

ML Update: 27 Jan.-2 Feb. 2009

Saturday 21 February 2009, by [CPI \(ML\) Liberation](#) (Date first published: 27 January 2009).

Obama Accession and the Change the World Demands

The US – and the world – has just witnessed Bush's exit from and Obama's entry into the White House. The mood at Obama's inauguration – an event replete with symbolic resonances, situating the Obama Presidency in the history of the civil rights movement against racism in the US – indicates the endurance of that groundswell of popular hope in the US which powered Obama's campaign. For a US people reeling from financial crisis and the highly unpopular Bush presidency, Obama has offered a promise of 'change'. Obama is quite aware of this crisis of confidence – domestic as well as global – in the hegemony of the US empire. He began his inaugural speech by acknowledging the economy weakened by greed, the lost jobs and homes, expensive healthcare, and schools that fail many, and tried to address the "sapping of confidence ... a nagging fear that America's decline is inevitable." Clearly, for Obama, 'change' must mean a restoration of the deeply damaged credibility of the US. At the same time, for the people of the US, and much of the world too, it is clear that their hopes rest on a more thoroughgoing definition of change – a break with the long history of imperialist war-mongering and aggression and capitalist hubris

While wholeheartedly reiterating the immense significance of a popular victory of an African American in a US Presidential election, and the understandable vesting of hope in him by people bruised by two terms of the Bush Presidency, it must be said that Obama's inaugural speech took care to indicate more continuity than change with the policies of empire. His bland declaration that the debate over whether the market is a force of good or evil is irrelevant, and his reassurance that "(the market's) power to generate wealth and expand freedom is unmatched," rather than indicating confidence, inadvertently perhaps let slip the anxieties about the widespread doubts being raised worldwide about the character of capitalism as a system, in the wake of the global financial crisis. He made it a point to establish continuity with the legacy of how "earlier generations faced down fascism and communism...with sturdy alliances and enduring convictions." Again, this reference reveals something about the renewed ideological challenge of communism and socialism for the US establishment. Obama's words suggest equal opposition to both fascism and communism. But in the second World War, it was the USSR that bore the main brunt of and played the main role in defeating fascism. Since then the US has never hesitated in condoning and even sponsoring fascist and dictatorial regimes to combat and contain communist regimes. Most of the US' Cold War alliances were with brutal dictatorships – Pinochet, Suharto, the Shah (Iran), killer regimes in Guatemala and El Salvador – as well as with forces like the Taliban in Afghanistan.

His offer of mutual respect and peace to the "Muslim world" carried little conviction, coming as it did alongside a resounding silence on US approved assault by Israel on Gaza. In an oblique reference, perhaps, to the likes of Chavez, Obama declared that leaders who tried to blame the West for their ills ought to remember that "your people will judge you on what you can build, not what you destroy." To authoritarian regimes that silence dissent, he said, "we will extend a hand if you are willing to unclench your fist." No doubt Obama will be reminded by the world's people that it is the US which has destroyed so much of what others have built – be it Allende's Chile, Mossadegh's Iran, or the cradle of world civilisation – Iraq. It is a neo-con apologist for the US empire who observed

approvingly that “The hidden hand of the market cannot work without the hidden fist.” For the world’s people, the “change we need” can happen only if the US which has throughout its history used its military might to “make the world safe for” its corporations and commercial interests were to “unclench its fist” and end the occupation of Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan.

Even as Obama echoes his immediate predecessor in his declaration that “We will not apologize for our way of life, nor will we waver in its defense,” we may recall the words of Martin Luther King Jr, who spoke ‘truth to power’ four decades ago to what he called “the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today: my own government.” (April 4, 1967)

The American people have given a powerful mandate against Bush and his policies; the US people will now see how Obama delivers. Likewise, it is now time for the Indian people to deliver a powerful message in the coming elections – against the blatantly pro-American course followed by the UPA Government and its consequence: the disturbing growth of US intervention in our internal matters and the regional affairs of South Asia.

