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US Presidential Election : What It Reveals

Curtain is drawn on the long, fabulous and traumatic tirade of US Presidential election campaign, the American people faced for months, rather years. George Bush, the sitting President, is able to cling on to his chair, he frantically fought for. Victory celebration is, however, counterpoised by loud, if not equally strong, allegations of rampant rigging. The victor, in his usual dramatic way, has called for unity of the American people. On the other hand, there have even been remarks that this election has irrevocably divided the American nation vertically into two parts and has placed the USA at the 'beginning of its end'. An analysis held it as "Bush

won the states in the Southwest and Great Plains area dominated by mine owners, millionaire land owners, agribusiness, cattle barons and oil magnates. But in the large and middle-sized cities, in urban areas where tens of millions of workers and the oppressed people are concentrated—in the Northeast, Midwest and West Coast—Bush's reactionary agenda was rejected across the board, mostly by significant margins." The campaign, orchestrated by palpably and largely corporate-controlled electronic and print media, tended to make even people of the world believe that Bush or Kerry, Republican or

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SUCI condoles death of Palestine liberation movement leader Yasser Arafat. Text of the condolence letter sent to PLO in next issue

Domestic policy is no less responsible for continuous rise in oil tariff

The Congress-led CPI(M)-backed UPA government, in keeping with the tradition of the previous BJP-led NDA government, has gone on a spree of raising the prices of petroleum products. While it effected two successive hikes in two months since it assumed power at the Centre in May last, the third instalment of steep increase has been made effective from the 5th November last. And like its predecessor BJP, it too is parroting the oft-repeated argument that this hike is necessitated because of rise in international oil price. But how far tenable is this logic that is, unfortunately, being shared by the CPI(M), CPI, as well? Let us turn to facts.

It is argued that (1) our country is fully dependent on imported oil and (2) the oil producing countries are augmenting price at regular intervals. So the government is helpless and forced to revise domestic tariff upwards. People should appreciate this compulsion and bear the brunt without any resentment. But then the authorities must provide answers to some basic questions. If the domestic price rise is linked with the international market why is not the domestic price level brought down when international price falls? Even now the international price has come down from \$56 per barrel to \$49 per barrel, i.e. by about 10%. Earlier also, when the international price

Observe November 17 as all-India protest day against steep hike in prices of petro-products — Nihar Mukherjee

Comrade Nihar Mukherjee, General Secretary, SUCI in a statement issued on 11 November last called upon the people of the whole country to observe an all-India protest day on November 17, 2004, the historic November Revolution Day, through organizing meetings, demonstrations, dharnas, bandhs whichever is found possible against the latest steep hike in the prices of petroleum, diesel and LPG, as a part of a powerful sustained resistance movement urgently needed to be built up at all-India level to force the central government rescind this highly anti-people decision.

SUCI strongly condemns steep rise in fuel prices and call for resistance

Comrade Nihar Mukherjee, General Secretary, SUCI in a statement issued on 5 November last strongly condemned the latest steep hike in the prices of petrol, diesel and LPG, third in a row since the Congress-led UPA government assumed power at the Centre six months back. While the government is putting forth the oft-repeated argument of surge in international oil price as the ostensive reason for such domestic tariff escalations in a spate, it is reported that there is in fact a decline in the international price of oil. The government, if it had the willingness, had definite scope for downward revision of domestic fuel tariff through suitable adjustments. But the Congress-led government chose to traverse the opposite path to impose, once more, in utter disregard to all proposals to provide cushion effect to the consumers and doing nothing to build up strong international public opinion against such unilateral raising of prices by the oil producing countries, a heavy burden on the common people groaning under the yoke of all out capitalist exploitation and left practically with no purchasing power at all.

Comrade Mukherjee also criticized the dubious role of the CPI(M), CPI upon whose support rests this government, for feigning opposition to this move while silently giving a go-ahead signal to the government in taking such a drastic measure to severely accentuate the misery of the people. He called upon all sections of the people of the country to launch an organized protracted resistance movement to compel the government rescind the highly anti-people decision.

declined to \$16 per barrel, the domestic tariff was systematically increased. Next question is, if international price fixation is so crucial and sole determinant, how is it that in Bangladesh, our neighbour, who is completely dependent on imported oil, petroleum products are sold at a much cheaper rate?

Was import dependence in oil inevitable

It is true that we are import-

dependent in oil. But is it by compulsion or by design? In the seventies, about 70% of the domestic need used to be produced within the country whereas it is barely 30% today, to be reduced further to just 14 % by 2010 as per experts' opinion. This means with respect to domestic demand, percentage of domestic production is getting reduced in direct proportion to the increasing

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US imperialists wage war both on other countries and common people of own country

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Democrat, settling this option in the USA was a real-life problem for them too. Verdict of the American electorate in their bourgeois parliamentary battle, it was asserted, would 'unhinge' or 'hinge' the world and its life. There have also been critical examinations of the features and trends that deserved observation and consideration. They were fewer, shadowed and left behind, or simply gagged, as it had been with the 27 anti-war websites that questioned the US war policy particularly in Iraq. Naturally it evokes a question in serious-thinking people: After all, what did this election reveal about American politics, or more broadly, about the bourgeois parliamentary politics of these days.

This election took place at a time, when American people were haunted with issues that affected their life. As mentioned above, there were two sharply divided opinions. One, held largely by the capitalists, the moneyed people, who rallied behind Bush representing "Our country — right or wrong" sort of Americanism, that did not hesitate to pounce upon weaker countries with brutal aggressiveness, under false pretexts and demanded blind allegiance to the war-mongers. The other stood firm in its opposition to the war and other policies of the American rulers. It was true that American senators lock-stock and barrel, Democrats or Republicans together, Bush or Kerry, Rice or Clinton alike, stood with vociferous support for the 'pre-emptive' war in Iraq, or for that matter all other previous ones. But it was equally true that the American people were increasingly rising against the war-mongering foreign policy of the US imperialism. Series of huge anti-war demonstrations in the land of USA immediately before the election attested to this truth. Kerry, the main contestant of Bush in his rat race for power, was in obvious dilemma. He felt the mood and criticized Bush for the 'wrong war'. But he never cared to commit withdrawal from the 'wrong war', nor to come out in support of these millions of people voicing strong protest against pointless genocide being perpetrated by the American rulers in one country after another. Rather he vowed to "win the war in Iraq" and to "stay the course". By that he confused the masses, tried to demoralize the anti-war forces and

really reinforced the militarist mood promoted by and exploited by Bush. Finally he had to concede even before the battle ended. After all, like Bush, a Republican, he, though a Democrat, represented a bourgeois political party or force serving their master, the US imperialism and in this era of acute crisis of world capitalism-imperialism war was the compulsion for the US imperialism. Behind all their belligerence was their frantic attempt to tide over the unassailable economic crisis. Thus Iraqi oil or dominance over the Middle East might be the associated motives, the more important fact was that the US imperialists needed war to lubricate and keep running their military-industry complex, in the face of their acute crisis. And Bush or Kerry ran for the power and pelf in exchange of their service to this crisis-ridden master. But the present US presidential election, at the same time, reflected the mood and feelings of the American common people, hitherto unknown in that soil. So much so that there came the expression that this election marks the 'beginning of end' for the fire-spewing belligerent US imperialism.

