

LETTERS

**'THE DILEMMA OF TRIBALISM'**

Ever since the collapse of the European Socialist Bloc and the widening gulf between Chinese realities and Marxist pretensions, there have been two kinds of responses, both not very productive in results. First, there is a wholesale skepticism about the practical experiences of the past in creating a socialist society and an unhistorical and undialectical attempt to start from the scratch again. Secondly, there is a kind of hardline fundamentalism that doggedly goes on asserting that the basics of Marx-Engels-Lenin-Mao as have been formulated in practice up to Mao remain sound, and those who disagree must be condemned as traitors and if possible shot.

Into this swamp of stagnation and disillusionment Ranjit Sau's article in FRONTIER (July 18-24) comes as a refreshing breeze of fresh, creative and pertinent thinking. I am afraid I have in the past sometimes been perturbed by Sau's eclectic and maverick-style erudition. But this seems to me genuine creative thinking. (See 'The Dilemma of Tribalism' in that issue of the *Frontier*).

Sau has argued that it is unsound and highly misleading to think that Leninism was a 'higher' stage of Marxism, or Maoism is the latest and highest contemporary form of Marxism. While no one makes such stark statements in words, many powerful and influential leaders do so in practice. Sau has exposed the hollowness of such thinking. Lenin himself was too sensible and modest to make such exaggerated claims. For him Marx and Engels remained the most reliable guides to socialist theory and practice. Late in life he started studying Hegel in earnest and re-examining some of his own convictions. All that he had actually done was to have called imperialism the 'latest and most developed stage of capitalism'. It was Stalin who started calling 'Leninism' the 'Marxism of our time' and practically confined study of Marx-Engels to academics, and then went on to write such tracts as 'Problems of Leninism' raising questions of party-tactics to the pedestal of fundamental theory.

Mao was canny, and wary of such metaphysical ideas which were quite powerful in the ranks of the CPC throughout the better part of his career. But he too raised hopes of human invincibility against the odds of history to extraordinary heights. For example he sometimes claimed that a time might come in the future when Marx and Engels will have to be discarded as so much outworn intellectual baggage. While it may be true enough it is useless at the present stage of our knowledge to dream of such possibilities. Further his tendency to popularise ideas in order to empower the masses had both positive and negative sides. His battle against state capitalism and bureaucratism were relevant and important. But to rely on the masses as the last repository of wisdom and use them as a safeguard against elitist distortions of socialism was a rather reckless venture. One remembers millions of school students using the *Red Book* as their sole guide in ridding society of the 'three evils', 'five evils' or whatever. There were also silly examples of Table Tennis champions and successful technologists tracing their achievements to the *Red Book*! Thus the mass-line turned into Mao-worship with the *Red Book* as sacred scriptures. History has a way of foxing unbridled idealists.

Ranjit Sau has rightly described the Soviet Russian and the Chinese forms of socialism as forms of socialism based on Marxism but specific to their countries and histories. Indian socialism may draw certain general lessons from them, but must create out of its historical and cultural context its own specific form. It is also necessary to examine and learn from the mistakes of the Russians and the Chinese. I think this article deserves wide and careful attention.

**Hiren Gohain, Guwahati**

### **'QUIT INDIA'**

August 9th 2010, Quit India Day : 68 years ago on this day all across India people took to street and gave final ultimatum to the British Government and sought independence from their control and resolved to establish people's control over the resources of the country. Today in a bitter irony, the same Congress Party using the draconian and colonial law Land Acquisition Act, 1894 and SEZ Act of 2005 is handing over the land, rivers, forests, minerals to the corporations, public and private (national and International) for mining, big dams, thermal, nuclear and other power projects, SEZs, highways, ports, airports etc. in complete violation of peoples' constitutional and natural rights. LAA and SEZ Act have not only displaced people across rural and urban India, ruined fertile agricultural lands, destroyed forests and fisheries, but also destroyed adivasi-dalit lives, livelihoods and their culture around the country. How can Indian law, the executive and judiciary side with these criminal corporations and private interests in this oppression and exploitation?

This Congress-led UPA government is guilty of crimes and bloodshed in the process of establishing numerous colonies of Tatas, Birlas, Ambanis, Mittals, POSCO, Vedanta, Nagrajunas, L&T, NTPC, ONGC, Dow, Coca-Cola, Pepsi, Infosys and many other corporations. They exploit these colonies, export ores and products to their factories in India or outside at dirt cheap rates, pocket the large profit in the name of serving public interest and enslave a large working population and displace billion in this process from their homes and fields. And the government and the elected representatives have become their agents facilitating the process of colonization and exploitation and in turn filling their own coffers at a huge price to the nation. In continuing with the struggle against all forms of injustice, exploitation of human and natural resources by these capitalist and imperialist corporations people's movements celebrate this day today with a nationwide call for challenging the might of the government and these corporations and launch a renewed struggle for freedom from Corporations. The call was issued on April 20th from Delhi after carrying out social audit of SEZs in states of Tamilnadu, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Goa, and Northern region called for an all India action day on 9th August with the purpose of declaring ultimatum to corporations and to reclaim the rights of community over the natural resources.

