

Tribute To A Revolutionary Character

On the demise of Comrade Subodh Banerjee, a member of the Central Committee and the Politbureau of the party, on 16 September 1974, when a school of politics of the party was in progress, a meeting of the party workers was arranged the next day, which Comrade Ghosh addressed with a heavy heart. He explained what had made Comrade Banerjee a truly great revolutionary leader and what the party workers should do to pay him true revolutionary respect. In course of that he highlighted the important aspects and process vital for building up the best of the revolutionary characters of the present time. This is a teaching for the communists everywhere that short of building communist character on this principle and in this tune the communist organization and movement cannot be successfully led in deeply complex situation of today's world.

Comrades,

Although this meeting today is being held in an atmosphere of profound grief (voice chokes with tears; after some pause he resumes), yet it is not exactly a condolence meeting. You know, Comrade Subodh Banerjee was a leader close to the hearts of the people. So many people looked to him as one of their own, and they held him in the highest of esteem. He was one deeply loved by the downtrodden masses. It is only proper that his condolence meeting should be held in public, so that people of all walks get the opportunity to attend it. So, it is in that sense that I said today's meeting is not exactly a condolence meeting.

As you know, we were going through a school of politics of party workers. In the course of it we have come up against a harsh reality, a profoundly painful development. The programme of the school could not be continued any further. In the very short time available, members of the Central Committee who were present and leading comrades of the State Committee¹ took the decision that all workers attending the school and other comrades who had reached Calcutta from outside in connection with this event would gather and I should address the gathering to speak on Comrade Subodh Banerjee. For this is this meeting today.

Comrades, you know, politics calls for noble feelings of heart. Nobler still is the feeling that spurs on to revolutionary politics. Tender as it is in one way, inherent in it are stern reality, strict discipline, and steadfast sense of duty. Our work cannot suffer because of our grief. Outwardly, the conduct of this politics appears so heartless. But it is here, in what appears so heartless, that the significance of true realization of grief lies. That is why, big revolutionaries, even in the midst of most profound grief, unwaveringly pursue their revolutionary work (voice again chokes with tears, and he continues in a tearful tone). Work they must. In no event can they allow themselves to muddle up the work. Else, it was not for them to tread this path. They had better lead lives of common men. So I said, revolutionary politics comes from nobler feelings. Whereas, its style of functioning appears so pitiless. Outwardly, it looks as though it is devoid of compassion and tenderness, it is much like a machine. But in reality, it is truly not so. In this commitment to duty is revealed the true nature of the tender heart of the revolutionary. The pain

and sorrow of the entire society together with the revolutionary transformation they underwent in the realm of values made such a penetrating impact on the revolutionaries that they have become steeled in their resolve to make revolution a concrete reality. That is why, the revolutionaries never neglect their duty. Even death of the most beloved, a profound loss, or an event leading to deep emotional upsurge cannot make them oblivious of their duty. So, it is not merely to express grief, or pour out heartfelt sorrow and sentiment that other members of the Central Committee and leaders of the State Committee have called this meeting. They urged me that, at this memorial meeting of Comrade Subodh Banerjee, I address those aspects which would help comrades take bold initiatives for greater strides to accomplish the unfulfilled mission of his life.

My charge at this moment truly appears formidable. At times, words are coming out in their natural flow, but now and then a memory or another makes it immensely difficult to speak out (at this point tears completely choke his voice; pausing awhile, he resumes). Leave that aside, I wanted to say that mere expression of grief and emotion has just no meaning for revolutionaries if they fail to realize the significance of the pain in them and what that enjoins them to do. Remember, even if one is deeply shocked and pained on seeing a terribly painful and harmful aspect of society, true manifestation of that agony in him comes only when he discerns the correct course of action through it, and, realizing the correct course to deliver the society from that condition and his own role in it, he does not neglect his duty. The same applies also to us.

So far I remember, in the past two days of the school of politics, I emphasized a particular point. That is, to us, the revolutionaries, emotion, pain, liking, love, compassion, sense of duty, responsibility, anger and hatred — everything carries a specific meaning, a significance. With us, these are not mere personal affairs. At least to him, if he is a big revolutionary, a Marxist-Leninist who grasps revolution, it should be clear that the expression of these emotional faculties in him simply for personal reasons have truly no significance for him. But despite that if these manifest themselves in him simply because of personal factors then it has to be understood that he is not a revolutionary of great stature. All these occur with common people. Though it is true that these may occur and as a matter of fact do sometimes occur amongst some of the revolutionaries. It happens because we live in this social environment and turn in the vortex of constant conflict and tussle of its class struggle, the struggle between the bourgeois and the proletariat. We want to rid ourselves of the grime of this society; but it does not come about that all of us, and automatically at that, could wipe off the grime just because we want to. Nor can it be asserted, on the other hand, that dirt is not already accumulating again, or not tending every moment to accumulate in them who once had cleansed themselves of it. Thus, maybe for a moment even, these catch us off guard and make us victims of these bad traits. Only those revolutionaries can immediately save the situation whose consciousness of revolution is clear as crystal, sharp and free from all confusion, who see through everything clear as daylight and are aware of every development, who grasp intricate issues with as much ease and clarity as they understand simple issues. If one is a real revolutionary then one either at once or in the course of time realizes the futile aspect of an issue. He realizes that to us, the revolutionaries, these feelings have no significance of worth in life except in relation to the cause of revolution and the party. Those others who act in some way in reaction to feelings under influence of other considerations or in personal interest, utterly fail to realize the true significance of these feelings in the life of a revolutionary in terms of revolutionary activities, moulding oneself as a revolutionary, and for development and progress of the revolutionary movement. I emphasized it in my earlier discussion also. I am emphasizing it again today.