Myth of American Economy Falls Fast Apart

The present election took place at a time when the myth about the USA, as being the greatest invincible economy, the symbol of stability and prosperity, the emblem of the most living democracy who could play the role of self-appointed guardian of the world to protect and uphold democracy — all these myths were being shattered before the American people.

They could see that the supremacy of their capitalist economy was really a myth shaken to its feet. The USA has now turned out to be one of the most indebted country of the world. It is feared that US net external debt will rise to 690,000 crore dollar by 2008. President Bush ended his first term with a 41,500 crore dollar deficit, creating the largest national debt in history of the country. An important cause of it was Bush's tax policy allowing huge tax relief for the corporations and the rich and a result was the massive cut in the welfare measures for the common people. The country also experienced the largest trade deficit in history to the tune of 16,600 crore

dollars in the last reported quarter of this year indicating the huge flow of dollar out of that country. This was because of the self-defeating policy of allowing the US people to buy more materials at a lower price manufactured abroad and purchased in exchange of dollars, thereby also allowing trade deficit in the long run.

In the domestic scene, the USA recorded mounting unemployment, for the first time since the depression in 1930s preceding the second world war, witnessing a net job loss with a loss of 16 lakh private sector jobs and a 20% net decline in employment in the US manufacturing sector during the last four years. Sensing the intense popular resentment, Kerry tried, albeit lukewarm, to use it on the issue of outsourcing of jobs from USA that only brings more profit to the corporations. During the same period, number of part-time job-holders because of the absence of full time jobs, increased by 37%, the largest increase on record. Workers faced lay-off; 33% of such workers in manufacturing sector stayed jobless, 73% of those who found job faced pay cut. Closures jumped 50%; 40 lakh more Americans sank into poverty to reach a total of 360 lakh. Income of the typical household stagnated. The official figure of 2% inflation is publicly apprehended to reach 5% On the contrary, of the economic gains in the last 3 years, only 15% went to wages and salaries, the smallest share in 50 years, 47% to corporate profits, more than in any period since the second world war. In fact, as against rise in unemployment, stagnation of per capita growth and real wages, a small elite, the top 5% of the US income distribution benefited disproportionately again from Bush's tax policies. They also lost nothing from the cutbacks in welfare that the huge budget deficits required. Rather their after-tax income increased by 53%. It all meant that the 'haven of democracy' liberally pampered its rich, the owners, the capitalists and thrust the onus of the crisis on the people. Of the latter 49 people died each day because costs for health insurance had increased by 36%. Drug prices rose nearly 3 times faster than inflation, resulting in 13,900 crore dollars as an expected new profit for drug corporations. In regard to education, US ranked 18 among 24 industrial countries behind even the

Czech Republic, Ireland and Hungary. Budget allotments for education for every child, for After School Programmes or for federal grant to students were all curtailed; education fees rose by 35%.

All these facts were there to torment the American common people's life and the toiling oppressed people of America longed for redressals. To an extent, they wanted to make use of the fight against Bush in the election, siding with Kerry. Unfortunately, the alternative they had before them or was placed before them, was nothing but the bird of the same feather. However, while the American people saw their system exposing its skeleton, the USA was staging its costliest election in history, in which billions of dollars were spent. A very general estimate reports a total spending of 120 crore dollars of corporate money. The two main candidates, Bush and Kerry freely spent record sums for the TV channels and radio stations and other advertisement materials, on hiring 'poll-watchers' and 'party workers', law-professionals, election offices and such others. Obviously, the actual figure must have been much higher than this official one. But extravagance in campaign in the face of huge budgetary deficit invoking rampant cut in welfare measures was only one side of the story.

Haven of Democracy Became Example of Rigging

The other was falsehood characterizing words and deeds of the US rulers on socio-political questions. From all sources including top US arms inspectors, it has now been clearly known over the world that the aggression on Iraq was made on sheer lies of Iraq possessing WMD (Weapons of Mass Destruction). He clamoured for homeland security, enacted or signed different bills and then cut funds or withheld the money for them. Labour Department's Equal Pay Matters Initiative for women to earn close, if not equal, to man was abolished by Bush. He banned US aid for clinics to effect closure of many health centres in US and abroad. He also vouched for No Child Left Behind Act for their education, yet never met the level of funding required. Equally under-funded was the After School Programmes. The American rulers

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BJP's renewed effort to stoke communal passion

The communal BJP, after two successive defeats in the last parliamentary elections and recently concluded Maharashtra assembly elections, has been in slough of desponds. Ousted from power, the BJP, like any other bourgeois party, has been embroiled in bitter group squabbles, fractional feuds, mud singling, personality clashes and arraignments. So much so that a leader like Uma Bharati has been suspended for openly challenging Advani in media glare. Demand for naked pursuit of diehard communal politics and Muslim bashing has become extremely pronounced in the party. It became so acute a problem that to somehow salvage the situation, Advani, known as the mascot of Hindutva, had to stage a comeback as party president. Immediately on assuming power, Advani raked up the Ram Mandir issue and promised to "work in tandem with the RSS". This has created a feeling in some quarters as if there is a shift on the part of the BJP to be more aligned with the ideology and agenda of the RSS.

But it would be incorrect to think like that. At no point of time, the BJP moved an inch away from the RSS line or Sangh Parivar doctrine. The BJP was born in the womb of the RSS as its political front and hence an inalienable part of the Sangh Parivar, the undivided entity swearing by crass communal ideology and hatred against the religious minorities particularly the Muslims. The RSS came into existence years before the independence outwardly championing Hindutva but actually rousing anti-Muslim feelings. It floated Jan Sangh as its political outfit. But Jan Sangh could not make that headway in the electoral politics in the then atmosphere surcharged by the fervour of powerful freedom movement though the RSS went on consolidating its position. After independence the RSS had been on a communal spree spitting anti-Muslim venom and inciting religious fanaticism. The ruling capitalist class continuously haunted by the fear of growing unity of the struggling people groaning under the yoke of ruthless capitalist exploitation, was aware that its class rule could not be perpetuated unless this struggling unity of the people was disrupted. So it went on pandering to all sorts of divisive politics and activities in the name of religion, caste, creed, community, language etc. Hence the RSS and Sangh Parivar also had the blessings of the class in their ominous growth.

