programme included songs on women's liberation.

On September 2 a meeting was held at Hanuman Nagar in which Com. Namdev Laghve addressed.

On September 3 a meeting was addressed by Com. Varsha Jamdar at Panthravoli Bustee. She explained the significance of women's liberation and appealed to the people, especially the women to make the programme of 7th September a grand success through massive participation of women. The poster-drama was also staged there.

On 5th and 6th September Nagpur experienced very heavy downpour for which no programme could be implemented.

On 7th September, the final day of the programme, a dharna was staged in front of the office of the District (Contd. on page 4)

Defamation Bill

(Contd from page 1)
of law whereby an accused is considered innocent so long his guilt is not proved. The implications for the freedom of the Press are obvious : they amount to its obliteration. For, this proviso in the existing 'Disturbed Areas (Special Court) Act' takes away the right of fair comment considered heart and soul of Press freedom. That means, one would have to have evidence sufficient to prove a person guilty in a court of law before one could make a fair comment on his activities. In other words, those who are guilty of paying or accepting commissions and kickbacks would first have to be brought to trial and convicted before the Press would gain the right to talk about the Bofors scandal.

No doubt, in its accelerated pace towards all-out fascism to stave off its crisis and sustain its class rule particularly in the present phase when the all-pervasive crisis is rocking the bourgeois system, its trusted defender, the Congress(I) led by Rajiv Gandhi, has hatched these draconian Bills, one after another, to guard against any possible upsurge against its fascist onslaughts and to strangle in particular, its anti-thesis, the working class. Will the working class including the Press community as well as people belonging to different walks of life, in the face of the fascist blueprint that is unfolding before them, in all its terrible dimensions, put up with it? Or will they take up the issue now as a question of life and death? Mind it, the fascist move will not stop at disarming the working class only; it is designed to go beyond and draw into its menacing fold all sections of the common people of the country as a whole. Clearly, Rajiv Government is left with no dearth of draconian Acts and ordinances to subvert democratic rights and civil liberty in the country even if one particular draconian Bill, viz.

the Defamation Bill is withdrawn now.

When the toiling people at large truly are under a state of siege, can any section of the toiling people be rest content forestalling the civil rights abuses of the Centre to the extent they are afflicted with? Cannot the series of Black Acts, coming as it were, one after another, including the frontal attack on the *Indian Express*, provide the Fourth Estate, grounds enough, to release a concrete move of the Press against these portentous moves? How is it then the cross-sections of the Press community came up with heaps of praises showering on Rajiv as if with the eclipse of the Defamation Bill, the impending danger of fascism would also disappear? Cannot they see the design of the scheming ruling class that the Defamation Bill came up with a view to strengthening the hands of the bureaucracy through enactments of lawless laws? Clearly, the objective is to deprive the people of their fundamental rights and in the process push the country to all-out fascism. In tune with the call of the struggle given by the distinguished journalists engaged in the movement against the Defamation Bill, they will have to come out in the open in defence of democratic rights and civil liberties of the people.

They have, therefore, to fight against any government measure that strikes at the very root of democratic rights and civil liberty. Besides, they have a cause to fight for their own freedom against restriction from their masters to uphold truth and defend ethics of journalism. Their struggle cannot, therefore, succeed unless it is wedded to the democratic mass movements of all sections of toiling people on their legitimate demands.

We call upon the people including the journalist brethren to join in strength with greater zeal to build up a united mass movement through

out the country against every anti-people, anti-democratic measures of the Central and State Governments.

BIHAR

Mammoth rally at Muzaffarpur

The Muzaffarpur District Committee of the SUCI on October 5 last organised a 35,000 strong massive rally at Muzaffarpur, Bihar, against price rise, unemployment, administrative corruption, police-goonda nexus, fascist new education policy, draconian Black Bills and Acts etc.

Before the meeting a memorandum containing an 18-point charter of demands was submitted to the Collector, Muzaffarpur, by a delegation headed by Comrade Baleswar Rashulpuri, a senior member of the District Committee. The following demands, among others, were mentioned in the charter : Stop police-landlord repression on the landless peasants of Vidyajhamp village ; 2. Provide justice to the landless workers of Khar-Phulwaria (Meenapur) ; and 3. Provide adequate grant to the family of the deceased Lalu Ram (Saroica).

The memorandum also emphasised the necessity to treat the agricultural produces pricing at

Different speakers in their speech while congratulating the heroic workers of Sukinda explained in short the history of the struggle of the Sukinda miners and the significance of their victory. The speakers condemned the utter reactionary and anti-people policies of the Orissa Congress(I) Government as the part and parcel of the nationwide policy of the Congress(I) implemented through the Centre and State governments.

