

Tasks Ahead of Students and Youth

Students and youth have particular roles to perform in democratic movements and revolutionary struggles, especially at the stage when mass movements still centre round the leading role of students and youth. In this address to students Comrade Shibdas Ghosh exhorts them to grasp the revolutionary contents of their tasks for fulfillment of the historical role which history has charged them with in this country.

Members of the Presidium and Comrade Delegates,

A request has already been made that I should speak in English but at the same time in Hindi — perhaps meaning a peculiar kind of mixture of Hindi and English. I do not know how to speak that way. Anyway, considering the present composition and nature of the assembly, I shall speak in English.

Now, first of all, let me express my heart-felt greetings to all the delegates.

Comrades, you have come from different parts of the country. Many of you have travelled long distances and have taken much trouble to come here to take active part in the deliberations of the All India Students Conference, to chalk out your programme, meaning a strategic programme of struggle with a clear-cut concept and idea about the present-day problems confronting our lives. Also I congratulate the leaders and the organizers of the All India DSO Conference, particularly the DSO workers of Orissa state, for making such nice arrangements and for handling problems relating to such a gigantic conference so smoothly in a short period.

Comrades, the All India Students Conference, organized by the All India DSO, is taking place at a time when our country is passing through a very critical situation — political, economic, social and, more so, in the field of cultural and ethical activities of the society. You have all noticed, and I think, all right-thinking persons of our country are noticing with much agony and anxiety that there is a steady decline in our moral and ethical standard. Now-a-days, it is not an isolated act of this sect or that sect, of this group or that group, who do not bother about

any standard of culture, or any norm of ethics and morality. Today, moral depravity has assumed such proportions and has taken such a naked form that it may seem just like a biological natural affair to many people. Indeed, there are empiricists engaged in so-called scientific research work who have concluded almost like this. As if today a race is living in India that has got a biological naturalness of not having any concern for any kind of values. By this what they want to suggest is that, as if some biological intrinsic factors are inherent in our people for which they are basically incapable of having such concerns. To conclude like this is not only unscientific and unhistoric but simply preposterous. Be that as it may, what is agitating the mind of every honest thinking person is — why this suffocating situation? Why did such an unbearable phenomenon, a heart-breaking phenomenon develop in our society? You will have to probe into the deep of the problem. Because, I think this is a very important question. So important a question that if it is not correctly handled, if we cannot correctly handle this question and find out the correct answer, I am afraid whether we can also correctly lead political battles in our country to their logical conclusions, or whether we can solve, we can take active measures and steps, concrete steps to bring about a fundamental change in our politico-economic and social structure and thereby solve the burning economic and other problems of our country. Because, as you know, political, economic and all social problems are always closely linked up with certain questions, with certain vital questions without solving which you cannot solve any of the items of these problems. These are questions relating to power set-up, politico-economic and social system of the country. These are all related to the class character of the state and the particular and peculiar character of our economic system which we call capitalism, a capitalist economic system. Everything, every social malady affecting our life is cropping up from the material base and from these two important factors. Again, the most important of these two is the capitalist state, the state controlled by the exploiting bourgeois class in furtherance of their class designs, class motives and class exploitations with a view to consolidating and further consolidating the present capitalist system not only to the detriment of the interest of the Indian people but even at the cost of the lives of hundreds of millions of people living here. So comrades, you should always remember that whatever may be the tall talks of the ruling bourgeois class and their parties, in reality, they have no concern about the people. Even when they talk of nation and national interest, their sole purpose is to exploit the patriotic feelings of the masses in furtherance of their bourgeois class motives. So, nationalism, which during the period of independence struggle was

to some extent progressive in nature and to that extent served the interest of the people, has now become a privilege and a weapon in the hands of the ruling bourgeoisie to deceive and hoodwink the masses in order to distract the attention of the people from the real problem to a fake one. On and off the ruling bourgeoisie and the petty-bourgeois parties use this deceptive weapon to keep the masses away from the main current of the revolutionary struggles. To educate the masses not to be deceived by this trick of the bourgeois and the petty-bourgeois parties, is of paramount importance. To grasp this approach correctly you should always bear in mind that ours is a class-divided society. Our nation is not an indivisible one. Whether we like it or dislike it, if we are conscious, we cannot ignore the stark reality that our society, too, is a class divided society.