After independence also, the Jan Sangh could barely improve its position in the parliamentary democracy because the Congress, as the most trusted representative of the ruling Indian bourgeoisie and enjoying the prestige of the freedom movement managed to rule the country for three decades in a row. But this long tenure of misrule and grueling oppression created mounting discontent against the Congress. Its credibility was totally lost. The situation became so aggravated that the ruling bourgeoisie, despite best of efforts, found it extremely hard to contain the wrath of the people keeping the Congress in power. Hence, it was intending to introduce a 2-party system by finding out another suitable party to carry out its class-design. The class initially experimented with the Janta conglomerate which had the Jan Sangh of Vajpayee, Advani, as one of the prime constituents. But it did not yield results as the conglomerate disintegrated within short time. The Jan Sangh then reemerged as Bharatiya Janta Party or the BJP with total adherence to the RSS philosophy and as an integral part of

the Sangh Parivar. In the meanwhile, Rajiv Gandhi, the former Congress prime minister, with a view to improving his electoral prospects by fomenting religious sentiment of the majority community, forced open the lock of the Babri Masjid site. This widened the communal polarization in the already tenuous social fabric and the BJP, as the political protagonist of the communal philosophy of the RSS-Sangh Parivar, seized the opportunity to eke out its political fortune and jumped into the fray with all strength to catch the imagination of the ruling class desperately looking for a viable bourgeois alternative to the Congress. Advani began his Ram Rath Yatra with the BJP election symbol engraved on the vehicle. The Sangh Parivar threw all its weight behind this Rath Yatra that triggered anti-Muslim riots in various parts of the country. The rabid communal preaching and anti-Muslim tirade were raised to such a pitch that the Babri Masjid was demolished by the armed hooligans of the Sangh Parivar in connivance with the BJP-run Uttar Pradesh state government in full public view and in the indulgent presence of the BJP bigwigs like Advani, Murli

Manohar Joshi, Uma Bharati and others, all having grown in the tutelage of the RSS and taking pride in calling themselves RSS pracharakas (propagandists). The Narasimha Rao government of the Congress at the centre, in spite of knowing every detail of this orchestrated move to stoke communal conflagration, remained a mute spectator to this heinous crime, and thus actually played the role of an accomplice. A spate of communal holocausts including diabolic anti-Muslim riots followed snuffing out hundreds of innocent lives and destroying properties worth thousands of crores of rupees. But all these barbaric acts had been to the advantage of the BJP as a Sangh Parivar constituent as it did reap rich harvest in electoral politics riding this communal wave. Its tally in the parliament went up from just 2 in 1984 to 86 in 1989 and 182 in 1999. The ruling class also lent total support to it in terms of finance, media publicity and by projecting it as a party with a difference. It also gave the BJP some leverage in naked pursuit of crass communal agenda and minority bashing. This is the history of the BJP's emergence and ascendancy over the throne as the political front of the Sangh Parivar in the context of decline of the Congress.

Hence we find that the BJP and the RSS are inseparable and not even for a moment had the BJP deviated from the arch communal ideology. But at the same time, it had to take due note of the electoral exigencies to satisfy its lust for power. In 1999, the BJP could not secure absolute majority in the parliament. So it had to form a coalition ministry by the name NDA with some other regional level power-greedy bourgeois parties. And to accommodate these coalition partners and to provide them a face saving, the BJP leadership had to look for some maneuvering tactics to shield its communal face. So it began a putative peddling in, what it called, "developmental agenda" while under the leadership of the RSS, the foot soldiers of the Sangh Parivar were given a free hand to carry out reprehensible communal activities in full swing. The minorities were being continuously threatened, intimidated, harassed and coerced to capitulate — either in the name of religious conversion or by attacking places of worship or through unleashing lethal hostilities

and planned armed assaults including murders and carnages. The gruesome murder of Graham Steines, an Australian missionary and his two sons and the worst pogrom of Gujarat bear eloquent testimony to this beastly savagery raving wild, aided and abetted by the BJP government. But the BJP leaders at the helm feigned an ambivalence between the "development theme" and Hindutva plank to camouflage their ugly communal fang. Even they studiously cultivated a so called radical face of Vajpayee as against the naked Hindutva credential of Advani to hoodwink the masses while everyone knew that this duo, in fact, formed two sides of the same coin — rabid communal ideology and programme of the Sangh Parivar.

Expecting that this line will work favourably in the days to come, the BJP, in order to secure another term, preponed the parliamentary elections. But it lost to the manipulations of the Congress. Its much trumpeted "governance theme" campaign with contrived picture of "India shining" embellished with massaged figures purported to overcome widespread condemnation and criticism of the Gujarat massacre was of no avail. Immediately there was an outcry in the party to end camouflage and openly brandish communal sword since it was this naked pursuit of Sangh Parivar ideology that brought the party to power. After the drubbing in the hustings in Maharashtra, this demand was further heightened and Advani had to return to hold the reins. So it is obvious that there is no change in the stance of the BJP, no switchover from 'soft line' to 'hard line' but shameless baring of its communal tooth and claw. Surely this is of grave concern as the BJP, a Sangh Parivar unit, will now be more fanatic and frenzied to regain power and the country might be pushed to another communal backlash.

But how could the BJP be so unbridled in pursuance of naked communalism? This is the question of utmost importance. Our party, the SUCI, had been consistently stressing that only deterrent to this communal politics of BJP-Sangh Parivar is to build up a massive democratic movement of the people, irrespective of caste, creed, religion, community, ethnicity and language and based on true leftist ideology.

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US ELECTION

Myth of bourgeois parliamentary democracy shattered again

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cried for cleaner world, and shifted the environment-clean-up burden from the polluters, the corporates, to the tax-payers in their own country. Bush changed the Clean Water Act or Clear Skies Initiative permitting industries to pollute air and waterways.