In Indian ruling circles, there is some anxiety about Obama’s pronouncements (echoed more provocatively by the British Foreign Secretary David Miliband on his recent visit to India) on Kashmir. While Indian rulers may be chary of a US-brokered Kashmir solution, they are nevertheless doing all they can to facilitate increased US presence in the region. The US’ FBI has virtually taken over the investigation into the Mumbai terror attacks; recently, it was even audacious enough to whisk away an eyewitness – a woman from the fishing community of the city – to the US for “interrogation”! The US has also intensified its efforts to entangle India further in its military misadventures. Recently the Indian Army Chief even hinted that India ought to send troops to Afghanistan as a strategic counter to Pakistan, pointing out that India has already been providing “soft assistance” there, but adding that it was up to the political leadership to take such a decision. There was no reprimand by the UPA Government for such irresponsible foreign policy statements by the Army Chief.

The pragmatic corporate discourse which has discovered in Modi the greatest icon of governance analyses Indo-US relations as though it was just a business deal – outsourcing benefits, technological assistance, and American admonition and arm-twisting of Pakistan. The economic crisis and terrorist threat exposes the utter hollowness of this approach and the huge costs we are paying for the mirage of perceived benefits are no longer a secret.

The time is ripe for India to say “Yes we can” to change in the grievously harmful “strategic partnership” of the Indian ruling class with US imperialism, and to forcefully demand a de-linking of Indian foreign and economic policy from the grand US design.

16 January: Jan-Nayak Comrade Mahendra Singh’s Martyrdom-Pledge Day

Diverse programmes with broader participation of people were held in Jharkhand as part of the month long nation-wide Pledge campaign declared by the Party beginning on Comrade Vinod Mishra’s tenth Anniversary 18 December, 2008, and culminating on Comrade Mahendra Singh’s fourth martyrdom day 16th January, 2009. On 16th January people of Jharkhand converged in Bagodar in massive numbers to make a pledge to achieve what their dear Comrade Mahendra Singh laid down his life for four years ago. Thousands upon thousands of clenched fists raised in air and red flags everywhere depicted the resolve of the people of Jharkhand that they will be Mahendra Singhs

and what was on display was that the murderous politics of UPA-NDA has boomeranged on them. The assembled masses took a pledge in unison to intensify the struggle and intensify the red wave for establishing the rule of workers-peasants.

CPI(ML) General Secretary addressed this massive rally and called for strengthening the struggle front of poor people against the rulers' united front of loot and repression. He also called for a state-wide bandh on 19th January to force the powers that be to stop the manipulative game and declare fresh elections. Remembering Comrade Mahendra Singh he recalled his life's mission to forge a fighting front of workers-peasants-tribal and women to fight for freedom, justice, people, nation and revolution. Citing developments inside the Parliament where anti-people and pro-rich, pro-imperialist policies like Indo-US nuclear deal and SEZ Act have been enacted most recently, he said that if there were leaders like Mahendra Singh inside the Parliament they must have surely fought and resisted such dangerous policies. He called out to all workers, peasants, tribal and youth to come under CPI(ML)'s flag to smash the reign of lies, cheat, plunder and repression.

At the venue an exhibition of posters based on poems penned by Comrade Mahendra Singh was on display and this was designed and put up by cultural organization Kala Kammune of Varanasi. Revolutionary songs were presented by Jharkhand Jansanskriti Manch and there were many other cultural presentations. The Gate of the venue was named in honour and memory of martyred comrade Kameshwar Yadav. At the end a five-point resolution which included declaration to defeat and punish the killers of Mahendra Singh who are still in power and cancellation of all MoUs was passed by the assembled masses. Pledge march was also organised in other places including Ranchi and Chakradharpur.

The Jharkhand bundh called by the Party on 19th January for demanding dissolution of the current Assembly and seeking fresh mandate saw people of the State responding enthusiastically and making the call a success across many towns and centres in Jharkhand. At fifty places across sixteen districts groups of Party cadres and supporters along with general people marched on streets asking people to observe bundh. In Giridih town, goons owing allegiance to Congress leader Sarfaraz Ahmed severely assaulted CPI(ML) leader Comrade Usman Ansari who was leading a march and CPI(ML) leader Comrade Rajkumar Yadav was arrested by the police and false cases were slapped against him. In Obra of Garhwa Dist. the Party supporters blockading a road were lathicharged and false cases slapped against them. Reports of bundh have come from Giridih, Birni, Jamua, Dhanwar, Deori, Hazaribagh, Giddi, Hslong, Ramgarh, Bhurkunda, Patratu, Pochra, Bokaro, Chas, Jainamore, Petarwar, Bermo, Nirsa, Govindpur, Sindri, Jharia, Jamtara, Raneshwar, Shikaripara Road, Nanihat, Devghar, Koderma, Ranchi, Lohardaga, Kisko, Barwadih, Ghaghra, Bihnapur, Latehar, Daltongunj, Chhatarpur, Panki, Obra, Nagar Untari, Bhavnathpur and some more places. At all of these places marches were taken out and national highways were blocked for hours. The successful bundh has compelled other opposition parties also to demand for fresh elections.

