

BEYOND FROMAN'S E-MAIL

## Of Traitors and Patriots

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While describing the characteristics of imperialism, Lenin showed that advanced capitalist countries had accumulated large amounts of surplus capital. " As long as capitalism remains what it is, surplus capital will be utilised not for the purpose of raising the standard of living of the masses in a given country, for this would mean a decline in profits for the capitalists, but for the purpose of increasing profits by exporting capital abroad to the backward countries. In these backward countries, profits are usually high, for capital is scarce, the price of land is relatively low, wages are low, raw materials are cheap."

Lenin also pointed out that "finance capital finds most 'convenient', and derives the greatest profit from, a form of subsistence that involves the loss of the political independence of the subjects countries and peoples", which means the transformation of these countries into colonies. But he also observed, "Finance capital is such a great, such a decisive, you might say, force in all economic and in all international relations, that it is capable of subjecting, and actually does subject, to itself even states enjoying the fullest political independence." In this respect, Lenin characterized semi-colonial countries as atypical example of the "middle stage." He also showed that in the era of finance capital, the competition among imperialist countries for domination over these semi-independent countries intensifies. Today's India furnishes some glaring examples of how imperialism can force semi-colonial countries to create situations favourable for intensifying the plunder by finance capital.

The name of the Union Carbide, whose action killed 25000 persons in Bhopal in a single day, is known to all. In 2001, Dow Chemicals, a large manufacturer of chemicals, bought off the Union Carbide. It is only natural that even the very small amount of liability of Rs 15 billions that was imposed by the Central Government on Union Carbide should fall on Dow Chemicals. Had the accident occurred in the USA the Union Carbide or its successor, the Dow Chemicals would have to pay at least Rs 250 billions as compensation. But the latter is not willing even to pay the paltry sum of 1.5 billions. Now the US Government has entered the scene and has begun to exercise overt pressure so that the Government of India relinquishes its claim for the 15 billions. The news has come out in the press, and there has been quite a storm in the parliament too. M S Aluwalliah, the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, had asked the US Government in order to help India in getting more assistance from the World Bank, and in reply, Michael Froman, the Deputy National Security advisor to the US Government, sent an e-mail virtually ordering him to take care that no adverse reaction on the US investment climate in India should take place. The language of the communication is uncharacteristic of the representative of an independent country writing to the representative of another independent country, and more like a landlord writing to his *gomasta*. The message of the communication is self-evident: the US will look after the matter of World Bank assistance, but the hue and cry over the Dow Chemicals must be

stopped. The US security advisor however expressed the hope that Mr Aluwalliah would properly look after US interests. It was not an unrealistic expectation. But what is the cry all about.

The people have raised the demand for extradition of Anderson, the mass murderer of Bhopal, and his trial in India. Besides, there is the talk of realizing the cost of making the affected area pollution free from the Dow Chemicals.

This is where the objection of the USA, the leader of world imperialism, is most intense. As Lenin pointed out one century earlier, present-day imperialism too demands a political environment that allows finance capital to maximize its profits, and acquire raw materials for this purpose. Maximization of profit requires curtailment of the number of employees and reduction of safety expenses. It is immaterial if this causes the death of 25000 persons in one night, because lives of innocent Indians are very cheap. Hence a furore over the Dow Chemicals would adversely affect the climate of investment, which means that the World Bank won't grant credits liberally, and US finance capital would not be forthcoming. This is how the US imperialism, the protector of finance capital is subjugating formally independent countries like India.

It is good that Mrs Brinda Karat, the CPI(M) MP has sharply condemned the letter of Froman. But how can the Indian people forget that the Government of West Bengal threatened to make a hell of the lives of the people of Nandigram and finally shot down peasants in a ghastly manner.