Above all, when it came to the question of electing the President, the process right from the start to the end, from setting machines to counting, was infested with fraud, inefficiency and administrative machinations leading to rampant rigging. The much-vaunted parliamentary system of the USA was based on different election laws in different federal states, making room for anarchy and corruption. Even an international delegation of election observers, including lawyers, diplomats, civic leaders, human right activists and veteran election monitors from 15 countries, reported that in spite of attempts towards improving election procedures from what they had been in 2000, there remained substantial threats to the integrity of the US presidential election. Even the observers themselves were denied access to polling places in certain states. It was found that in spite of official assurance, the faulty punch card to be used by the voters, that earned notoriety in the 2000 election, remained unchanged. Besides, serious questions were already raised as to how far secret and safe was voting by 'touchscreen computerized voting machines'. In fact several cases of grossly anomalous results in earlier elections were reported to the American people. They hinged on use and manipulation of both computer softwares and hardwares, effecting changes completely beyond the knowledge of the voter or even the polling personnel immediately in charge.

Apprehension of the international team was borne out in a series of instances of different types of irregularities, that amounted to nothing but rigging. Democrats accused that officials of Republican controlled states tried to disenfranchise new voters; Republicans, in turn, accused Democrats of voter registration frauds. In the state of Nevada the Republicans hired an agency to prepare voters' list, which had been reportedly instructed to enlist voters from Republican-controlled areas

and throw away forms from areas of Democrat-influence. About 94000 people (most of them black) did not find their names in the list. They were refused for their alleged criminal record, although 95% of them do not have any such mark on them. There were allegations that senior citizens had received ghost calls advising them to use postal ballot instead of going to the poll-centres, whereas about 60000 postal ballots sent to the voters were said to have disappeared midway in the state of Florida only. In the same state of Florida again, as reported by the well-known investigative journalist Greig Palast, more than 4000 students signed on such a form that enlisted them in two different lists. In Pennsylvania, even the registration form has not reached a substantial number of people. In Ohio, telephone connections of many residences have been cut off. Reportedly a number of popular websites of 17 countries were jammed because they warned people of rigging; on the other hand online forecasting of results, simply gambling, was rampant. Blatant transgression of administrative neutrality was evident in the following two instances. In Florida, Bush's brother who was accused of fraud in the last election of 2000, held the chair of Governor, thereby having full control over the proceedings. In Missouri, too, the secretary of state was himself the Republican candidate for governor and also bore the responsibility to issue certificate of the winning candidate.

Steps to disrupt polling were also varied. Booths were fewer in areas where black or rather poorer people resided. Naturally, this was done with a view to discouraging voters from driving to far-away centres. Republicans hired 'poll watchers' supposedly for keeping an eye on the procedure. It was feared, and proven right afterwards, that posted in areas of black, Hispanic or urban workers majority they challenged and harassed genuine voters and even, sent them back by force. This slowed down the process of polling much to the vexation of voters standing in long queues or create panic to drive voters back. The party recruited more than 3600 'party workers' at \$100 per day in Ohio state. It also demanded striking off of 35000 names from the voters' list of that state. Reportedly British

TV and BBC have exposed a secret document obtained from the election office of Bush. It has directed to perform rigging in black (Afro-Americans)-dominated areas.

As it appears both parties knew of their opponent's preparation for rigging. So both of them hired thousands of campaign lawyers to take the battle to court.

US Parliamentary System Spews Falsehood, Subservience To Corporate Money And Fraud

This brief picture itself tells how elaborate and pervasive was the rigging arrangement in the election of the 'world's greatest democracy', that went side by side with free flow of money, false promises, even lies. The whole orchestrated campaign of the US presidential election, through all the pre-poll surveys and analyses, was based on falsehood right from its root. Sidetracking a number of other candidates that were in the fray, and who spoke of people's different demands or others, the two, Republican Bush and Democrat Kerry were projected as the only ones to chose from, since they represented the two most loyal and efficient candidates to serve the ruling US imperialists. The candidates, in turn, ignored or glossed over the vital economic, social, political issues that affected American people's life with increasing intensity and simply harped on the bogey of terrorism and security, Bush enticing the nation and Kerry trying to prove Bush's inefficiency and hypocrisy, but both standing for the Iraq war and the capitalist-imperialist system that told heavily upon the American people. Without taking any cognizance of people's increasing resentment against the crisis-ridden economy and society of the USA, both the candidates, without exception, may be only with differing verbiage and emphases, staged the apparently bitter fight for power earning favours from the media, moneybag and administration and with the backing and blessings of the ruling class in varying degree. In no respect they represented American people's real interest, in no respect they showed any basic difference. This is what the US presidential election 2004 based on false campaign, money and fraud, in the world's 'most dynamic and prosperous democracy' revealed in the end,

amply exposing the bottomline of decadence the bourgeois parliamentary system has reached today.

For obvious reasons, this pathetic downfall of the country which was founded and led by characters like George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and Abraham Lincoln and whose slogans of government 'of the people, for the people, by the people' once reverberated the world, may give rise to deep anguish and dismay in every right-thinking man. But the instance of the US Presidential election also urges upon them to realize that it only and convincingly vindicates the Marxist-Leninist teaching that the fervour and zeal with which bourgeois democracy grew and upheld human values in the age of capitalism developing as the new social system, have been lost completely in this age of moribund capitalism-imperialism. When bourgeoisie democracy uprooted feudalism from human society, it imbued people with lofty ideals and values of humanism, individual liberty and rationality. But now with capitalist-imperialist social order bogged into insurmountable all-out crisis, the same bourgeois democracy stands out with politics that plays with sheer falsehood, fraud and coercion to bring such forces to power that can carry on fleecing people economically, curbing their rights and polluting their culture. The US election once more proves the point. So it also reiterates that bourgeois democracy has nothing more to contribute to the human civilization and must leave its place to the proletarian democracy for development and emancipation of the mankind.