About Comrade Subodh Banerjee I should point out one thing in the first place. You know very well, Comrade Subodh Banerjee was a powerful and front-ranking leader of our party. In our party leaders of the front rank have a distinctive quality and Subodhbabu² also possessed it. Leaders, all, have the firmness of character, but it would be unrealistic to think that all have their quality, capability and character at the same level, exactly in accord to the level of thinking, ideology, culture and ethics to which we are trying to elevate everyone. Some have attained it a little higher, some a little less. Some have a little weakness in some respect, some have deficiency in some regard, and some others are strong in some or other respect. These are always there. These differences arise because though everyone is engaging in struggle on the basis of the same ideology and principle there are variations in their capability to imbibe and apply them in all spheres of struggle. This apart, it has also to be remembered that humans all have both good and bad qualities. What is pertinent to note is that, between an ordinary human being and one of leading stature or a revolutionary leader, and between an ordinary cadre and a leader of the front rank of the party, the conceptual structure of good and bad is different. Because, positive and negative qualities of character are of such nature that compared to what is deemed as positive qualities for me, the absence of any one of these are my negative qualities. If you lack in those which are to be reckoned positive qualities in you, then it is to be regarded as your defects. That is why, corresponding to differences in level of character, qualities and also defects come to differ. At every level it is so. Whether it is Lenin, Stalin or Mao Zedong, or, say, when in the communist society more advanced characters than Lenin, Stalin or Mao Zedong would emerge, all the many great characters in the communist society who would be much more advanced would also be humans with blend of both qualities and defects. There will be this difference, however, that if we go by our present concept of the highest standard of quality in that future, it will perhaps turn out to be their drawbacks — this much. In other words, their drawbacks will be of different nature. Which means that what may be considered a defect in a revolutionary character more advanced than you is not understood to be a defect in you. Similarly, what is understood to be a defect in an ordinary cadre is not one and the same as what is understood to be a defect in a leader of the front rank. Likewise, what are understood as qualities in ordinary cadres are not understood to be qualities in the case of leaders of the front rank.

As I said, you see, humans are a blend of both qualities and defects. It is natural, Comrade Subodh Banerjee had abounding qualities and he had some drawbacks as well. A memory which is churning my mind again and again today (again tears choke him, he pauses for some time and then resumes) is how often in the presence of so many comrades, even in the presence of ordinary comrades, I severely criticized him; even reproached him for one or other of his faults and his drawbacks — and it is not that I did it in presence of leaders only. There are many leading comrades here, and many senior comrades from old times. Many of them will bear me out. I have tried to introduce it as a practice in our party that there won't be any criticizing at one's back. The practice is still living. This is why, on many occasions, I openly criticize the mistakes and shortcomings of leaders.

It is in your knowledge, Comrade Subodh Banerjee, as a beloved leader of the people, was the most popular of all leaders of our party. And, as cadres trained in the revolutionary politics, you are also aware how popularity is apt to degenerate a man. This is why, all revolutionary parties conduct uncompromising struggles inside themselves to fight and eradicate this populism, that is, the make-up and conduct to win cheap popularity so that it cannot worm its way into any leader and he does not fall a victim to it. Otherwise, it may so happen that even a revolutionary

talent of great promise lapses into degeneration. Such criticism and self-criticism should be the practice in order to correctly mould the revolutionary make-up of all cadres and leaders, and I can affirm with pride that this practice is living in our party. Because of this, leaders, too, come under criticism for their drawbacks, and the criticism is openly conducted in our party. I already told you, many comrades of ordinary ranks living in and around Calcutta, or those who moved together with us have been witness to it. They have, in fact, seen it happen in the case of all leaders. Other parties cannot even conceive of it. To my knowledge of history, I do not know whether in the Bolshevik Party of Russia or in the Communist Party of China a leader of this stature and enjoying so much popularity ever came under open criticism in this manner. I found it happen only in the Chinese party during the last Cultural Revolution, and you know well I welcomed it wholeheartedly. As regards our country, I am sure that if this kind of open criticism and severe reproach were made in other parties, let alone against an acknowledged leader of this stature, clique would have immediately been formed, or gross misconduct would have been the recourse undermining the party's cohesion. But you all know, no such thing has ever happened in this party.

Comrade Subodh Banerjee, who enjoyed so much popularity with the masses and had a definite weight to bear on the administration, of which he was aware himself, never conducted himself in a manner which might go to undermine the party's leadership, unity and cohesion even though he was severely and openly criticized by me at different times in the presence of comrades, and he might have occasionally felt hurt at it. The type of reaction generally found in human beings, if they have a false sense of dignity and inflated ego in which their head is turned, uttering such things and behaving in such ways as to hamper the unity and cohesion of the party and of party leadership, was altogether absent in Comrade Subodh Banerjee. Maybe at times comrades of ordinary ranks and new recruits, who failed to understand the real purpose of the open criticisms, raised questions. But Subodhbabu, always and in the same way as other leaders of the front rank of the party, tried to explain to those comrades the real significance of all these criticisms inside the party. Let alone form cliques with them, he never gave them indulgence even as their reactions were prompted by sympathy for him. Wherefrom did he acquire this make-up of mind? Other leaders of the front rank of the party also possess it. You should realize, this extraordinary mental make-up of the leaders of the foremost rank of this party, which Subodhbabu also possessed, it could develop from the party's politics and its very teachings. It has not come just because of some tall sermons. It has not also come out of some slogans only or simply because of the political line of the party. This party has been moulded on a new model, a newer ideological understanding, through correct application of Marxism-Leninism in the concrete situation obtaining in India. The methodology and process of its formation has altogether been different. You will not find the same in any other party. New comrades now-a-days coming into the party are to acquire this cultural tune, side by side with their education in politics, by pursuing the cultural essence of party's ideology and political line. Only through this can Subodhbabu be understood correctly. Otherwise, even paying respects to him leaves much to be desired. Even emotional outpourings will be tainted by pretence. Truth will not be there, falsehood will take its place. Even when tributes are showered upon a man, but from a wrong understanding, its consequences cannot be good.