Pledge Campaign In Coimbatore

In Coimbatore many have been enrolled as Party members in the last one year amidst fierce struggles. During the Pledge Campaign, healthy interaction on the CC's Pledge call was carried out among these members. Theepori (Party Organ in Tamil) circulation, local committee and branch formation in residential areas have been worked out.

AICCTU Meetings in The Midst of Pricol Struggle:

Ever since March 2007, a long drawn struggle of a few thousand workers is going on in Pricol led by AICCTU. Recently, there has been a spate of attacks on the workers in the form of huge wage reductions, dismissals etc. The management is attempting at finding an escape route by designing a no work-no pay formula as there is a recessionary trend in the automobile industry. We are cautiously observing it and trying to enhance the role and involvement of general workers to defeat management's evil designs. With this view we organized the state council and office bearers meeting of AICCTU on 25th and 26th of January in Perianaickenpalayam. The public meeting which was organized on 25th was a huge one. More than 1000 workers and 1000 general public attended the meeting and they all stood up and paid homage to the Tamil, Palestinian, Afgan and Iraqi people who were killed everyday by Srilankan Chauvinism, Isreali aggression and US imperialism. This meeting with its politically offensive nature stood in refreshing contrast to the tepid opportunist left shows.

Pricol workers who have undergone so many sufferings took upon the task of organizing the AICCTU meetings with typical working class enthusiasm. The office bearers meet as well as the general council dealt with the issues of 'The Capitalists Crisis and The Proletarian Response', 'Struggle Centres, Membership and Network'.

There will be a gherao of unorganized sector welfare board offices, which have ceased to function, in first week of February.

AISA's Delhi State Conference, Maharashtra Convention & Bihar Agitation

The All India Students' Association (AISA) held its 3rd Delhi State Conference on 27th January, 2009, at Delhi University. 70 delegates from DU, JNU, Jamia Milia Islamia and Indian Institute of Mass Communication attended the Conference. Besides discussions on broadening and strengthening students' movement in Delhi led by AISA, the actions and initiatives to make successful AISA's nation-wide Students' Rights Campaign from 5-20 February, 2009, was also discussed. The campaign is focused around two central themes - (1) spreading awareness among Indian students of the terrorism and economic crises being imported from the US by the UPA Govt. and students' response in fighting it, and (2) calling upon students to fight and end the undeclared emergencies in the campuses while bringing democratic functioning and order in the campuses. Among other organizational decisions, a 41 member State Council led by Com. Sandeep Singh as President and Com. Rajan as Secretary was elected by the delegates.

AISA's Maharashtra unit organised a State-level cadre convention in Pune on 20 January, 2009, at Sharamik Bhawan attended by 80 student activists from 5 districts of Maharashtra. The Convention was addressed by AISA's General Secretary Com. Ravi Rai and leader of Lal Nishan Party Com. Mukta Manohar. The student activists from different districts of Maharashtra unequivocally condemned the violence and politics of Maharashtra Nav-nirman Sena (MNS) and Shiv Sena and held their brand of politics responsible for rising unemployment and extreme commercialization of education in the State that is out of reach of common students. It is note-worthy that while MNS and Shiv Sena have attacked non-Maharashtrians alleging them of taking up jobs which could go to

Maharashtrians, they have never dared to oppose the economic policies and politics that is creating unemployment and commercializing education, as their narrow and sectarian politics rests upon such a situation. The Convention deliberated on strengthening AISA-led students' movement in Maharashtra and the implementation of 5-20 February campaign in the State.