The US presidential election also made clear another glaring truth for the masses of toiling people of the USA, as also of the world. In the USA itself, there had been growing new symptoms that bear promise to develop into a new wave of anti-establishment, anti-imperialist movement, albeit in an embryonic stage. Democratic-minded working people there wanted to give vent to their increasing disillusionment and disenchantment, in this election by standing against the reactionary anti-people policies of Bush. However, on one side, Kerry cleverly used and spent up this fighting spirit merely towards the parliamentary end of racing for the presidential power. It

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Increased import-dependence, heavy tax, embezzlement of fund triggering price rise

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percentage of import-dependence. And this trend is increasing day by day. This is no handiwork of the international market but an outcome of the deliberate policy — the policy of allowing the oil companies to net huge profit by bringing down domestic production — of the various governments subserving the ruling monopoly capital. Even after independence our domestic oil industry was being controlled by foreign multinationals who were reluctant to make investments for exploring newer oil fields in the country as because there was no guarantee of success in such ventures nor was there any scope for quick and substantial profit. So the oil multinationals merrily eschewed that path and went on procuring oil from abroad and sell in the Indian market at a lucrative margin. In 1970 when Indira Gandhi with her radical slogans pretended to make some drastic policy changes, oil multinationals were debarred from doing business here and the activities of the ONGC (Oil and Natural Gas Commission) were widened. Thrust was given on locating fresh crude reserves within the country and extraction from such newly found fields also began in full swing. As against import-dependence the country almost acquired self-sufficiency in meeting domestic oil need. Refining capacity touched almost 100%.

But soon the table was turned. In 1985, during Rajiv Gandhi's tenure, the so-called economic reforms process was initiated and it gathered momentum during the V.P. Singh government that was installed with the joint backing of the BJP and the CPI(M). Finally, in July 1991, the Congress government of Narasimha Rao with Manmohan Singh as Finance Minister gave final shape to this reforms agenda by announcing the policy of liberalization. In the name of progress and economic restitution, this Congress government began to hand over profitable industries and sectors to national and foreign multinationals and monopolies. The CPI(M)-supported UP government that was installed subsequently also followed suit. As a sequel to this policy of continuous privatization, twenty-three oil producing blocks were handed over to national and foreign multinationals by 1996. Alongside went on a skillful exercise to weaken ONGC and Oil

India. As a result, instrument for exploration and refining of oil has tended to slow down (EPW 20.7.97). In 1996, the budgetary allocation towards new oil field exploration was drastically reduced by Rs 1100 cores. The combined effect of all such measures caused a significant decline in domestic oil production. It was 34.52 million metric tons in '95-96, only to be reduced to 31.54 million metric tons in '96-97 and around 31 million metric tons in 2003. So it is revealed from published figures that there has been steady reduction in domestic oil production. And the reasons have been quite obvious. The national and foreign monopolists who took control of the oil sector in this country found that buying oil from abroad and selling it here entailed a bumper profit which was not possible to make from domestic production. In a planned way, the governments representing the interest of the ruling bourgeoisie, made this country import-dependent in oil. This is the history of much trumpeted "compulsion" of importing oil.

Is import dependence solely responsible for price escalation

Now let us take up the question if this import-dependency is triggering the domestic price rise. Strange though it may sound — the answer is a big NO. Domestic production cost is considered to be much lower than import cost. Obviously, the price of the domestic produce ought to be much lower than the imported stuff, (product) particularly if the import dependence is brought down. But that is not to be. There is an import price parity policy of the government which prohibits the oil companies from selling domestic production at a price less than that of the imported product. So even if for argument's sake one day our domestic production level increases to 95%, the price would not go lower. Why has the government fixed such a policy? Surely not for the welfare of the consumers or under the mandate of any international treaty. The beneficiaries of this policy one would easily understand, are the oil barons like Indian Oil and Reliance Petroleum and the likes in the private and public sector. It is to protect the interest of the oil MNCs of both Indian and foreign origin

that the government has formulated the import price parity. The CPI(M), CPI who pretend to be so opposed to the oil price rise, have not made a single request to the government for withdrawal of this anti-people policy. There is no mention of this in the much clamoured Common Minimum Programme (CMP) of the UPA government either.

Central government usurping the oil fund

There is one more aspect worth taking note of. An oil fund was started in India in 1975 with a two-fold objective. The first was to supply oil and oil products throughout the country at a uniform price (excluding local levy and surcharge imposed by the state governments). The other objective was to sell petrol and gasoline at a profitable price and utilize the money for giving some subsidy to diesel, kerosene and cooking gas. Till 1989, this account always ran in surplus. The amount of surplus was Rs 8,900 crores (Rupees fifty thousand crores at present including accrued interest). The erstwhile CPI(M) supported V.P. Singh government indulged in lot of manipulations to use this fund for financing budget deficits. That was the beginning of usurpation of oil fund.

But it did not end at that. Right from 1975, the central government in the name of developing oil industry began imposing a special kind of cess on domestic oil production. (The rate of this cess from March 2002 has been Rs. 800 per tonne). The resource raised by the central government on this account stands at around Rs 1 lakh crore of rupees including interest. But only 902 crores of rupees have been so far for the declared objective. Moreover, between 83-84 and 87-88 and from 92-93 till date not a single paise has been spent on development of oil industry. In other words, the central government by violating all norms and regulations, has usurped 99 thousand crores of rupees. Right from the Congress to BJP-led NDA and CPI(M) supported U.F. government —

everyone is guilty of this embezzlement. The cost of oil import in this country had been Rs 85,042 crores in 2002-03. In 2003-04, it has gone upto Rs 93,159 crores. So there is a rise of Rs 8117 crores which could have easily been met from the oil fund and still 91,000 crores would have been left in the kitty. In that event, was there any need to increase oil price? What would those so eager to prove "helplessness" of the government in footing this bill other than price hike say of this?

The role of central and state governments in price rise

The fiscal policies of the central and state governments are also having significant role in skyrocketing of domestic oil tariff. Let us see how much does the spurt in international oil price affect the pricing in the domestic market? Till June 2004, the maximum price of oil per dollar touched \$35 per barrel (1barrel = 158.6 litres, one \$ = nearly Rs 45.46). Subsequently it went up to \$56 per barrel and then slid down to \$49 and still sliding down. A calculation assuming the international price as \$42 per barrel would show the price of crude oil at Rs 12.25 per litre. The transport cost from West Asia to Mumbai Port works out to \$1.28 per barrel. The cost of refining is \$1.50 per barrel. So per barrel the added cost is \$ 2.78 or just 80 paise per litre. Hence the total cost of international purchase, transport and refining amounts to Rs 12.25 plus Re 0.80 = Rs 13.05 per litre (to simplify calculation we hereby ignore the trifle loss of crude oil in refining process). Add to this an import duty of Rs 2.50 (i.e. at the rate of 20%). Hence the price works out to Rs 15.55 per litre. By the same calculation, the price ought to be Rs 17.72 per litre if the international tariff is \$56 per barrel. More surprisingly the import duty levied does not get deposited in the government exchequer but is used for providing subvention to the oil-industry owners. Reliance petroleum, for example, received Rs

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Bandh Call in West Bengal

To protest against price-hike in petro-products, party calls 24-hour Bandh in West Bengal. Also big protest demonstrations were held in all state and district headquarters. Preparations are afoot for escalating the resistance movement countrywide.