The e-mail of Froman has come at a time when there is a vigorous debate in Indian politics about the Nuclear Liability Bill, which the Government of India is hell-bent on getting passed by the Parliament right now. Their enthusiasm in this regard is similar to that displayed in 2008 when they spared no pains to have the Indo-US nuclear deal passed. The Nuclear Liability Bill has been so framed as not to place any liability on the US or other foreign agencies supplying the equipment and machinery of nuclear power projects. Chernobyl of Russia and Three-mile Island of the USA provide examples of large accidents in such projects, and small accidents are endemic. The Liability Bill that the Indian state is going to pass in this situation has only one objective, that of ensuring the expected rate of profit of imperialist capital. At the same time, the Indian big bourgeoisie have another important ambition, which is to receive the recognition of a nuclear power and to use it for intensifying expansionist activities in South Asia. The Indian big bourgeoisie are trying to project their expansionist ambitions as a matter of national pride, while the fact of the matter is that to the extent that the Indian state goes on intensifying such activities, it is bound to enhance its dependence on imperialism, particularly US imperialism. Every well-meaning person should agree that India's national interest lies in setting up and maintaining friendly ties with India's neighbours and those countries of the Middle East and Latin America that are oppressed by imperialism. But this is repugnant to the outlook of the Indian ruling classes. The Government of India, instead of standing by the side of the anti-imperialist and anti-Zionist struggle of the Palestinians, has now thrown its weight behind Israel, which has become one of the chief arms-exporting countries to India. Besides, the Israeli intelligence agency, MOSAD, is now interfering in India's internal affairs in the name of the so-called 'war against terrorism.'

Going back to the subject of the Nuclear Liability Bill, it should be pointed out that it was said in the first draft of the bill that the liabilities of the operators, i.e. the companies

using the nuclear reactors, should not exceed more than Rs 5000 millions in the event of an accident. After much criticism all over the country, it has been proposed to raise the amount to Rs 15000 millions. But at the same time, the clause 17(a) has been so changed as to free the reactor supplying company from the compulsion to face the liability of the accident. Besides, the amount of stipulated compensation is even less than that of the Bhopal gas tragedy. There is ostensibly no reason for fixing an upper limit of compensation since there is no such upper limits in the laws of countries like Japan, Russia and Germany.

This very session of the Parliament has given sanction to a pernicious bill that is going to open the prospect of plunder of Indian agriculture by imperialist capital. The name of the bill is Bio-technology Regulatory Authority of India Bill (BRAI). According to scientists, the bill has opened the door of Indian agriculture through genetically transformed seeds. US multinational corporations have long been trying to introduce the bt-brinjal and other genetically transformed seeds in the Indian market and have been rewarded with partial success. Widespread application of such seeds will enable giant-sized multinational corporations to monopolize the trade of seeds in this country and the technology required for seed-farming will also go under their control. The most dangerous part of the bill is that it reckons any propaganda about the harmful effect of these seeds as punishable offence, and imprisonment and fines await those who dare such a campaign. The effort to introduce the cultivation of bt-brinjal drew vehement protests from peasant associations, scientists and various social organizations, forcing Mr Jayram Ramesh to issue an instruction of its postponement. It is highly probable that the fascist law would be promulgated in order to thwart such protests. There is no precedence for such a suppression of the constitutional right of speech in the interests of multinational capital in the history of independent India. What is the matter of utmost shame is that there was little commotion in the Parliament on the BRAI Bill, and all the parties, left and right alike, helped it to be passed.

The three above examples show how the Government of India is bent on sacrificing national interest in order to serve the profit motive of finance capital, while its leaders, e.g. Manmohan Singh, P Chidambaram, M S Aluwalliah etc are singing in chorus about patriotism. Rajiv Gandhi, who allowed Anderson to leave the country in the wake of the Bhopal disaster, is now raised to the stature of a god and worshipped. On the other hand, those who are opposing this policy of sell-out, be they Maoists or some other persons, are being branded as 'traitors to the country' and threats to internal security.

Besides, various steps are underway to acquire land and labour cheaply. Land is forcibly seized under the acquisition act of 1895. This is an all-India phenomenon, and various state governments, led by the CPI(M), or the Congress, or the BJD or the BSP of some other party, have displayed their essential unity in this regard. None of them has no qualms about shooting down protesting peasants.

The other side of the story is the lengthening of working days and reduction of their wages. The convention of eight hours' work on a day was established after heroic struggles of the working class, and much bloodshed. Although this rule is still in vogue in the country, it is more often than not violated and working hours have been raised in the organized and unorganized sectors as well. What goes in the formal name of "labour reform" is in reality a device of empowering the big bourgeoisie to hire and fire, and to raise working hours at will. What is noteworthy is that the Trinamul Trade Union

Congress, probably as a show of its loyalty to this reform programme, has issued a directive, forbidding workers to go on strike struggles under any circumstances.

What should the working classes and other progressive people do? It is in their hands that lie the future of the country. They must rise in protest against the unabashed capitulation to imperialism and the fresh attack on labour. Besides, they have to chalk out an alternative line of development. □□□