If you wish to pay homage to Comrade Subodh Banerjee from the correct understanding, you should realize which quality of his was the noblest and greatest, something that is even rare to find in many of the towering and powerful revolutionary leaders of history. You will, however,

find it in leaders of the front rank of this party. It is no simple or commonplace a matter. Not a few men have come into the international communist movement who, considering their level of learning, scholarship, erudition and intellect, were far more knowledgeable and erudite than leaders of the front rank of this party, and, considered in this way, Subodhbabu does not compare with many of them in respect of learning, erudition and scholastic attainment. But, because they lacked in this element of the revolutionary culture, which Subodhbabu had acquired, many of them later degenerated — as you know of the one-time leading revolutionaries, men like Plekhanov, Bukharin and Kautsky, known for their high erudition — they all degenerated. Their erudition could not save them. It is in this respect precisely that Subodhbabu stood towering above many a revolutionary leader. I affirm this without doubt, and you cannot deny it. Because, many otherwise great revolutionaries, too, failed to set examples in their life struggle on how to behave like true revolutionaries, accepting all criticism from the leadership in proper spirit so long as the party's base ideological line and leadership remained correct — even if the criticism is made openly and severely, even if momentarily at times the criticism appeared humiliating which no doubt would hurt one's prestige if one's revolutionary culture and ethics were not tuned to the higher pitch and in case one carried even vestiges of a false sense of ego. Comrade Subodh Banerjee had the clear understanding that the qualities essential to developing into a leading communist revolutionary are not ever to lose head over all this, not to allow reasoning and the basic methodological approach to be confounded, not to undermine party's leadership and cohesion. For, he never failed to grasp that all this criticism had the well-meaning object of helping one to develop and did not aim at disparaging one. It is a practice being constantly followed to elevate each and every comrade in the party to the level of worthy revolutionaries. It does not aim at belittling one, its sole purpose is to elevate everyone.

Always remember, strong emotions exist for those who are subjected to harsh criticism (with tears welling up, voice completely chokes, and at this point everyone in the audience breaks into tears; after a long pause he resumes). In this party severe criticism is a practice. It continues to be a practice and I am in favour of it. I do it myself and also encourage others to do it. When someone takes the criticism otherwise, you may have noticed, it makes me flare up, and I come down upon him heavier still. I hold that a false sense of self-respect and prestige has no value at all. There is a height of self-respect and prestige above the personal sense and, when one has attained that height, no criticism can deprive him of respect. All people then pay respect from the core of their heart. Inevitably the men who are worth the name would do that. Else, what is the use drawing respect from lowly creatures? Respect should be won from those of higher character. That should be the object of everyone and Subodhbabu's standing was indeed high in this regard. Subodhbabu who had allegiance to an ideology and principle realized that because of that allegiance whatever may be the concrete form of party leadership at a given time undermining that leadership this way or that way or under the cover of contrived reasoning was in reality tantamount to going against progress itself, and this could only harm oneself and also harm the cause of revolutionary movement. Whatever might have been his mistakes, drawbacks and faults, and howsoever harsh might have been the criticism for that, he never faulted in grasping this essence. This level he attained. He became great because he had grasped this essence, and because he had grasped it he won respect of all comrades, of countless others. If you bear in mind the lesson he left for you through his own example and if you conduct yourselves in the twists and turns of every day in the same manner in which Subodhbabu did himself, then that would be paying true respect to his memory.

Comrades should be conscious, when paying homage to Subodhbabu, that truth should not be mixed with untruth. I might draw your attention here to what once Saratchandra³ said. Nothing great can be achieved with falsehood, you know that. Taking falsehood for truth may create an upsurge of emotions, but that does not help accomplish anything great. On the contrary, it causes harm all-round. It harms one's own self, too. In which sense? In the sense that I fail, in the first place, to grasp truth. The result is, I follow falsehood taking it for truth, and I make falsehood my ideal, shaping out my mental frame in keeping with that. How could I truly develop and elevate myself if I conducted myself that way? I cannot develop by treading this course. My own self becomes an exercise in falsehood. Similarly, in the instance of a movement, if I consider untruth to be truth, I would exhort others to follow suit, and, in the course, with my belief in falsehood as truth, my conviction, my sincerity of purpose, and with whatever ability at my command to convince others, I induce others to accept my mistaken view. The consequence is, the movement causes harm to people. For this, Saratchandra put it in his beautiful style : To tell a lie is an offence. But to tell a lie, mixing it with truth, is a crime with few parallels in life. Why did he put it in this way? His argument is, if somebody tells what is actually a lie he commits an offense. Because, by this he acts against the good of people. By trying to pass falsehood as truth he seeks to confuse people. Not only he is confused himself, he is actually seeking to confuse others, too ! But because it is actually false, so, man, the seeker of truth, would some day easily detect the falsehood. Today or tomorrow its falsity will be easily exposed. Its harm will be only temporary. But when one says something mixing truth and falsehood, it creates additional difficulty for people to recognize the nature of falsehood. It becomes too difficult to unravel the threads of falsity. Thus, with falsehood mixing with truth and truth mixing with falsehood, from their experience people can neither recognize truth in its concrete form, nor recognize falsehood in its true nature. Because, there is also some truth in what has been said. And because truth remains mingled with untruth, the innate power of truth makes it extremely difficult to identify untruth. As a result, falsehood eludes recognition. And because of falsehood mixing with truth, whatever truth may be present is not manifest concretely. A long time passes by in the confusion between truth and falsehood, and one cannot come out of it so easily. So, dedication and emotions notwithstanding, if the outlook and the course of action are wrong — if these are incorrect and not based on truth — then, in the end, not only they cause harm but engender evil as well.

So we hear Lenin sound the caution that an honest priest does more harm to the cause of progressive social movement than a dishonest priest. Similar is also what we hear from Saratchandra that telling a lie is an offence condemnable, punishable. But no crime is greater than mixing truth with falsehood. It is the height of crime and there is nothing to be condemned more. Everything, even emotional feelings, is to be guided along in the light of truth, on the correct understanding of truth. It needs to be guarded that emotion does not work on a ground that is patently false. Bear it in mind.

And if you keep this in mind, you will see that the quality of Subodhbabu which stands out as the greatest in him is the aspect I just told you about. This was the noblest element of his character. Otherwise, learning and sacrifices considered, there have been many such leaders who joined political movements. Why should students of history be confounded in judgement? They should know what the truth actually is in this regard. In every country, also on this soil, so many people sacrificed everything they possessed, giving away all they had, everything of theirs, only for the cause of movement and revolution. During the freedom movement, was there any dearth

of such people in this country ? And considering knowledge, learning and intellectual ability, were there any fewer in this country and in the whole world with the same level of knowledge, same learning and intellect which Subodhbabu had? Yet, though they had all these, what many of them lacked or at least what has been found to be wanting in many but which Subodhbabu possessed and for which he will be cherished and respect would pour out for him from the core of heart, was his unquestioning loyalty to the ideology and political line — ideology, object and overall interest of the movement centring round that object. On this question of loyalty to the leadership he never faltered — making no plea whatever, no crooked argument, not under any force of vulgar individualism — even if he might have felt hurt somewhere or pained, or because his prestige, self-esteem and ego were injured at something. Through relentless struggle and dedication, by following the party's thoughts and ideology, Subodhbabu attained that stage of development where one does not allow oneself to muddle the basic and fundamental power of judgement, one does not muddle it even if one felt hurt, or sometimes felt one had been treated unfairly or was subjected to injustice. Take to heart these words of mine, whatever his defects and drawbacks you might have noticed. This is the lesson you should learn and imbibe — precisely this. Many leading comrades, good comrades, do not always remain conscious about it.