Comrades, always remember that antagonistic classes and class struggles appeared in society at a particular phase of development of production in history and from then on, classes and class struggles existed and are still continuing to exist, something like independent of our will, and class struggle is acting as the lever in the process of development of human society. Until the classes, the class exploitation, the class struggles and the class instrument of oppression and coercion, that is, the state, disappear in course of development of class struggle from the arena of development of human society, the society remains as a field of intense class battle. So, there can be no single approach to the question of national interest, national unity, education and educational reforms. All approaches to these problems, whether progressive or reactionary, whether serving the interest of the bourgeoisie openly or in disguise, or serving the interest of the toiling masses and their revolutionary struggles are to be judged on the anvil of class struggle and class political outlook. All other ways to find out a correct approach and programme of struggle are not only deceptive but dangerous too. Any honest thinking people, who talk of revolution, will have to understand this question. Because, if they are really interested in bringing about social transformation, in bringing about a fundamental change in the politico-economic and social structure, then they will have to know the laws, the very laws which are governing all the activities in the process of development of class struggle. Unless and until we get to know this, we cannot accelerate the process of change in the society. We may have a dream of social change and revolution. But we cannot have any impact or influence on that process. In that case, all our theories will be sterile and our action will be a blind one, in spite of our devotion and dedication. I believe it and I mean it. So, whoever living in a class-divided society talks of 'nation', 'national interest', 'social development', 'social interest', 'educational

reforms', etc., in general terms without making any special reference to the classes and class interest — is either ignorant, or what shall I say, a hypocrite. They are either ignorant simpletons, philistines or they are hypocrites. Take for example, the case of the CPI and the CPI(M) in this regard. Both of them still claim that they are Marxist-Leninists. These two parties and their student wings, the AISF and the SFI, in tune with the ruling bourgeois class are advocating 'job-oriented' or 'employment-oriented' or 'production oriented' education. Do they not understand, which they should have if they were at all Marxist-Leninists, that this scheme of 'job-oriented' or 'employment-oriented' education is solely designed by the ruling bourgeoisie to channelize the entire education on to the line of purely informative and technical education instead of providing our students with a truly democratic, secular and scientific education, under the pretext of providing a booster to production? It is not so difficult to understand why the ruling bourgeois class and their parties are advocating such a scheme in the name of bringing about educational reforms, but I am really at a loss to understand how parties like CPI, CPI(M) claiming to be Marxist-Leninist can support such a sinister scheme and talk in almost similar tune with the ruling bourgeoisie in this regard in the field of educational reforms. In the circumstances what shall I call these people — ignorant simpletons or hypocrites?

Though I know, people generally talk of these questions in general terms and many of you, too, often speak in this way without always making any reference to the classes and class interest and without knowing how to correlate these questions with the existing class struggle continuously going on and taking place in the society. Whether you are conscious of it or not, all this matters little. You may be ignorant of the existing class struggle, the impact of which has got a great influence and direct bearing on your life and thinking. So, if you do not know how to correlate these questions with the existing class struggle and class interest, then you will invariably commit mistake in spite of your honesty and dedication. Honesty and dedication are the elementary conditions, just the starting point without which nothing can be done. Because, if a good line, a correct theory, a correct line is grasped, even then if a man is not honest and dedicated, he cannot give it a shape, he cannot translate it into action. For translating any idea into action, be it for the revolutionaries or for the counter-revolutionaries, they need honesty. If they want to mean something, if they want to change a power structure, if they want to do revolution or counter-revolution they need dedication, they need a kind of discipline, they need determination. These are fundamental things. Without these qualities of character you cannot do