The speakers also demanded immediate withdrawal of 144 Cr.PC. and Armed Forces from the Sukinda Valley, put a stop to arresting SUCI workers, harassing the Sukinda villagers and release of all the leaders and organisers of Sukinda miners and withdrawal of the cases instituted against the workers and their leaders.

SUKINDA

(Contd. from page 1)
atrocities is going on unabated.

Meanwhile all the Opposition parties and Trade Unions have condemned this attitude of the State Government. A team of MLAs and MP also visited the zone and issued statements condemning police brutalities. The State Committee of the party gave a deputation to the chief minister. All the Opposition parties in the State Assembly condemned this attitude of the government and many newspapers extensively published this incident. But despite all this the government is continuing its attack.

To develop a State-level protest movement SUCI observed Sukinda Day on 23rd September throughout the state. In Cuttack a massive demonstration was held before the District Magistrate. A memorandum was submitted to the ADM demanding withdrawal of prohibitory orders and the police, and release of the arrested. The demonstration took the form of a vast gathering in which Com. Binapani Das presided and Com. Mayadhar Nayak, among other district leaders, spoke.

Meanwhile Com. Nayak has issued an appeal to the well meaning people of the State to come forward to stand beside the heroic Sukinda miners.

The West Bengal State Committee of the Party observed 'Protest Day' on 5th October all over the State against the police atrocities perpetrated on the workers of Sukinda Valley mines and the Party workers there after their glorious victory against machine-mining. The day was observed through meetings, demonstrations and street-corner meetings.

par with those of industry and immediate provision for adequate remuneration to peasants for their crop yields.

Speaking at the meeting Comrade Shiv Shankar, Secretary, District Committee, called upon the peasants to organise protracted and higher phase of movement to get their demands achieved. Comrade Baleswar Rashulpuri strongly condemned the heinous attack of the vested interests on the agricultural workers who were proceeding to join the rally. Dozens of them had been seriously injured and were hospitalised, among them Comrades Jibaneswar Paswan, Ganapat Ram and Harihar Ram are struggling against death, he said.

Others who addressed the rally were Comrade Mundrika Pandey, a peasant leader, Com. Rakesh Chandra, President, AI-DSO, Bihar, Com. Md. Idrish, member, District Committee and Com. Arun Singh, member, Bihar State Committee of the Party and President, All India DSO.

At the end, all the students, youth, agricultural workers and landless peasants took a revolutionary pledge to continue their struggle against the vicious capitalist exploitation, police-anti-social nexus and their dastardly attack on the people, holding aloft unflinchingly the banner of the SUCI.

ASSAM

Barak Valley Bandh

A 24-hour all-out Barak Valley Bandh was successfully observed on 23rd September in two Districts of Kachhar and Karimganj of Assam jointly sponsored by the SUCI, CPI, CPI (M), BJP, Janata Party, Lok Dal and Congress (S) on the demand of permanent measures to check flood, development of communications, bringing down price level and adequate relief measures to the

(Contd. on page 4)

Joint Convention Against Emergency

GUJARAT

Gujarat, which for a long time did not witness a united movement against despotic measures of the Central Government experienced a significant move in this direction when on Sept. 11 last a State-level convention was held under the banner of Katokoti Virodhi Manch (Anti Emergency Front) at H. K. Hall, Ahmedabad against 59th Amendment to the Constitution, Industrial Disputes (Amendment) Bill, Hospitals and other Institutions Bill and the Defamation Bill.

the ex-chief minister of Gujarat, Advocate Sri Girish Patel of Lok Adhikar Sangh dwelt at length on the dangerous implications of the 59th Amendment to the Constitution.

Com. Dwarika Rath, Gujarat State in-charge, SUCI, in his speech said all the steps of Rajiv Gandhi were aimed at bringing Constitutional dictatorship. To thwart fascism, he emphasised, a protracted united democratic movement by all Left, democratic & Opposition parties and forces was to be built up. He gave the call to recall the

Resolutions against the 59th Amendments, Industrial Disputes (Amendment) Bill, Hospitals Bill and against misuse of TADA in Gujarat and against different kinds of prohibitory orders in Gujarat were moved. Sri Girish Patel, Sri Manishi Jan, Sri Vishnu Pandya, a noted journalist, and Sri Vismay Shah moved the resolutions and the Editor of Jansatta of Baroda, Sri Prakash Shah, and Sri Gautam Thakkar supported them. All the resolutions were unanimously accepted.