The Arrah town committee of AISA led a gherao of the Senate meeting of Kunwar Singh University on 13 January demanding students' union elections, students' representation in the University Senate body, free education for girl students, 180 guaranteed days of teaching and other educational and institutional reforms. Around the issue some other students' organizations had also organised demonstration. As AISA march was approaching the venue the police brutally lathi-charged the students and seriously injuring four students including AISA leader Manoj Manzil. The students irrespective of organizational banners revolted against this barbarism and consequently two policemen were also injured. Following day AISA organised protest march in Arrah town and University bundh was observed on 15th January. Various students' organizations and CPI(ML) has condemned the police action and the attitude of University Administration.

Threats fail to Subdue Striking Employees of Bihar

The employees and teachers of Bihar State Govt. have been on strike since 7th January 2009 and till the time of going to the press the strike continues and has completed three weeks despite threats of punitive actions by the Nitish Govt., and far from striking employees submitting to threat and withdrawing more and more are in-fact joining the ongoing strike.

On the eve of first day of strike, a torch-light procession was held in Capital Patna and all district headquarters of Bihar on 6th January and the following day witnessed a total halt of all governmental work. According to the official report more than 90 percent employees joined the strike on very first day. A significant section of the primary teachers and all of the shiksha-mitras (para-teachers) stopped their work. During the fortnight panchayat employment assistants throughout the State also went on strike. The strike is being spearheaded by the joint front comprised of Bihar State Non-gazetted Employees Confederation (Gope faction), Bihar Secretariat Services Federation, Bihar State Non-gazetted Employees Confederation (Yogendra faction) and the Bihar State Primary Teachers' Federation.

The State employees and teachers have been forced to proceed on strike due to Nitish Govt's clumsy response to the issues of employees being voiced for some months now. The Bihar Govt. tactic of dilly-dallying on adopting the pay-pattern recommended by Sixth Pay Commission for Central Govt. employees, non-regularisation of teachers-employees working on contractual and daily wages and executing the yet-to-be executed terms of agreement arrived at during the 43-days strike in 2004-5 were some of the issues that pressed them into stopping work. And the strike is indeed continuing and has received moral support from Bihar Policemen's Association. Even the Gazetted officials of the State meanwhile have declared to go on strike from January 21. The strike's impact can be felt even in the remotest areas of the State. The secretariat and collectorates wear a deserted look these days and Zilla Parishad employees too have declared they are on strike. There are rallies being held daily by the striking employees outside the Secretariat in Patna and elsewhere.

The Bihar Govt. issued a threat on 19th January declaring "no work-no pay" and declared disciplinary action against the striking employees, citing 1976 Bihar Govt. Manual, if they do not report for work by 21st January. This threat has been rejected by the striking employees who have mentioned to

rather intensify their strike. CPI(ML) extended its full support to the strike from the very beginning and its Central and State leaders have visited the striking employees and have addressed their meetings and rallies. Comrade Dipankar addressed the mass-meeting on 19th January and exposed Nitish's hollow and baseless claims of development saying that when all of the employees and teachers were on strike and even the Gazetted officers were going on strike, who is going to drive Nitish's much touted development agenda. He declared Party's full support to the striking employees.

Saffron Offensive in Karnataka

The televised incident of barbaric assault on girls at a Managalore pub by Sri Ram Sena has created a widespread rage. However, incidents of similar barbarity are on for quite some time in Karnataka. Further emboldened by its victory in the by-elections in 5 out of 8 Assembly seats, the ruling BJP has intensified its communal fascist onslaught. At Mangalore, a coastal district is the nerve centre of Sangh Parivar's saffron offensive B V Seetaram, Editor of Karavali Ale, a magazine that had been a bold voice against the BJP Government, was arrested recently on flimsy charges and even displayed in handcuffs. The arrest came on the heels of months of harassment, fake cases, attacks on the magazine's office and public bonfires of copies of the magazine.

In Mangalore, the Sangh Parivar's moral policing is not confined to a few incidents. Groups of young people are routinely attacked on the grounds that Hindu women are fraternising with Muslim or Christian men. A bus in which college students were being taken on a trip was stoned on the same grounds. A Hindu school girl visited a Muslim girl, her schoolmate; both were beaten up and the Muslim girl's home ransacked. Sangh activists boast that mostly, girls 'behave' if thrashed and humiliated in public, but it is more difficult to make boys obey the 'moral code.'