I can say with pride, there is a category of good workers in our party who have elevated themselves to the level of good communists, in the relative sense, in the particular condition of India at present. They have more or less acquired this mettle. But their number is not that enough. This large auditorium is full of you — leaders and cadres present here. There are numerous other comrades, supporters, sympathizers and well-wishers who are not present here. If you could reach them the message, if you could inculcate in each and everyone this mind, this culture and level of knowledge that whatever his personal problems, so long as the party's thoughts, base political line and ideology are correct then, if he were a true revolutionary, he should not lose his head to muddle up his judgement to the extent of confusing the basic issues, howsoever he might feel hurt and whatever his feeling of injustice and howsoever unfair the treatment meted out to him, he could not thereby undermine the revolutionary movement, the party leadership, unity and cohesion, he could not busy himself gathering support to form coteries nor could go about bickering, squabbling and forming cliques — all which are so often found in other parties. Remember, whatever their plea in justification of such acts, those are but crooked arguments. Subodhbabu attained that standard of revolutionary consciousness where, with this acquired standard of political consciousness, sense of values, ethics and culture, a revolutionary cannot even conceive of such acts. This is, to be sure, no ordinary standard. Plekhanov, whom Lenin called the father of Marxist movement in Russia, had erudition of high level. Ultimately, however, he could not save himself from degeneration because he had failed to attain this standard. Men like Bukharin and Trotsky, who had erudition and were once known as revolutionaries of high standing, could not elevate themselves to this level. So, inevitably, they also degenerated. In China, after so great a Cultural Revolution, those giant old guards of revolution, who even now could not return to the party — because they could not agree to openly admit to the party their faults and defects for which they were criticized and to happily take on any assignment at any position given by the party, prove by their attitude and conduct that they have not yet attained this standard. A group of leading revolutionaries has, no doubt, already returned to the party, but there is a section yet to return. They became quite big leaders, and were in the lead of the revolution, they wrote volumes and at different times in the past took classes of the cadres, but they are yet to attain this standard. Otherwise, they would have returned to the party without attaching any condition and without caring for a false sense of personal prestige or

its injury but solely in the interest of revolution, progress and social advancement in spite of all criticism against them and all insult they were subjected to in public. Many such so-called communist leaders, intellectuals, erudite men and pedant authors are here in this country, too, most of whom are nowhere near to this standard of revolutionary culture and ethics. So, bear in mind, this is an aspect of foremost importance, and without acquiring it, simply by oratories and getting publicity in press and writing volumes, one cannot develop into a revolutionary of worth.

But you should keep it in mind that we are faced with many more tasks. When you say so, not merely for the sake of saying it, but by grasping it by all possible means, if you grasp it from the depths of heart, then it is your onus in the first place to grasp this basic point that, be it the question of development of the individuals in India and their well-being, the question of well-being of all families, their betterment and advancement, the question of saving the individuals, families, family relationships, affection, compassion, love, sense of values, ethics from the economic, cultural and all-round degeneration, and even the cult of science from the clutches of capitalism — in a word, saving the whole country and transforming it — there is no alternative to revolution. And in the particular context of our country this revolution means socialist revolution. This is the point you should grasp in the first place. It is another matter what materials of information you will have to collect after that to understand it better still from different angles. I am not going into that here. The more you will grasp it from different angles, covering all the different aspects meticulously and in every detail, the more lucid will be your understanding, and the more will develop a firm make-up of mind, capabilities and a foundation of character in all of you which I am urging you to develop — and which, as I have been explaining so long, Subodhbabu possessed — and I can assert with pride that all front-ranking leaders of our party possess it. Subodhbabu stood on this strong foundation of revolutionary character, and all front-ranking leaders, whatever the variation in their capabilities, possess it. You must have noticed that it is actually for this that when at times I find them erring or doing something wrong, I criticize them without hesitation in presence of all in such language which I do not use when it comes to many ordinary comrades. In that case, in any circumstances, I do not allow myself as best I can to be victim of impulse. It happens at times that I feel very much disturbed in many ways by the behaviour of some comrades who are new to the party, or weak-hearted, or politically unconscious, or who are yet to attain this standard. This type of behaviour does not conform to party's interest, culture and tastes, nor are conducive to these in any way — still I do not normally use any harsh words against them. I do not criticize them in the same language as I do in the case of leaders of the front rank. They get sympathetic treatment, but leaders of the front rank do not get it when I criticize them. For what reason? In the first place, leaders are like pillars of the strong foundation on which the party stands. Their defects and mistakes may lead the whole revolutionary movement and political line into the wrong track to cause very serious damages to the party and revolution. In their case mistakes entail a serious danger. Secondly, the leaders have attained such a standard of political consciousness, education, culture and ethics that the real significance and beneficial purpose of my criticism, howsoever severe, cannot be lost upon them. I am fully confident about it; so without hesitation I often criticize them. But that does not apply to ordinary comrades. So the manner of criticism and behaviour become different in their case. It is a matter of adopting specific approaches depending upon the specific nature of different cases. It is so because truth is concrete by nature. The style and manner of discussion and criticism which may reflect concrete truth when it comes to the leaders, the same style and manner of discussion and criticism does not reflect concrete truth in the case of cadres of ordinary ranks and for all categories of workers. But many leaders

in the party do not keep it in mind in practice. In the case of ordinary comrades, if the language of criticism is harsh then it takes them time to realize that this harshness does not entail ill-feeling ; on the contrary, it has comradely affection and compassion behind it. It takes them time to realize that despite a thousand rebukes and reproaches there has been not the slightest dearth in feelings, emotions, compassion, love and sense of duty towards them in the core of heart. From words alone one cannot get the feel of it. From outward conduct it cannot be understood. It has to be realized by fighting together shoulder to shoulder for long. With those, however, who I feel have realized it, I often take a tough attitude and I feel no hesitation then. But with others who may take it wrongly or get puzzled and find it more difficult to follow the point, I am always in favour of doing discussion in a calm and quiet manner.

