

ML Update: 14-20 Dec. 2010

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Nobel Prize and the Price of Peace

This year's Nobel Peace Prize has been awarded to jailed Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo. China termed the award a calculated affront, and with Liu Xiaobo in prison serving an 11-year sentence and his wife under house arrest, the prize was awarded to an empty chair.

That the Nobel Peace Prize more often than not carried a political charged message is nothing new. Last year's award to US President Barack Obama was calculated to boost the US' bid for renewed prestige and credibility after the universally condemned Bush era. The choice of Xiaobo is very likely inspired by the intention to delegitimize Communist Party-ruled China as an authoritarian regime. If so, however, China has walked headlong into that trap.

Liu Xiaobo, associated with the Tianenmen protests of 1989, is an advocate of political reforms to bring China in line with Western-style liberal democracy. His Charter 08, for which he was sentenced to 11 years in prison in 2009, advocates a gradual path of reform including property rights and multi-party democracy. In a media interview in Hong Kong in the late 1980s, Xiaobo is also said to have spoken approvingly of colonialism's role in Hong Kong's development and prescribed "300 years of colonialism" for China.

In China, spectacular capitalist growth in the economy is accompanied by continuing oversight and direction as well as political control by the CPC. Behind the clamour by the US and other capitalist countries for 'democracy' in China is the hope that this contradiction between China's increasingly neoliberal economic trajectory and its communist-ruled political structure could be sharpened to push for wholesale capitalist restoration in that country. However it must also be recognised that China's market reforms in the economy are providing a material basis for demands of commensurate political reforms as well. For China to deal with that contradiction by muzzling the advocates of such change is to play into the hands of its detractors. By imprisoning Xiaobo, pressurising various other countries to boycott the Nobel ceremony and preventing Xiaobo's wife from receiving the award in his stead, China has obliged its opponents with the most potent symbolic weapon they could have hoped for.

It must also be recognised that it is not only advocates of capitalist political reform that have been muzzled in China - it appears that even voices highlighting the growing social disparities too have been similarly suppressed. Not long ago, a man whose five-year-old son was poisoned by toxic milk in China was sentenced to jail for setting up a website to organise other parents against melamine

poisoning. Workers' protests too are known to meet with repression. The same repressive stick has been wielded to deal with popular outbursts at regional and cultural disparities in Xinjiang and Tibet.

The Nobel episode also unavoidably highlights the hypocrisy and double standards of capitalist liberal democracies. Even as Obama and others express pious outrage at how China treats its dissidents, they have all participated in the manhunt for Julian Assange, the founder of whistleblower website Wikileaks which blew the lid off the horrific war crimes that were the daily feature of the wars and occupation in Iraq, Afghanistan and other parts of the world. A 22-year old US soldier, Private Bradley Manning, languishes in prison on suspicion of having leaked documentary evidence of war crimes to Wikileaks, including a video of US soldiers deliberately firing from the air to kill unarmed civilians in Baghdad. Even as the Nobel ceremony was underway in Norway, neighbouring Sweden was partnering the US in its bid to hunt down and silence Assange. Had the Nobel Committee really wanted to give a powerful contemporary message of peace, surely a more suitable candidate for the Peace Prize would have been Manning or Assange, for exposing the real face of war to people all over the world at the cost of personal liberty?

The double standards are no less visible here in India. How would the Indian state and mainstream media, quick to castigate China on Xiaobo and Tibet, have responded were Irom Sharmila, that powerful icon of protest against the Indian state's war on its people, to have been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize?

The Resolve of December 18 : We Must Rise to the Occasion

As 2010 draws to a close, the country is witnessing an unprecedented spate of mega scams. The 2G spectrum scam alone is estimated to be of the order of Rs. 176,000 crore - 2,750 times the size of the Bofors scam which had once rocked the country and led to the downfall of the Rajiv Gandhi government which enjoyed a massive 400-plus majority in Parliament.

What however makes the current spate of scams unprecedented is not just their enormous magnitude, but the range of institutions afflicted by the spreading rot. The Delhi Commonwealth Games turned out to be a mega circus of corruption. The Adarsh Society scam in Mumbai has exposed the corrupt nexus involving chief ministers, top bureaucrats and the Army top brass. The Radia tapes have revealed the intimate links between governments, big corporations and influential mediapersons. The Supreme Court has objected to the appointment of a tainted official as the Central Vigilance Commissioner. Accusing fingers have also been raised against the judiciary itself, both from within the judiciary and without. From the Prime Minister's Office to Chief Ministers in key states - be it Congress-ruled Maharashtra or BJP-ruled Karnataka, from the Army to the judiciary and corporate media, all ruling class parties and pillars of the state-system are today under the scanner.

This clearly shows that corruption has emerged as the essential bridge between bourgeois economics and politics in the era of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation. This is the lubricating oil that runs the machine of state-power and corporate power in India today. The rulers had of course made a contrary claim while initiating the new policies two decades ago. We were told that market-driven policies would clean up the system by abolishing the licence-quota-permit raj. But there is now overwhelming evidence to show that the market is gobbling up everything, subjecting the entire decision-making process to a shadowy market mechanism where every law of the land is thrown to the winds and all resources of the country and rights of the people are sacrificed at the altar of corporate power and greed.

An all-pervasive agrarian crisis which has claimed hundreds of thousands of lives of Indian peasants, sky-rocketing prices that are daily pauperising large sections of the toiling masses, draconian laws and repressive campaigns that are bent upon throttling every voice of reason and dissent, and now this epidemic of corruption which is fast landing the system into its worst crisis of credibility - this is the big picture of today's India. The ruling classes and the UPA government are trying to combat this crisis with American certificates declaring India as a 'key strategic partner' and an 'emerged power' and promises of a permanent seat in the UN Security Council. But as the recent Obama visit clearly showed, India's partnership with the US may guarantee a bailout package for a crisis-ridden America, but for India it is certainly no passport to prosperity.