Recently the office of the PUCL's Karnataka Working President D'sa was attacked by the Bajrang Dal. The inmates of a jail in Mangalore were attacked brutally within the jail premises by Bajrang Dal members, who were later shifted to other jails, without being punished for their acts. In a shocking incident, a young man Mukarram was killed by army personnel in Bangalore city. Chased by traffic police for 'drag racing' on his bike, he had taken refuge on the roof of a house, which turned out to be that of an army Major. The Major's security staff heard him weeping and speaking to his mother in Urdu on the phone - and shot him dead, claiming they assumed he was a 'terrorist'. Meanwhile, recently, eight Hindu boys were arrested in connection with a bomb blast in the Hubli court premises last year. Earlier the act was attributed to SIMI and LeT by the Hubli police. The state government's anti-terrorism campaign in schools and colleges is a euphemism for a hate campaign conducted by Sangh outfits. The state is slowly but surely moving towards communal fascism on the lines of Gujarat.

Red Salute to Comrade Madhukar Katre

Comrade Madhukar Katre, President of Lal Nishan Party (L), passed away on 16 of January, 2009 in a hospital in Ahmednagar, Maharashtra. Born in Pune on 05.02.1927, Com. Katre joined the freedom movement even as a young schoolboy in Kolhapur. Later, he embraced Marxism-Leninism, took

active part in the freedom struggle as well as the Praja Parishad struggle against abolition of the princely state of Kolhapur. He was jailed for 17 months for his participation in the movement.

Later he also took leading part in the Goa Liberation struggle and also the movement for the formation of Sanyukta Maharashtra. Later still, he led the struggle for implementation of tenancy legislation of the Maharashtra State. Later along with Comrade Sataram Patil, he founded the movement of Co-operative Sugar Factory Workers in 1982. He had also been the General Secretary of the Maharashtra Rajya Sahakari Kamgar Mahasangh, from which platform he helped organize a militant Trade Union movement of the Co-operative Sugar Factory Workers, which created a broad rural base for the Lal Nishan Party. He was also the founder of the organization for the much exploited Sugarcane Cutters of the Co-operative Sugar Industry and was the General Secretary of their State-level organization.

As a leader of Lal Nishan Party, he played a leading role in the movement of the peasantry for relief and elimination of famine in Maharashtra as also in organizing the Municipal Workers. He was also a front-ranking leader of the landless labourers, and of the Maharashtra Rajya Sheti Mahamandal. He was an inevitable part of struggles of road workers, forest workers, and other sections of the rural working class. When there was a split in the Lal Nishan Party, he joined the Lal Nishan Party (Leninist) in 1989, where he eventually was elected President. In spite of health troubles he remained active till the end of his life.

On 17 January, a massive funeral procession was held at Ahmednagar in which a wide cross section of people from Ahmednagar District apart from Party Leaders, paid tribute to him. He is warmly remembered by many comrades of CPI(ML) with whom he had many comradely interactions. Liberation pays heartfelt revolutionary tribute to Comrade Katre, and condolences to his family as well as comrades of the LNP (L).

Tribute to Comrade Sacchida Babu

Comrade Sacchidanand Prasad, fondly known as Sacchida Babu passed away and his home in Patna on 6 January 2009. He was 73. Since 1969-70, he had been in touch with the Party. Defying state repression, he had used his home as a party shelter, and during emergency, he had even been jailed under MISA for 18 months as a result. In spite of pressure to turn informer, he never gave in and never betrayed the Party. Throughout the 70s, he worked on the front of translation, publications, and ideological education. He encouraged his wife and daughters to join the movement; his daughter was part of the women's cultural group 'Chorus', which was formed with encouragement from him and Comrade Maheshwar. As an employee in the Patna Secretariat, he organised other employees to form a union. He played a leading role in the anti-communal movement following the Babri Masjid demolition.

Red Salute to Sacchida Babu!

P.S.

* ML Update, A CPI(ML) Weekly News Magazine, Vol. 12, No. 05, 27 JAN - 02 FEB 2009.