Leave aside that, as I was saying, that is, the basic point we were going through is that if we want to effect a radical social transformation encompassing individual lives and the entire pattern of social life in every sphere, there is no alternative to revolution. In the present stage of our country it cannot be anything other than anti-capitalist socialist revolution. We take to studies in different fields and we want to learn in order to understand this revolution, but the basic point remains the same. The more we heighten our understanding, the sharper it grows and clearer; the stronger grows our determination and more enriched our mental faculties ; more we build our body and mind to meet the needs of revolution, more we mould the pattern of our culture and ethics, more we enhance our political capability and more we constantly improve the style of organizing movements — their course, methods and tactics — and can always maintain it at the dynamic level. For this we need to study and learn from all different aspects. But the fundamental point remains that social transformation cannot come about without revolution, and we cannot do with any superficial and shallow understanding of this question of revolution. Therefore, along with it, we, all who have assembled here, surely also hold that the question of revolution and the revolutionary party are inalienably linked together. For, it can never be that revolution happens, but the revolutionary party is not ready to provide leadership. This has never happened in history, this does not happen, this cannot happen. Out of discontent of workers, peasants and all exploited masses, revolution will again and again try to surge ahead in waves after waves. In waves after waves it will try to burst forth. The contradiction within society will deepen and sharpen many times more, calling for radical transformation of this order. It will beseech our consciousness, it will appeal to humanity that revolution is the necessity. Still, revolution will not come, again and again it will recede, it will go astray, and reaction will again and again gain by that — revolution will not see the light until the revolutionary party emerges, capable enough to lead revolution. Let it be clear, just to want revolution is no reflection of revolutionary consciousness. So also, to think about the working class, the proletariat, is no proletarian class consciousness. The correct revolutionary consciousness is the correct proletarian class consciousness, and the correct proletarian class consciousness is the correct proletarian party consciousness — which means, whether you have been able to recognize the genuine revolutionary party or not.

All of you present here, all who fill up this auditorium, want to build the SUCI as the party capable of ushering in revolution in the prevailing condition of India. What you mean to say by that is that the party which, on the basis of Marxism-Leninism, with a distinct ideology, a correct base political line, distinct category of understanding has emerged as a new model deeply enriched with newer ideas through a particular process and having a new mental make-up, if you cannot build it up with sufficient strength to lead the revolution, revolution will not materialize

in India. Had this not been your mode of thinking, then with all those Marxist-Leninist parties around who all talk of revolution, many of which, small or big, even talk of socialist revolution, why would you not have considered any of those but have thought of the SUCI ? It is so because, from your knowledge of their theories and from what you understand of their conduct through your contact with them, you have at least understood that these parties are not capable of making revolution a reality. These parties are here only to trade in revolution. They will be always misdirecting revolution. So, you find, time and again the upsurge of revolution is breaking out, people in multitude are rushing in to lay down life in the turbulence of revolution, struggles are mounting, bloodshed is all around, but revolutionary movement is suffering setbacks — it is getting channelized into wrong tracks, and for the time being reaction is gaining ground. This is exactly what has been happening in India since long. After the Congress had lost its popularity and capitalism got enmeshed in extreme crises, struggles burst forth in so many surges, so many times. For long people have been yearning for a change. But revolution keeps on eluding us. It is because, just as I said, in history it never happens that revolution is taking place or that revolution has been achieved but the revolutionary party has not come to the leadership of revolution attaining the minimum required organizational structure — that minimum of form and content required of a revolutionary party to lead revolution in a country in a specific situation. So you must be realizing that if revolution is the task essential to accomplish and if this party is the party to lead revolution, then — while effectively confronting the contradiction of its good and bad qualities, all its defects and drawbacks — so long as its base revolutionary political line, its theoretical and ideological line are correct, your struggle is to be directed at consolidating its leadership — strengthening it and freeing it from weaknesses. When you move together in the party in some particular situations — say, in a locality, a district committee, a cell, or in regard to some personal matters of a worker or a leader — maybe even an injustice occurs ; but for that, under any circumstances, you cannot move away from the basic point, that is, the question of strengthening party's leadership, unity and cohesion.

Remember, in a revolutionary party such incidents may occur on occasions. For example, injustice may happen, to the extent that a stigma is motivatedly attached to a good worker who knows he is honest and is not wanting in dedication, but the party's doors are closed on him. There may be a conspiracy to murder him even. Of course, no such features have yet appeared in our party, but it should be borne that, despite utmost care, at times, in some situations, such incidents may happen because the constant class struggle within society is casting its influence on the cadres and leaders of the party, and in the future the possibility of any such incident happening cannot be ruled out altogether. If an incident of this kind happens to any worker, what is he expected to do if he is a revolutionary worth the name and has his unquestioning loyalty to revolution and the party ? If it is in his mind as to why the leadership at the higher level did not understand the issue properly although he had informed them of the development, then he is committing a serious mistake. If he is thinking in this line, it means he is thinking only about himself. He should understand, while he is giving his own version of the incident, others who are speaking against him and who, he thinks, are conspiring against him, are also executives and they are conducting party work. So in this circumstance, the leadership may take some time to understand who is right. In most cases, in fact, the leadership needs time to understand the matter from their assessment of work of respective comrades. But if that comrade cannot wait for this, or from his consideration that injustice has been done to him he conducts himself in such ways that he in fact muddles up the cardinal question of trust and loyalty to party's thoughts and leadership, undermining its unity and cohesion, then he confuses the basic point, that is, the

significance to a revolutionary of questions like whether he lives or dies, his prestige or lack of it, justice and injustice meted out to him. If his mission is really that even at the cost of life he wants to strengthen the revolutionary activity to the best of his ability and if he considers the base political line of the party to be correct and he is convinced that this party is the genuine revolutionary party, then no matter the injustice to him from whatever position, if by his act he weakens the revolutionary movement itself and undermines its cohesion, or if he deserts the party, then with all that sense of injured feelings what great act of deliverance does he perform other than furthering his petty self-interest? If this be his conduct, then it can only mean he has muddled up the basic point which Subodhbabu never did. Other front-ranking leaders of our party and a good number of other comrades have attained this level, and they are still maintaining it — they never muddle up this issue, at least so far they have not.