MSS

(Contd. from page 2)

Magistrate in which Comrades Varsha Laghve and Mridula Laghve along with others spoke.

The speakers in their address dwelt on different aspects of women's struggle against oppression and exploitation and called upon the women to rise up to the occasion to strengthen the movement to achieve victory over age-old oppression and deprivation.

A memorandum consisting of about one thousand signatures of women was submitted by a 5-woman deputation comprising Comrades Madhuri Naidu, Varsha Jamdar, Kamal Barahate, Uma Rao and Mridula Laghve.

The poster-drama *Mulgi Jhali Ho* was also held and a telegram to the Prime Minister was sent.

GUJARAT

The Gujarat unit of the Mahila Sanskritik Sangha, as a part of the All India Protest Week, staged a spirited demonstration before the Ahmedabad Collectorate against obscenity, dowry system and foeticide in the name of sex-test of the foetus. A memorandum in this respect was submitted to the Additional Collector by Meenu Joshi and Suryo-Ben Shah.

On 7th September a seminar was held at Gujarati Sahitya Parishad in the afternoon against dowry system and obscenity with Com. Meenu Joshi in the chair. Prof. Protikhya Behn Raval, Head of the Department of Psychology, and Smt. Smita Behn Meheta addressed the seminar and called upon the women to strengthen the MSS which is fighting against various forms of onslaught on women.

ASSAM

(Contd. from page 3)

people affected by the recent flood.

The parties jointly took this decision on 12th September at a meeting at Gandhi Bhavan of Silchar. As the preparatory measures to make the bandh a success extensive propaganda campaign through meetings & demonstrations throughout these two districts was taken up and as a result to foil the bandh police arrested hundreds of activists of all the parties in the districts. In Karimganj 113 SUCI Comrades were taken into custody by the police and later released unconditionally.

Karnataka march against Defamation

The Joint Action Committee Against Defamation Bill, comprising UTUC (LS), AIDS, Journalists' Association, Bar Association, DYFI and other organisations held a protest march and rally on 24th Sept. at Bellary, Karnataka. The march started from and Press Association and ended at Scout Hall where a mass-meeting was held.

Comrade Simhadri, a prominent leader of the UTUC (LS) and the Secretary, Bellary District Committee of the party, speaking on behalf of the UTUC (LS) said that the Defamation Bill should be seen as a logical continuity of various draconian enactments.

CORRIGENDUM

In the last issue the heading "Delhi Convention places" should be read as "Delhi Seminar places" and in the Vol. 22, No. 3 issue on 5th August news Com. Milan Majumdar, Secretary, Agartala District Organising Committee, has been inadvertently printed as Secretary, Tripura State Organising Committee. Both the errors are regretted. (Ed. P. ERA)



A portion of the audience at H. K. Hall, Ahmedabad, in the Anti-Emergency Convention.

The Katokoti Virodhi Manch came into existence at the initiative of the SUCI and Citizens for Democracy (CFD) in which the following Opposition parties and organisations joined: SUCI, CPI, Janata Party, BJP, Jan Morcha, Lok Swaraj Manch, HMP, Ahmedabad Mill Mazdoor Mandal, PUCL, Lok Adhikar Sangh, Cultural and Educational Forum, MSS, CFD, Gujarat Biradari, Gujarat Lok Samity, AIDS, ABVP, Indian Radical Humanist Association and Sampoor-na Kranti Yuva Sangram.

The convention was presided over by Sri Babubhai Jasbhai Patel,

spirit of 1974—Nav Nirman Movement in Gujarat.

Sri Naropat Chavd of Janata Party, Sri Haren Pathak of BJP, Sri Asok Punjabi of CPI called for a united movement against the draconian black Acts and Bills.

Com. Damini Shah of MSS said fighting injustice, despotic rule and fascism was an integral part of women's struggle for emancipation.

Speakers representing the HMP, ABVP, Gujarat Biradari, Indian Radical Humanist Association also addressed the gathering.

In his presidential address the veteran Gandhian leader, Sri Babubhai Patel called upon the people to foil any attempt of the Congress government to instal authoritarian rule in the country.

The convention resolved to hold district level conventions.

The Ahmedabad District Unit of the SUCI staged dharna on 6th September near Sardar Bag expressing solidarity with the journalists and the Press in making the all India newspaper strike against Defamation Bill a success.