anything. But the next important question and the most vital one is to have a correct and scientific outlook and a correct base political line, without which in spite of dedication and power of sacrifice, you can do nothing, rather you will do something harmful. Because, everything which you do, if it is wrong, if it cannot serve the purpose of the people, if it cannot accelerate the process of change, then it is not neutral, not nothing. It will invariably, directly or indirectly, have an adverse effect on progressive movements, will strengthen the reactionaries. Every action has its reaction. If it is correct, there will be a correct reaction. If it is incorrect, don't think it will have no reaction. Not that. It will have a bad reaction, giving scope for the reactionaries to consolidate, this way or that way, the existing system. So, to have a correct approach and a correct base political line and programme of struggle are of fundamental importance. You cannot bypass it or cannot look at it with a non-serious attitude, that "let us struggle, let us work, the correct political line and thinking will automatically evolve out of the struggle." Only the humbugs, the demagogues, the self-seekers with an ulterior motive say this to confuse the issue at discussion. Yes, you will have to work. As I have already said if you do not work, then even with a bunch of good programmes and a beautiful noble ideology you are completely impotent to produce anything. You will be worthless. In that case, you can't do anything. So, that is a primary condition necessary. For us dedication, work, discipline, going to the masses are all important and necessary things only to thrash out and push the correct revolutionary political line among the masses, only to educate them in order to organize them in their day-to-day struggle and conduct these struggles in such a way and in such a style so as to develop political power of the people. Comrades, why do we go to the people? Certainly not to simply educate them in the ordinary and academic sense of the term. Education here has got a specific purpose — to organize the masses in their struggles against all sorts of injustices and exploitations, and in that way finally to develop in them a political power, invincible in nature, which can ultimately determine the destiny of the nation, overthrowing the despotic rule of the country. This is why we go to the masses — not with a philanthropic attitude of serving them as the Ramkrishna missionaries often do. They rather confuse the issue. Going to the people is a great thing, but going to the people with a wrong remedy is the worst thing. Because, as they themselves are confused — in case they are honest — they cannot but spread confusion in the mass-mind. Moreover, they try to distract the attention of the masses from revolutionary struggle to the mystic alley of blind faith. In that case, I will say, leave the people alone. It is the people,

who themselves will one day find out the correct way. But don't give them wrong remedy, don't confuse them, don't mislead them, don't take advantage of their ignorance, wrong understanding, prejudices and many obsolete ideas still prevailing in their mind. Don't take advantage of all these. So our business, our purpose is to go to the masses to educate them with a view to organizing them, the sole purpose of which, even of organizing them, is not to lead their struggle on day-to-day economic issues or sufferings only, but ultimately to give birth to the political power of the people, so that one day the people, as an organized political force, rise up to the occasion, take up arms and decide the destiny of the nation.

So, in a class-divided society like ours, talks of nation, national interest, education and educational reforms, interest of the students and of the people — if these are not spoken of in terms of class references and in their relationship with the existing class struggle — then one is sure to commit mistakes and invariably play into the hands of the bourgeoisie. As there can be no single approach in a class-divided society, you will have to be very particular in ascertaining whether an approach to these problems reflects the interest of the majority of the people and is conducive to the growth and development of the revolutionary struggle of the masses or it is an approach which is basically in tune with the ruling bourgeoisie which has usurped all the wealth and property, the means of production of the society and is leading the country to ruination.