You have heard that the front-ranking leaders of our party are openly criticized. I have lost count of how many times members of the Central Committee like Comrade Nihar Mukherjee, Comrade Sachin Banerjee, Comrade Prithish Chanda, Comrade Shankar Singh,⁴ Comrade Hiren Sarkar and leaders at other levels have been openly criticized for their defects and drawbacks. Many comrades have been witness to it in the party office. Wherefrom did the leaders acquire this mettle ? Taking note of this characteristic of our party but failing to grasp its significance — as many from other parties and from the people at large do — it is possible to make an easy and oversimplified assessment that starting from Subodh Banerjee and other leaders of the party all are my blind sycophants ; if one gets pleasure from thinking so, one is free to do so. But you see the matter is not so simple. Sycophants are not created through this process. To grasp that real thing is not so easy. Considering the social standing of Subodh Banerjee and his weight — he enjoyed much more reputation than me — there was no reason for him to be a sycophant, to happily and unhesitatingly accept everything after all the harsh and severe criticisms. The only reason for it is that he had dedication to ideology and had loyalty to the leadership. If ever he felt hurt, he had the realization that this criticism was of a different character. It had no intent to belittle him. It was purported to help him develop higher as a revolutionary. It arose from a deep emotional attachment to him (voice chokes). He never erred in realizing this.

In the same way that each of you have dedicated yourself to strengthening the party, if together all of you can attain this level, if you can acquire this make-up, then only you can strengthen the leadership, unity and cohesion of the party as Subodhbabu did. Otherwise, did he have no problems in his life? Do not problems arise in the lives of great revolutionaries ? Did not problems appear in the lives of the revolutionaries of Vietnam? Did all of them live lives in which no problems ever cropped up ? Did all have enough to eat at home ? Did not they experience any problems of love ? No problem in sex life ? No financial crisis in the extreme ? Did not they have to face situations with their children starving to death before their eyes ? Did not they have to see their parents weeping, for whom they have boundless respect ? Great revolutionaries of all ages had to endure all these, they had to bear with this. But they made no plea, no excuse of all this to shy away from revolutionary life. All the time and as best as they could — whether or not others made way for them, with their own effort and to the best of their intellectual ability — every moment they strove to strengthen the party, movement and revolution. Subodhbabu belonged to this class of leaders. This is the point to be grasped in paying homage to his memory. This way you have to mould yourselves. Short of this, all homage paid to him is of little value to me. In that event, I would think that some people are shedding tears out of blind emotional attachment and paying false tributes. I understand well

their emotions, but that will not serve any purpose. They have failed to understand anything. They will in fact do more harm. If they understand Subodhbabu properly they will strive to emulate this quality of his character.

Subodhbabu also had problems in life and turmoils arising from these. Whenever he failed to resolve a problem he approached the leadership. He took guidance from the leadership and tried to act on that. But never did he muddle up the question that because of the problems he would not be able to carry out party assignment, or was not in a position to discharge party's responsibility, or was not trying his best to do his work the way it should be done within the reach of his ability. Always he carried out his work for revolution and the party to the best of his ability. Whether he could always do or could not sometimes do what was needed to be done, whether party's workers would be able to do something or not is a matter of competence, of course. Whether everybody is capable of carrying out every type of work is again a question of competence. I do not want to put stress on that in the first place. Perhaps not everybody is capable of carrying out every type of work. But what is required of everyone is that he or she strive utmost to do what they are capable of doing completely or to the extent they can do it — what is within their limit. Whether they are getting stuck up by all their personal problems and allowing their time and capabilities to waste. This is the moot point. Then comes the point that one's capability develops through work in many directions, the capability grows in him to do many different types of work.

If you pay homage in this way to the memory of Subodhbabu, if you can glean this essence from his life — pure gold to be precise — then howsoever adverse the situation for you, you will be able to accomplish revolution. Without this revolution, remember, you cannot lead the country to its well-being, even your own development and progress will not be possible. You cannot render any good to society in the real sense, you cannot even keep yourselves in the right track, unless you dedicate yourselves to the task of revolution. If this realization correctly develops in you, you should also bear in mind that only by pondering you cannot bring about revolution. Revolution needs the organization to lead it through, which is the revolutionary party. If the SUCI is that revolutionary party — in other words, taking into consideration the base political line, ideology, principles, culture, ethics, world outlook and its method of analysis, application, ideas, concepts and in every other way, if the SUCI is that revolutionary party — then being one with this party, whether that entails trouble or not, onslaughts or not — its weal and woe are your concern, mind that.

You must give up the mentality that only its benefits will accrue to you, that the party is yours if reputation comes your way when you are in it, but the party is not yours, if being in it entails threat, or you feel cornered. Subodhbabu had no such attitude, no front-ranking revolutionary leader has it either. So learn this attitude of his life to inculcate it in you with all seriousness. Whatever your problems, howsoever adverse the situation, so long as you consider this party, its ideology, base political line and basic teachings correct, the movement organized on that ideology and the leadership also correct, you cannot undermine the movement and weaken its cohesion out of a feeling that you are hurt, or have been subjected to injustice, or that you face difficulties. If this mental make-up develops together in every worker present in this gathering which has packed this auditorium, you just cannot imagine what a tremendous power it will turn out to be. In no time it will go to make a qualitative difference in cementing unity in the party. There would be no limit to the height to which it will raise political initiative of each in

one stroke ! This is a very important aspect, and you cannot undermine its importance. You should all strive to acquire it.

There are two basic lessons you should learn. One, not to go against the party on any plea whatsoever so long as the party is correct. The other, if you aspire to become a great revolutionary of the stature of Subodhbabu, and you wish his life to inspire you, then, remember, a basic pre-requisite is that, whatever the problems in life, under their brunt, as soldier of the revolutionary movement, you cannot leave your task and responsibility unattended even for a moment. Even when in tears, you must carry forward your work. You cannot disown this responsibility. You cannot argue as to how you can carry out your work because of some personal setback. If you approach life with this outlook, if you attain this level of realization of the ideology and can mould your character with unquestioning loyalty to revolution and the party — drawing these two lessons from the life of Subodhbabu — then only you can pay him true respect. And only in this way, in the struggle ahead in the coming days in which the SUCI will have a very important role to play, you can strengthen the party.