Main Resolution of All India Save Education Convention held in New Delhi on September 25, 2004

[In our issue dated 1.10.04 we reported the proceedings of All India Save Education Convention held in Delhi on 25.09.2004 but due to lack of space could not publish the main resolution adopted there. Considering the importance of the same we now publish an abridged version of it.]

This Convention of educationists, teachers, students and education-loving people ... notes with deep concern and anguish that education for the common people has been a victim of motivated and systematic attacks since independence. Throwing aside the goals of a modern, scientific, secular and democratic education for all, which the luminaries of renaissance and freedom movement fought life-long to achieve, the Congress Government, right from the start of its rule, began to curtail whatsoever scope of education was there for the common people, in order to curb the numbers of the educated unemployed. Along with this, it promoted a fusion of technological aspects of science and spiritualism to foster blind dogmatism in people, in place of a scientific, rational bent of mind, thereby preparing the ground for fascism to take root and to dehumanize the populace.

A major attack on education was the promulgation of the National Policy on Education, 1986 (NPE), by the Rajiv Gandhi Government, which was a blueprint for destroying the prevailing education system, whatever of it still remained, under the garb of verbose promises for its development. Through it, the Governments, both at the Centre and in the States, attempted to totally escape from the commitments for ensuring education for all, sought to disown all financial responsibility, and slashed down grants. Instead, it opened the field of education to industrial and business houses for making profits, sanctioned capitation fees, virtually declared a moratorium on opening of new institutions for general education, and denied grants to any new institutions set up with public initiative. Now, foreign capital, MNCs and corporate houses are being given a red carpet welcome for investing in the field of education and opening professional and general colleges. Not only that, the stage is being set for education to be formally brought under the purview of WTO. The Union HRD minister of the Congress Government has gone to the extent of declaring that education sector will be opened up for foreign investment under the provision of WTO. The UGC

Concept paper, "Towards a Model University Act", brought out during the BJP-led NDA rule, essentially seeks to transform the existing Government funded universities into commercial bodies, which can deliver what the market requires efficiently at least cost, and maximize profit. ...Thus, education is fast being reduced to a lucrative commodity for sale and purchase in the market, available only to those who can afford it. Self-financing courses have started even at Government and aided institutions, which has shifted the financial responsibility entirely on the students and their guardians. With the slogan that the colleges will have to be self-sufficient the Government is disowning their responsibility, is slashing their grants and is forcing them to hike the tuition and other fees and placing the entire burden on the students. This is nothing but hoodwinking the people and concealing from them their real intention of curtailing the scope of education through all these measures.

... Since independence the high cost of education has deprived the poorest people of it, but now even the people from the lower income bracket, who out of aspiration of education for their wards often stake their all, are driven out from the field of education because of governmental policies leading to ever-rising cost of education and the inevitable curtailment of it.

Moreover, according to the UGC Concept Paper on Model University Act, the students and teachers will have no democratic voice in the universities of the future, which, according to the Paper, must develop "corporate" and "commercial" culture. All these are the culmination of the trend of political and bureaucratic interference in educational institutions, which has been going on for a long time. This Convention recognizes in these steps the design of the ruling class to establish absolute control over the education system and use it to further its objective of curtailment of education and regimentation of thought. These are the policies of the bourgeois class of the country, which fears the consequence of genuine scientific, secular, democratic

education, controlled by genuinely autonomous pro-people institutions and educationists. The Convention notes that in one form or another, political-bureaucratic-commercial interference in education to make it a tool of the ruling class is practised by Governments of all parties, even those who claim to be leftists.

Furthermore, due to commercialization, that is, direct subjugation to the laws of the market, a fundamental change in the character of education, whatever is available, is being brought about, and this is even more dangerous. The concept of cultivation of knowledge is being completely negated and the sole motive of education is being projected as one to earn a degree and procure a job somehow, though the scope of jobs is fast getting squeezed. At the same time, on the pretext of having little relevance in the market, subjects like physics, chemistry, mathematics, language, literature, history, philosophy, etc., are being pushed backstage; but these are so very important for development of true knowledge, character-building and the development of harmonious personality in a student. This is leading to compartmentalization of knowledge and lack of development of coordinated thinking and scientific approach. ...Market oriented subjects, ... are being projected. These subjects merely create some skills, which can easily be acquired through on-the-job training; but if these become the main items of education, then that education will resemble mere animal training, as cautioned by the famous scientist Albert Einstein. Vocationalization of education will rob it of its man-making, character-building role, its role in inculcating logical, scientific and rational bent of mind, and will turn it into a money-making, career-building activity. Such an education cannot but produce only technocrats, bureaucrats and skilled labourers, devoid of all sense of values. At the same time, in the name of value-oriented education, the ruling parties are bringing forth all types of outmoded, obscurantist, religion-oriented values, instead of instilling in the students secular, democratic values; this is nothing but an attempt to promote fascistic fanaticism and dehumanization.

Siphoning of funds to the Navodaya institutions set up under

NPE has sounded the death knell to general schools, further curtailing the scope of education. NPE undermined the formal education system and offered in its place non-formal open learning system for the common people, a system without any standing. All this is done while making big claims for universal, free, primary education.

...This Convention notes with deep pain and anguish that as a direct outcome of commercialization, the degeneration in outlook has led to rampant corruption and malpractices, ...many students all over the country become victims of psychological disturbances; some even commit suicide out of frustration.

The deliberate policy of the Central and the State Governments to abolish the examination system in stages from the primary to the secondary levels will surely and certainly lead to further lowering of the education standards and the students coming out from such a system will find that the doors of higher education are closed to them. However, the formal system of assessment and examination would continue in the private institutes open only to the rich. ...

This Convention notes that during the last NDA rule led by the BJP, the onslaught on education reached menacing heights. Commercialization of education has crossed all bounds. ...The Convention notes with deep concern the alarming recommendation of the Birla-Ambani Committee, commissioned by the Government, that in future the sanction of grants to colleges and universities, and in the end even to schools, would be absolutely conditional to the favourable report of the Government appointed 'assessment and accreditation committees' like the NAAC. This is nothing but a ploy to derecognize institutions, to stop Government grants and to pave the way for the entry of private capital in the field of education. This butchering of higher education is done on the plea of strengthening primary education. But at the same time, the entire system of formal primary and secondary education, in turn, has been thrown to the wind through DPEP and Sarva Siksha Abhiyan, which the Central and State Governments are implementing with the funds

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Save Education Convention

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sanctioned by the World Bank and other foreign donors.