Comrades, you should always remember that in a class-divided society, educational reforms and all educational problems can only be posed from two angularities, from two world outlooks. One, reflecting the world outlook of the bourgeoisie, the ruling class, the exploiters, aims at tuning, patterning and manning the education system in such a way so as to develop certain traits of mind which are inimical to social progress, namely, neglect of duty, professional egocentricism, a complete indifference to the social and political problems of the country, to develop a mental faculty which is not bent on logic and science but naturally bent on belief, religion and all sorts of obscurant ideas, and finally to develop contempt for social action. Another is to approach all these questions with a revolutionary outlook, that is, proletarian class outlook to open the gate for reasoning, scientific understanding, for a scientific faculty of mind, bent of mind which will invariably be conducive to the growth and development of the revolutionary movement of the country, a movement which is so urgent and necessary to bring about a fundamental political, economic and social change in our country — that is, a movement

aiming at the revolutionary overthrow of the bourgeoisie from power and freeing our production system, thereby science, technology, educational institutions, philosophy, morality, ethics, values from the grip and tentacles of capitalist exploitation. So there can be only two approaches in relation to the educational problems and educational reforms. Not one single approach.

Comrades, we are living in a capitalist county, may be backward in comparison to the Western rich imperialist capitalist countries, but no doubt ours is a capitalist country also. And what is the character of this capitalism? It has already become imperialist in nature, in so far as the formation of finance capital and a financial oligarchy through the merger of banking and industrial capital controlling the entire economic life of the society are concerned and in so far as the extent and amount of export of capital are concerned. I have discussed and dealt with these issues at length in the last day's session, that is, in the inaugural session and I do not think it necessary now in this session again to go on arguing on this issue. You will have ample time to thrash out these questions, discussing and re-discussing and ultimately coming to a conclusion. But one thing is sure that it is a capitalist system. That here in our country we have got a form of state which can only be called a bourgeois national state, that is, a capitalist state machine. And the ruling bourgeoisie is doing everything possible for further consolidation of the capitalist system in our country. And that the capitalist relations of production and the capitalist motive force of production have already become obsolete in so far as the forces of economy are concerned, they are acting as a brake in the process. So, it is giving birth to crises, one after another. One measure is taken by the bourgeoisie to come out from, to get out of the impasse of a crisis only to be swamped by a greater crisis. And it is happening in our country. We are coming out of one crisis only to re-enter into a much graver crisis. In this way, our economy is arrested in a vicious circle. It cannot have and it is not getting a breathing space for development. It is a reactionary capitalism, part and parcel of the present day decadent and moribund world capitalist system. It is distinctly different in character than that of capitalism of the 18th century, when capitalism developed on the basis of free competition and when international capitalism, its role and character were progressive in nature and when capitalism enjoyed continuous widening of internal and external markets. And in those early stages of its development, capitalism was more attached to liberty, individual freedom and democracy and less attached to militarism and bureaucracy. Now as a world system, capitalism has become decadent and moribund. It has reached the highest stage, the stage of imperialism and has become reactionary. Moreover, it has

entered in its third phase of intensive general crisis. So, it is giving birth to crises, one after another. Finding no other way to come out of the impasse, it has taken recourse to continuous militarization of economy and so capitalism today is becoming more and more attached to militarism, bureaucracy, crisis and war. This is more or less true in case of capitalism everywhere, both in developed and in underdeveloped countries. So, this crisis and instability in the economic field are being reflected in the superstructure, in the moral and cultural activities of the society. By superstructure we mean the ideological, political, ethical, cultural, philosophical, artistic views of the society — these we call the superstructure of the economic base. So, the economic uncertainty, the crises, the acute crises, and the instability are naturally reflected in the superstructure. Comrades, therein lies the crux of all our problems, our social maladies.

Comrades, always remember that as our revolution is anti-capitalist socialist in character, to pave the way to a successful revolution, all varieties of social democratism — the forces of compromise between labour and capital — are to be completely defeated in the ideological field. Except for the so-called elite living in an affluent condition of life, the real intent of the theory and practice of Indira Gandhi's democratic socialism is exposed to a very great extent to the larger section of the masses. But the real intent of the advocates of the theories and tactics of people's democratic revolution of all varieties in our country are not yet exposed before the larger section of the masses.