Unless you can fast strengthen the SUCI and you can fast prepare the party, both politically and organizationally, to confront the situation — that means, even if it is found that the party is politically well-developed, it has its reflection in the leaders' thinking and understanding, but, that on the contrary, you have not acquired the strength to translate that politics into reality by developing side by side the mass organizations — then, as did happen in the past, in the future also people will again and again surge into battles only to be misled by the pseudo-leftists. By that these politicians will sometimes come to grab power and position, sometimes will become ministers, only to arrest people within the orbit of parliamentary politics and completely undermine the cause for which people made all sacrifices. Or, maybe, in some cases they will be misguided to resort to petty bourgeois ultra revolutionism or to petty bourgeois romanticism to exhaust the power of revolution, helping reaction to consolidate thereby. But revolution will not come. To accomplish revolution the SUCI has to be strengthened politically and organizationally. If you go back with the firm resolve to strive for this I shall deem that to be your true homage to Subodhbabu.

You should all acquire the attitude that, mustering all your ability — not minding whether you have party membership or not, or even if the party has not granted membership to you but you have the understanding that because revolution is a must and in consideration of ideology, politics and culture this party alone is equal to the task of revolution, and the truth does not alter just because you are not granted membership — you will go ahead carrying out your work as best you can to strengthen the revolutionary movement and this party on your own.

This process is the correct revolutionary process, and when it is living in the party, those revolutionaries occupying high positions whom the party may have once expelled come back to party fold afterwards despite the fact that they were openly criticized and condemned. They come back on their own. They do not raise questions out of a false sense of prestige to claim how could they come back since the party did so much of criticism and so much of open condemnation. Take the instance of the Chinese party. Till before the Cultural Revolution started, Deng Xiaoping was the party's General Secretary. In the party ranking, after Mao Zedong, Liu Shaoqi and Zhou Enlai was Deng Xiaoping, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the party. In terms of the party posts, after the Chairman and Vice-Chairman

comes his post. Such a person along with Liu Shaoqi came under open criticism and condemnation by the party and the people as a ‘capitalist roader’, ‘new Khrushchev’, or ‘China’s Khrushchev’. At one stage he refused to accept party’s instruction, and said what he did was right. For that he was criticized all the more and the party expelled him. After the Cultural Revolution when party’s Ninth Congress was held he still did not return and at the Ninth Congress he was openly criticized and condemned. Afterwards, on the eve of the Tenth Congress of the party he admitted his mistakes and rejoined the party.⁵ See, how merit is given recognition in a genuine revolutionary party, a party of truly high standing. This is what happens if and when a party has the distinctive characteristic of a leading revolutionary party. There such criticism and condemnation are impersonal in nature. A person who was made the subject of so much criticism and condemnation as to tear him into shreds, when the same person joined the party after admission of his mistakes, he immediately became no less than a Deputy Prime Minister. He was not made a member of party’s Central Committee and Politbureau as his return was about the time of the Tenth Congress, but his rank was next to Zhou Enlai only — that was where he was placed. Recently you have read in newspapers that Zhou Enlai, as his health is broken and he cannot carry on the burden of all the many works because of extreme pressure on him he continues only as a member of the Central Committee and Politbureau of the party, and a body has been set up to look after all other assignments. But the position of the in-charge of this body has not gone to that Wang Huang of Sanghai, about whom there has been so much speculation in different quarters that his position is next only to Mao Zedong — Zhou Enlai being on one side and he on the other. That veteran Deng Xiaoping, no sooner he returned admitting his mistakes, was immediately posted as the head of this body. The question did not occur to him that since he had been criticized so how could he come back and how was he to face ordinary comrades. He was conscious that comrades, all who made those criticisms, would rejoice when they would see him return on admission of his mistakes ; and the same comrades would be willing to make sacrifices for him and sympathize with him in hours of distress. He had no difficulty to realize this, and this is one of the distinctive qualities of every revolutionary of high standard. True, of course, scheming men with ulterior motives can also come back in such ways. But history bears out that revolutionaries at all times have conducted themselves in this way on many different occasions. I only sought to draw your attention to this make-up of mind. At the same time, at this memorial meeting of Comrade Subodh Banerjee, I ask you to take it into heart that whatever your personal difficulties, sorrows, and pains, whether the situation favours you or is against you in the extreme, in spite of all adversities and mental turmoil — mind you these are all common in people — you must not flinch from this fundamental teaching of the party under any circumstances. It is no doubt true, if you cannot adequately fight against these, temporarily you may be in difficulty and for that your work may slow down somewhat. So, you should fight against these to prevent even that much. But if you are revolutionaries worth the name, you cannot put forward excuses for why you cannot do your work or why you cannot take the responsibility and carry out your assignment, even offering a ‘materialistic’ explanation for why you cannot do it at all.

I am saying so because as Marxism-Leninism teaches that everything comes from a material condition and we just cannot disregard reality, so, many comrades try to offer a ‘materialistic’ explanation in self-defence to rationalize as to why, being circumscribed under what condition, they cannot properly carry out their assignment for revolution. I would say, there is no need to invoke materialism for this. Why take pain to learn materialism to understand just this little ? If you want to get a truly materialistic answer then all you need to know is to understand exactly

for what difficulties you think you cannot do your work for revolution and what misconception makes you think so, and you should at once take to fighting out those and recover strength to do your work. To guide your ideas and thinking in this line is to be properly materialistic — then you are conducting it in line with the dialectical materialistic concept. He who conducts struggle from this understanding has the correct realization of dialectical materialism.