Changing curricula, distortion of history text books to fan up communalism, introduction of obscurantist subjects like Jyotishshastra, Vastushastra, Karmakanda, etc. at the University level and manning of bodies like NCERT etc. with partisan people of the Sangh Parivar, have destroyed whatever minimum scientific contents were still there in the education system and robbed the democratic, impartial character of these bodies.

The Convention notes with concern that the ruling class has not only followed a policy of curtailment of education, but has systematically tried to destroy the very essence of education that builds character and inculcate moral values; instead, since independence, it has systematically and deliberately tried to break the moral backbone of the people, particularly of the youth, through promoting and encouraging pornography, obscenity in films, dramas, television shows and advertisements, alcoholism and narcotic drugs. This design to strike at the very roots of the moral fibre of the younger generation is even more dangerously manifested through the plan to introduce sex education in the schools. This promotion of vulgarism in the name of sex education is to be resisted at any cost.

The Convention is of the firm opinion that the little-more-than-100-day record of the new UPA government, headed by the Congress and supported by CPI(M) and CPI, has belied any prospect of change in the NDA-promoted policies in any field, including in education. It has come down heavily on the people, aggravating the problems of their lives in all spheres. Their allies, the CPI(M), the CPI, who claim to be leftists, too follow the same policies wherever they are in power, as in West Bengal and Tripura. The latest example is the introduction in West Bengal of 'capitation' fee of Rs. 9.00 lakhs in Government medical colleges and Rs. 1.40 to Rs. 1.75 lakhs in engineering colleges. Sarva Siksha Abhiyan, supposed to ensure education for all, is going to be run by 'para-teachers', on a meagre Rs. 1000 to Rs. 2000 per month contractual salary; one can easily imagine what would be the quality of education so offered. Completely ignoring the demand of raising the

allocation for education to 10% of the total budget, the Congress Government has imposed a fresh burden of 2% education cess on the already overburdened people, to fetch Rs. 4000 to Rs. 5000 crore, though out of it only about Rs. 800 crore is allocated in reality to education. Under public pressure the Congress Government is making some statements against the BJP's policies, but its much-trumpeted fight against 'saffronization' has ultimately boiled down to mere empty sounds. This is clearly exposed when the HRD minister of the Congress Government nonchalantly expresses support for teaching Jyotishshastra at the University level. The CPI(M) and CPI who are always trying to project the Congress as a secular force, themselves define secularism as encouragement of all religions. This is nothing but multi-theocracy and practice of communal politics in a covert manner. ...

The Convention appeals to the people to realize the need of the hour for building up powerful socio-cultural-educational movement to thwart the design of the ruling class and its Governments. ...

Therefore, this Convention raises a charter of 20 demands which included among other, to stop privatization-commercialization-communalization of education; withdraw NPE, and implement People's Alternative Education Policy as drafted and submitted by the All India Save Education Committee; Make education a genuine fundamental right of the people; Allot 10% of the union budget for education. Provide sufficient aid for effective functioning of schools, colleges and universities; Stop privatization, openly or through the backdoor, of Government aided and funded public institutions. Withdraw fee hikes at all levels. Open new schools and colleges and appoint teachers on a permanent basis; Strictly follow merit in admissions to educational institutions; Withdraw obscurantist courses like Vedic Astrology, Vastushastra, Karmakanda, etc. from university curricula. Introduce secular, scientific, democratic education at all levels etc.

Finally, this Convention calls upon all sections of education-loving people to come forward for strengthening the country-wide Save Education movement by forming Save Education Committees at grassroots levels as the instruments

Continuous rise in oil tariff

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2000 crores last year from this account.

So while the cost is around Rs 17 per litre, we are to pay Rs 42 for buying one litre of petrol. Why is there a gap of around Rs 25.- per litre? This is the contribution of the various taxes and cess imposed by the governments which, as is evident, is almost two third of the ultimate price.

Not that the government run by the known bourgeois parties are only fixing taxes at higher level. The CPI(M) run West Bengal government is one up in this regard. Its imposition of sales tax on oil is 25% — the highest in the eastern region. Over and above this there is a cess of one rupee per litre per diesel/petrol. The rate of tax in neighbouring Assam is 12% in Jharkhand 20%. So the oil price in West Bengal is higher by two to three rupees compared to the neighbouring states. When asked as to why the state government is levying tax at such a higher rate, Anil Biswas the CPI(M) State Secretary, defended the decision by saying that this is necessitated to meet government expenditure and serve the poor. What a novel piece of argument!

Conspicuous silence against unilateral action of oil sharks

We have also seen that the Congress-led governments fearing all out protest from the people particularly in the face of Maharashtra state elections, held back the oil price increase till date despite a price rise in the international market. Instead it cut down import duty by 5%. It shows that if the government desires, it can reduce import duty and other taxes to sell petrol-diesel at a much cheaper price no matter what is the trend or swing of the international market. At the same time another pertinent fact is to be taken note of. The very fact that neither the

of struggle to thwart the onslaught on education by the Central and State Governments and to pressurise them to concede the above demands. For this, concrete programmes are to be adopted, like organizing conventions, meetings, seminars, symposia, demonstrations at state, district and local levels, enrolment of volunteers and all other necessary steps to build up and push forward mighty people's movements.

Congress-led government nor its friends in the CPI(M), CPI are taking any initiative in building up world public opinion against the whimsical and arbitrary revision of prices by the international oil-sharks, show that they are not at all serious in containing this spiraling of tariff. Instead they intend to use this as a plea to ensure super profit to the oil industry owners by squeezing the oppressed people.