Left-minded people at large being misled by these advocates of people's democratic revolution, they do not yet understand that, unlike China, here in India we have got a capitalist state machine and hence the strategy and tactics of people's democratic revolution are nothing but a utopia imposed on the very objective process of revolution working inside our society ; that the real intent of the theory and tactics of the people's democratic revolution is to distract the attention of the masses from the real enemy to a fake one. Therefore, unlike China, the theory of people's democratic revolution in our country is nothing but one of the varieties of the social democratic trends in our political movements.

So comrades, if you really want to put an end to capitalism you will have to give defeat to both the theory and practice of democratic socialism of Indira Gandhi as well as the theories and tactics of people's democratic revolution of all varieties in our country through painstaking

ideological-political struggle and work among the masses. Whoever thinks otherwise, no matter under whatsoever pretext is actually falling in line with the social democrats.

Comrades, I don't like to speak in the air.¹ That is not my habit. When I speak, I speak concentrating my entire mind on the subject. Naturally, I have the right to demand of you that you should also try to concentrate your attention on the discussion. Comrades, I know the subject I am discussing may sound and seem a bit stiffer. But as you are to break through the situation, you cannot do it so easily. You will have to learn and re-learn. You will have to educate and re-educate yourselves. You will have to know many things in spite of difficulties. Without knowing things you cannot influence the situation. How can you forget that you will have to play a decisive and a leading role? So, you must be attentive, careful. You should also remember that you are students of the Revolutionary University. If you really dare to think that you, the students, have the courage and determination to lead our country, to deliver something good, then you must be attentive. Otherwise, it is pointless to deliver a speech on this or that subject. I don't see any reason.

Comrades, I shall not take much time though I had in mind many things to discuss before you. What I wish to highlight now is the magnitude of the problem of unemployment. Comrades, all of you after completing your education will have to face the problem of unemployment. Except a few revolutionary cadres from among you, every individual member of our larger community of youth and students who may be the supporters of revolution but not fully engaged and dedicated in the revolutionary struggles will have to face this problem. And I am speaking precisely of those members of our larger community of the youth and students. It is a real and heart-breaking problem for them. After completing their course of education, they will have to face the magnitude of the problem of unemployment. They will feel all the concomitant evil of the present day society, what many of them in their student life now do not feel. But when they will enter into the family life, they will have to take up various responsibilities, they will marry and have children, then they will surely start feeling what kind of social environment they are living in. Then they will find that all their dreams are shattered. They may also find at that time that they cannot live only with their kith and kin in isolation. The existing social maladies will have direct influence and bearing even on their private life which they used to think most secret and sacred. They may realize at that time that they cannot even save their secret and so-called

sacred private life from being polluted and degraded by the existing maladies in the social environment. This is a must. Probably, they will learn it then. So is it not better that without dreaming of this sort of useless, degrading, humiliating and parasitic way of life, we dedicate ourselves fully to revolutionary struggles for bringing about a fundamental change of our society and paving thereby the way for the freest, widest and speediest development of all individuals of our society, that is, their political, economic, cultural and ethical way of life? For that, you will have to adhere to a revolutionary ideology — Marxism-Leninism, scientific socialism — which speaks in terms of class references, which speaks to you that if you want to bring about a fundamental change in the socio-economic and political system you must have, along with your struggling ability, a researchive mind, you will have to develop in you an aptitude of constantly and continuously learning from the masses. In this way, knowing the problems thoroughly and crystallizing your ideas, you will be able to find out the correct way, the correct path. This is why Marx told the oppressed, exploited and downtrodden people of the whole world that don't worry, there may be arms, guns, artilleries in the hands of the bourgeoisie, the capitalist rulers, they may have highly equipped mechanized army, but dialectical materialism, a science, is such a powerful weapon in your hands, that if properly understood and applied too, it can give birth to an invincible power. Therefore, if you can learn Marxism-Leninism thoroughly and become able to apply it correctly in practice, then and then only you can grasp revolution correctly, you can grasp the process of development of society, trace the inherent hidden law which is governing the activities of all the forces stipulating the development of the society, that means, if you can get to know the law of development of class struggle then you will acquire an invincible power and ultimately you will be the conqueror of the modern world. Yes, you can conquer it, provided you can develop mastery over the science, Marxism-Leninism. No arms can compete with this. It is a decisive weapon in the hands of the working class, the masses and the toilers. So what is most urgently needed at present is to acquire knowledge which is creative and also decisive, which alone can provide you with such a power as to see those hidden laws which are governing the entire course of development of the society. In this way, while engaging yourselves in the struggles of the masses and other day-to-day political work, if you can prepare yourselves politically and ideologically, only then you can trace the specific laws which are governing the specific class struggles and understand all its peculiarities, appearing, developing in a particular environment of a given society.