Earlier, too, I said, that the coming days are very important to us. You are to build this party fast, within a very short period, with the political and organizational strength necessary to provide leadership to revolution. We could not have achieved this task earlier even if we had contemplated it. But now, with our present numerical strength, if all of us — each and every leader and cadre — strive to put it into reality, with adequate contemplation, we shall succeed to achieve it. To that end, every worker present here shall have to carry out his respective work without turning away from it, with individual initiative and intellect — no matter whether you can achieve it or not, you succeed or fail. Its method shall be that, on the one hand, you will be learning the party's politics, and, on the other, you will make every effort to organize people in any sphere on the basis of this politics. With this objective — be it in a club, a peasant and agricultural workers' organization, a slum dwellers' welfare association, a literary forum, a poets' forum, a gymnasium, a trade union, or a workers' welfare association, or if you are conducting political classes with the workers — in whatsoever way, you are mixing with the people, trying to rally them around you and free and wean them from the wrong political line and draw them into the fold of the party's politics. This is the task to be accomplished by you, in your respective sphere, each with full initiative and to the best of ability. While you are at this work, you are to mould your mental make-up and thinking, you are not to raise the question of whether you find you are doing it properly or not, and you are not to give up your work because you think you are not able to do it properly, and, when these questions come up, you call to mind the example of Subodhbabu and other leading revolutionaries. Constantly remember, when this is the only road and revolution is a must, you have no other work but to educate the people on the revolutionary party and the revolutionary politics, to organize people on this basis and try for the emergence of people's political power — there is no other way before you to become revolutionaries. So, if you find your work does not bear fruit today, not in ten years or twenty years, still this alone remains the only correct course before you. Only by adhering to it one day you will seize political power and radically change the face of this society. To you, if you are revolutionaries, all other ways are incorrect. If you get confused, finding you cannot do it, cannot achieve the goal — and you take some other course, will that bring in revolution? So, if you neglect the task of revolution on any such plea as 'you are not equal to it', 'it is eluding in any case', 'people are just not convinced' or, say, 'there is want in your family and you don't have anything to eat', say, 'you feel dejected, so sad that you cannot keep your cool nor can do your work' — it means you have not really grasped revolution. Then, you have also failed to understand Subodhbabu. Even with all your grief and tears you have not understood him. But if you have understood him even a little, then developing yourselves as such revolutionary workers will be paying true homage to him. You cannot then offer any such excuses, and before you could, shame will overpower you. If it so happens that you are explaining to people a thousand times but that takes you nowhere and nothing comes of it, everybody can see that. What is there to lose heart? If you have got the feeling that you are failing to achieve anything, or if it happens that your effort is bearing no fruit, you have stopped working out of frustration and you feel no enthusiasm for work, that will only mean you have not learnt anything from the life of

Subodhbabu. You have failed to understand him. Respects showered with no proper understanding behind — do you think it is any respect at all ? It is sheer blindness.

So, grasp the basic point — Indian revolution is on the threshold of emergence, and nothing of worth remains of this society — this you should realize. No longer the ruling class can give it any lease of life with any palliatives whatsoever. The Indian society is in the throes of birth. Only, it suffers from want of people's organized conscious political movement, from want of a genuine revolutionary party with that minimum of necessary strength with which this ferment for revolution in the people, this situation ripe for revolution can be led into an organized protracted powerful war for revolution. In entirety the objective condition for revolution is ripe, with all its ingredients and ammunition. The people yearn for a change. The ruling class has nothing else to bank on, except the military muscle of this old order. They count also on people's ignorance and political confusion, but that is not of any major importance. The reality puts so much pressure on the people that no confusing logic and delusions of religion can hold them back. Once the tide of revolution breaks out, no argument will succeed to prevent the onrush of the masses. Then the ruling bourgeoisie will be left with but one weapon to deploy against revolution — the military, police and armament. But when a country, a people stands up erect and takes to battle on the correct revolutionary line under the correct leadership, can it ever be stopped with military power ? Could anyone in history ever do that ? Think of a small country like Vietnam and that big military power of the USA. The US had bombed the whole of Vietnam to raze it to the ground. Could it thwart in the end the liberation struggle of Vietnam ? Could it destroy its peasants, workers and ordinary people? Those are ignorant who think that an entire people can be wiped off with bombs — they do not understand it cannot be done. It is not so easy. Those who understand the might of mankind know it well. History has to be studied with care to keep this mental power of judgement in order. This knowledge helps to understand that a grievous harm may be inflicted on humanity, even a strong countercurrent may be whipped up to temporarily forestall mankind's onward march, but it is never possible that a demoniacal power would destroy humanity. If it could, human society would not have survived at all. On this realization stands the ethics of revolution, its indomitable spirit, its determination.

So, as you see, the objective situation in India is ripe for revolution. What is lacking ? There are big political parties here, even parties with Marxist-Leninist labels. There are people who raise fiery slogans, people who play tricks. Among them are people in plenty who are capable organizers, people who can cleverly put up big federations overnight, who can call strikes by thousands and thousands of workers under the banner of these federations. But what is lacking ? It is that genuine revolutionary party, based on the correct revolutionary political line, ideology and comprehensive revolutionary theory with the minimum necessary strength. There is that party, it has developed — only it lacks in that strength with which it can channelize the outbursts of people's agitations into the correct course on a definite revolutionary line for protracted battles. Fast you are to muster this strength — anyhow, at the cost of life even. All the workers of the party could not be present in this meeting. Only those comrades of West Bengal are present who got the card to attend the school of politics. Comrades, numerically many times more, are spread all over the country. If every worker with all his understanding and with whatsoever capability and limitation engages on his own to equip himself with the party's ideology, basic teachings and revolutionary politics, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, constantly attends to his assignment without ignoring his responsibility whatever be his personal difficulty, and if in this meeting you all take the firm resolve to carry ahead the task, then I

would deem it to be your revolutionary homage to Subodhbabu. Only then, will it be possible, in a not too distant future for his unfulfilled mission to be fulfilled by his own party, the SUCI.

With this I conclude today.

Long Live Revolution !
Long Live Comrade Subodh Banerjee !
Red Salute to Comrade Subodh Banerjee !

Speech on September 17, 1974.
First published as a booklet
in Bengali on October 7, 1974.

Notes

1. West Bengal State Committee.
2. Courteous way of address in Bengali, used here to denote deep esteem for Comrade Subodh Banerjee.
3. Saratchandra Chattopadhyay, renowned Bengali litterateur of Indian Renaissance.
4. Subsequently turned a renegade and expelled.
5. After demise of Mao Zedong, developments in China revealed that Deng's admission of mistakes was deceitful, and by his acts in later years he proved himself to be an ultra-revisionist and conspirator.