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### **IT'S EMERGENCY**

Almost 35 years back, the reigning government had stripped all the citizens of their fundamental rights by declaring a state of emergency. A repetition of that in West Bengal today?

On one hand, the central and the state armed forces are involved in "Operation Green Hunt" taking place in the most backward tribal areas of the country, jeopardizing the already endangered lives and livelihoods of the residents and crushing down by use

of force any type of resistance and movements which developed to protest the handover of immense mineral wealth of these regions to the big money - both national and international. On the other hand, in the name of "subjugating" armed resistance, the nation, addicted to its glory of power, is not only stopping by imposing draconian laws which are the most inhuman and undemocratic laws in the history of India, but it is also threatening and indiscriminately using its power to resist the continually growing lawful protests against these measures by shamelessly harassing and arresting whoever they fancy, including workers from democratic and civil rights organizations. They are snatching away even the minimum right to protest.

Under these circumstances, recently the police, using the news media, openly accused Debolina Chakraborty, an ex-student of Jadavpur University and a worker in a women's organization, of illegal activity and threatened to arrest her. Debolina rightly protested by challenging the police out in the open, and is continuing to fast in the College Square [at the time of writing, 8th July, 2010], intending to show the true face of the false police accusations. APDR supports and stands in solidarity with Debolina's plan of protest against police threats and conspiracy.

At the same time, when seven brave raped women from Sonamukhi village presented themselves in front of the authorities and accused Chidambaram and Buddhababu's beloved joint forces of torture and even rape along with facts and proof, the police officials remained silent and inactive. APDR strongly protests the tortures, assaults, threats and rapes on the common people by the joint forces operating in the western part of the state, acting in collusion with the "Harmad Vahini" of the CPI(M) and demand punishment for all.

**Shachichadananda Bandhopadhyay**  
Chairman, APDR

### **SINKING NICOBARS**

The earthquake that caused the tsunami of December 2004 has altered the topography and ecology of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands forever: the Andamans were thrust upwards by four to six feet while the Nicobar Islands went under by 4 to 15 feet. So far the impact of such marked changes in topography do not seem to have been taken into account by policymakers and government.

Official figures give a sense of the massive damage that was caused to life and property: over 3,500 people dead or missing; nearly 8,000 hectares of paddy and plantation rendered useless; 938 boats completely damaged; more than 150,000 head of cattle lost.

These aggregated figures for the entire island chain hide an important detail that has not received the attention and analysis it deserves. It's the sinking of Nicobars.

Of the 3,513 people reported dead or missing only 64 were from the Andaman group of islands; the remaining 3,449 were from the islands in the Nicobar group. Seventy-six percent of the agricultural and paddy land destroyed, and 80% of livestock loss were also reported from the Nicobars. Likewise, nearly 70% of the construction of new housing for the tsunami-affected is in the Nicobar Islands.

It is evident that the impact of the tsunami was much greater in the Nicobar Islands than in the Andamans. So, while the Nicobars account for only 22% and 12% of the area and population, respectively, of the entire chain of islands, 98% of the deaths and 76%

of loss of agricultural land occurred here. The damage caused was inversely proportional to the area and population of the two groups of islands, and strikingly so.

**Pankaj Sekhsaria**

### **RAPE AS WEAPON**

On 20th July, around 50,000 women under the banner of "Committee to save honour of women" tried to march into Jhargram town to protest against the recent incidents of raping of women in Sonamukhi village by the joint security forces. Such a huge, and militant, mobilization of women has not been seen in Jhargram in recent times. The marchers, including school students in uniform, teachers, housewives and even many elderly women tried to enter Jhargram town via four different routes. Even the vice-chairperson of the CPI(M) controlled Jhargram panchayat samiti, Shipra Barik, joined the march. The marchers carried posters demanding the hanging of CPI(M) leader Prashanta Das, who has been known to have identified the houses of anti-CPI(M) villagers in Sonamukhi following which women from these families were raped by policemen.

The women tried to reach the Subdivisional officer's (SDO) office to register their protest and demand the punishment of the perpetrators of the atrocities. However, the joint forces blocked all the four routes they were following. One of the processions was blocked at the Jamda deer park. However, another rally, comprising around 5000 women, coming from the direction of the Jhargram Raj college evaded the joint forces and reached the SDO's office. The employees in the SDO's office all fled although the marchers remained completely peaceful. Somehow the additional SP reasoned with the marchers and persuaded them to leave the SDO complex. However, the police confronted another rally of around 20000 women coming from the Lodhashuli side with force. The joint forces chased them all the way till Kalaboni. Many women were injured in the melee. Throughout the day the women marchers tried to enter the town multiple times but were confronted by joint forces personnel. Even though the marchers wanted to meet the SDO, C Murugan, to place their demands he refused to meet them saying that he has done whatever he was supposed to do. The Sonamukhi atrocities have again taken the rage against the atrocities of the joint central and state forces occupying Jangalmahal to boiling point.

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