So, Marxism-Leninism is a science which must be carefully studied and re-studied, studied in a way so that you can apply it into practice, studied in a way so that you can deliver it to the masses, not only to write a book and surely not to quote from it at your sweet will. Marxism teaches us that to know and to realize are different things. If you can realize Marxism-Leninism then you can put it before the people in the easiest way and you will find that people understand it easily. Marxism is the philosophy of life and as far as I am concerned, I have conducted many a school of illiterate peasants and workers in the rural and urban areas and what I have experienced is that, if Marxism-Leninism, dialectical materialism, even the most intricate problems of science can be dealt with in a language and in a style which is understandable to the peasants also — then peasants do understand, workers do understand, in spite of being illiterate, better than people usually known as intellectuals. It is my personal experience, because I personally take these classes in the rural areas, in the urban areas. So, I don't believe that it is such a stiff subject which cannot be comprehended, cannot be understood and realized by the illiterate masses, downtrodden people. Rather we should always bear in mind that it is the philosophy of life, and for that matter today, it is the philosophy of the working class, the downtrodden people and the illiterate masses and can be best understood by these people provided it is taken to them, it is put before them, placed before them in such a way, in such a language and in such a style as can be understood by them. So, if going from this conference, everyone of you individually and all of you collectively, meaning individually and collectively, take pledge — then I am sure that the history of our political movement will definitely take a new turn. Look at the hall — how many people, young people, you have gathered here — if you are determined to break through and undertake all the burden and burns of the struggles, you can definitely make headway through the present impasse.

Comrades, remember, those who can sacrifice at the initial stage for ideology and idea — they are not many people, they are always few people — young, bright and students. At every stage of development of the society, in every country, it is the students and young people who come forward, being influenced by and imbued with the revolutionary ideology and being completely dedicated go to the masses, rouse the masses, organize them in thousands and help them in creating their political power. Then the time comes for the masses for action — that we call revolution. Before that you will have to travel many a step, arduous and tortuous — painful but happier. I say this is the happier and honourable way. Yes, in this way of fighting things, it

may be painful — sometimes even tortuous, but no doubt it is the honourable way to lead a life. Here in this struggle you may die, but you will die with honour, raising your head high. You shall not die with humiliation just as cats and dogs die, rotting in the street. Remember, we are all mortal beings. So, if to die, don't die begging, don't die humiliating yourself. When to die, die with honour, and you have got only one surest way to live and die with honour, that is by taking active part in the revolutionary struggle of the masses to bring about a revolutionary transformation of the society, and for that purpose you will have to organize yourselves in thousands, and close up your ranks.

Comrades, engage yourselves and take active part in all the just struggles of the masses, individually and collectively, and all the while keep up your political initiative at the fore. Your slogan should be — go to the masses, organize them, help them in creating political power so that people, the toiling masses, can take up arms and bring about a fundamental change of our society by overthrowing the bourgeoisie from power, replacing capitalism and establishing socialism. All best wishes to you. I conclude here with revolutionary greetings to all of you.

Long Live Revolution !

Long Live Marxism-Leninism !

*Speech on January 13, 1974.
First published in Proletarian Era,
on March 15, 1974.*

Notes

1. In a distant corner of the hall two delegates were found talking.