The hoax of subsidy

Mani Shankar Aiyar, the Union petroleum minister said that keeping the retail prices unchanged would put a lot of pressure on the margins of oil companies. The government also indicates that the oil-industry owners would incur a loss of Rs 20,000 crore this year. This is a lie and a blatant lie at that! The coffers of the oil companies are swelling beyond limit. It is reported that Indian Oil corporation is poised to become the country's biggest investor abroad, clinching a deal to develop Iran's gas bowl in the South Pars at a cost of \$ 3 billion in phases. (Times of India 2.11.04) If the oil corporation has been so starved of margin, where is this huge money coming from? The petroleum ministry had earlier moved a note saying that retail prices of LPG and Kerosene should be revised every quarter or month so that the "subsidy burden" on the oil companies is reduced. What is this so-called burden? The differential between existing price and the stipulated price as per the import parity pricing problem. The bourgeois government and the bourgeois parties are so keen to remove subsidies from the essential commodities of public consumption. But they are having no hesitation in showing amnesty to tax-defaulters and tax evaders, black money holders, the NPA candidate of the banks and financial institutions. They also show excessive eagerness to give various concessions and reliefs to the big houses, monopoly houses and MNCs. Misappropriation of public fund and mega financial scams are rampant. But the culprits go scot free or even anointed as ministers or rewarded with high public office. The government does not mind absorbing 35,000 crore worth of loss on account of the mega stamp fraud. But the heart burns when it comes to provide subsidy to the people and that too from public

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US Presidential Election

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was neither unnatural, for he represented no different brand of politics from that of Bush. At the same time and parallel to it, the American people confronted a powerful and materially and spiritually mechanized system, a fascist state machinery, armed with arsenals as well huge corporate money. They stood apparently wayward, undecided in front of this brute enemy, that cruelly and boastfully suppressed any effort towards alleviation of their miseries and change. The toiling oppressed masses of the USA, thus, now face the stark reality. They should recall the invincible teachings of the great Proletarian leader and thinker Comrade Lenin. While exposing the deceitful character of the bourgeois democracy and the capitalist system, time and often he made it clear that in a class-divided society cleaved into exploiters and exploited with their class-interests in conflict and contradiction, the concept of democracy could not be the same for all classes. So he posed the question: Democracy for which class, against which? He warned that holding brief for 'democracy for all, rights for the whole people' amounts to ignorance or cunningly concealing the truth of capitalist exploitation. Bourgeois democracy stands for the handful of capitalists and their henchmen. It was only the proletarian democracy that provided the real democracy for the majority, for the vast masses of the working class and their allies. As earlier in different instances of history, the USA 2004 once again established these views of Lenin. Elaborating this Leninist teaching and concretizing it to the post-Lenin days prevailing till to date, Comrade Shibdas Ghosh, the eminent Marxist thinker and the Founder General

Secretary of SUCI, the revolutionary party of India, added further to this concept. He made it clear that in this era of decadent capitalism-imperialism, of unassailable crisis of the world capitalist-imperialist system, the ruling capitalist-imperialist class seek to entrench their class rule through fascism, even keeping the parliamentary system in tact. To that end, the two party system of parliamentary democracy is just another means to hoodwink people with semblance of alternative looming before them, that is actually nothing but playing between available two or such fewer forces that serve the ruling class in the best and most efficient manner. The American instance vividly attests to this truth. So the toiling people there now face the task of realizing, which basic Marxist-Leninist teaching Comrade Ghosh emphasized in his different analyses, that the road to parliament was no road for the people to their desired goal of emancipation. They will have to search out the revolutionary path; they must smash their prevailing ruling capitalist system. And to reach that distant and difficult end, yet unavoidable and inevitable, the American people must build up stage by stage, one after another massive militant democratic movements, each conducive to and thus destined to inch forward to, their struggle for emancipation. We, the people of the world, in complete and earnest fraternity with their cause of ridding themselves of their plight, would anxiously await the days when we would find the vast masses of the USA rise up against oppressive, unjust, cruel and belligerent fascist rule to march on towards their final fight for emancipation. The present US presidential election provides us with indications of initiation of that process.

At the call of the AIMSS Women's Protest Demonstration before Parliament in Delhi

On 1st December, 2004

in protest against the Supreme Court verdict giving right to arrest women anytime by male police, increasing assault on women, women trafficking, obscene display of women body etc.

Make 24-hour Bangla Bandh on 17 November a big success

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BJP's renewed effort to stoke communal passion

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Alongside, there should be a conducive fierce ideological struggle up to the grass-root level against the rotten doctrine of communalism-fundamentalism of the BJP and the Sangh Parivar to wipe out the malacious effect of their vicious campaign. Those who lead and organize these movements must also reflect true secular values in their social, political, personal and day to day conduct. Notwithstanding the support of the ruling capitalist class and some other factors having been active behind the ominous rise of the BJP-Sangh Parivar, absence of waves of these movements provided necessary ground and environment in which they grew so fast.

Our repeated calls to the CPI(M), CPI who call themselves leftists, to come forward and build up this two-fold struggle to corner the BJP-Sangh Parivar and eliminate the menace of communalism-fundamentalism, have been futile. The CPI(M), CPI spotted 'secularism' and ingredients for defeating the BJP's communalism within the Congress, hated and discarded by the people for its pro-capitalist anti-people policies and giving indulgence to

communal politics. Hence they became busy with calculating electoral arithmetic in league with the Congress to beat the BJP in the polls and claimed to curb the ideological and organizational influence of the BJP-Sangh Parivar just by causing an election defeat to these forces.

The BJP lost the elections and as desired by the CPI(M), CPI, a Congress-led government has been installed at the Centre with their support. But have the communal policies of the RSS-BJP been wiped out or the Sangh Parivar has preparation to stage a comeback by sharpening its Hindutva plank topped? Has not the turn of events vindicated our views and political line and proved the anti-BJP rhetoric of the CPI(M), CPI to be a mockfight against communalism purely on account of electoral exigencies? To resist the RSS-BJP-Sangh Parivar and thwart their communal advances, we once again fervently call upon the people to build up united conscious democratic mass movement on the burning issues of life and simultaneously intensify the ideological battle against the vile doctrine of fundamentalism-communalism.

Continuous rise in oil tariff

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exchequer. What else is this but sheer hypocrisy of highest magnitude?

Issue of GRM

Some also raise the issue of gross refining margin (GRM) i.e. the difference between the total value of petroleum products coming out of an oil refinery (output) and the price of the raw material (input) which is crude oil. As if there is a loss in the refining process. But the fact is just the reverse. Crude when cracked chemically produces an entire range of fractionates like petrol, diesel, LPG and furnace oil each having different applications and different price. GRM for a refinery is higher if it produces more high value products. The Indian companies like Indian Oil

and Reliance Industries have been having a bull run with margins for most refineries running at above \$ 5 a barrel. (Economic Times 25.10.04) Hence this logic does not hold good either.

So what we have seen from the above discussion that there is no cogent reason whatever to hike price of petroleum products in the domestic market as neither of the arguments put forth in support of the decision to hike price is based on either fact or logic. The government, the bourgeois parties and their social-democrat supporters are unitedly taking common people for a ride and holding them for a ransom by giving cooked up reasons. It is only a conscious concerted move on the part of the learning people that can expose this conspiracy of the vested interest.