The more the Indian ruling classes cling to the US imperialism in the name of a strategic partnership, the more the US deepens its intervention in India and seeks to use India as a vehicle of American interest and influence in Asia. This only weakens our independence and vitiates our security environment. A recent study has also estimated that more and more Indian wealth is fleeing the country in search of greener pastures and safer havens abroad. Between 1948 and 2008, the country has been drained of an estimated Rs. 20,000 billion, and this outward flow has only been accelerating in recent years.

It goes without saying that this unfolding situation calls for a much bigger and much more assertive role of revolutionary communists to strengthen people's struggles on different fronts. In 2010, the Party took a couple of important initiatives in this direction - the launch of the All India Kisan Mahasabha in May and the formation of the All India Left Coordination in August. Together with the agricultural labour front, the peasant front is going to play a crucial role in the coming days not only from the point of view of resisting the agrarian crisis and advancing the campaign for land reforms, but also in terms of strengthening the anti-imperialist battle of the Indian people. The AILC too has made a good beginning, and it has already demonstrated some potential to attract the attention of serious Left forces in different parts of the country. In the coming days, we must make every effort to strengthen the AILC and carry it forward in the cherished direction of radicalization and rejuvenation of Left politics in India.

While most of our efforts and initiatives in 2010 yielded encouraging results, the results of Bihar Assembly elections have certainly come as a rude shock to the entire Party and all our friends and well-wishers. The continued presence of the Party in the legislative arena was the source of an added political profile for the Party not only in Bihar but in Left circles all over the country. Now that the NDA has swept the Bihar polls, rightwing forces and dominant sections of the media will surely try to use this sweeping victory of the NDA to mount an anti-Left offensive. The BJP having tasted extraordinary success in Bihar is bound to step up its role in Bihar and also try and use its success in Bihar for a countrywide rejuvenation of the BJP and the NDA. This will undoubtedly introduce new elements of tension in the political situation and we must boldly face every eventuality with our consistent anti-feudal anti-communal role.

The Party will surely learn every lesson that needs to be learnt and take every measure that needs to be taken, but electoral reverses cannot and must not be allowed to dampen the spirit and weaken the role and initiative of a revolutionary communist party like the CPI(ML). The Party will take the electoral shock in its strides and even use it as a "shock therapy" to strengthen the movement and streamline the organisation, and in no way will it allow reactionary forces to rob the people of the hard-won gains of decades of revolutionary struggle.

This 18th of December, along with Comrade Vinod Mishra we also remember Comrade Ramnaresh Ram (Parasji) who breathed his last on October 26 after giving his very best to the communist movement and the people for more than sixty years that changed the face of Bhojpur and much of erstwhile central Bihar. Comrade Ramnaresh Ram's long political journey from the days of freedom

struggle through the historic struggle of Ekwari (his native village in Sahar block of Bhojpur district) to the glorious assertion of the rural poor against feudal oppression and domination will remain a treasure house of inspiration for generations to come.

Comrade VM and Comrade Parasji played a historic role in reorganising and reviving the CPI(ML) after the setback of the early 1970s and also in upholding the revolutionary banner of Marxism and communist movement in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union when weak-hearted communists had started wavering and deserting the communist movement. This 18th of December, the entire Party takes a collective vow to carry forward their glorious and inspiring legacy. This 18th of December, we rededicate ourselves to the revolutionary communist mission of the CPI(ML) and to the challenge of fulfilling the unfinished tasks of all our martyrs and departed leaders. We inherit the legacy of learning from mistakes and turning defeats into victories. Let us rise to the occasion with renewed and stronger resolve and take the Party forward with bold and energetic steps.

Massive Demonstration in Patna by Sand Labourers

Thousands of labourers employed by big businesses in sand extraction in the Ganga-Son river belt of central Bihar held a massive demonstration in front of the Bihar Vidhan Sabha on 8th December 2010. This demonstration was led by the Balu Mazdoor Sangathan (sand workers' association) and CPI(ML). Comrades Gopal Singh, Secretary of Balu Mazdoor Sangathan and Rameshwar Prasad, President of All India Agricultural Labourers' Association (AIALA) led the militant demonstration. The rally caused the blockade of most main streets of Patna.

Recently, the contractors, who are mainly patronised by the JD(U), BJP and RJD have brought huge machines for sand extraction purposes thereby rendering jobless thousands of workers in the Bikram, Bihta Maner block of Patna district and Sandesh and Koilwar blocks of Bhojpur dist. Most of the thrown out workers had to migrate to other states to earn livelihood. The demonstration, first of this strength after the formation of Nitish Kumar's Govt. in Bihar demanded withdrawal of the big machines creating unemployment, besides other demands of balu mazdoors.

Senior Govt. officials met a delegation of Sand Workers' Association and CPI(ML) leaders and have given a verbal impression that the workers rendered jobless will be given employment either by withdrawing of machines or MG-NREGA. If the promises that the officials made are not respected by them, the Party will launch a bigger movement.

Condemn P Chidambaram's Anti-Migrant Slander

The national capital has been witness to four shocking rapes of women in the past month. Faced with this evidence of the Delhi Police's inability to curb the growing rise of crimes against women in the capital and nab the perpetrators, the Home Minister has resorted to blaming the culture of migrants living in unauthorised colonies! Not surprisingly, although Chidambaram was forced to withdraw his remarks, the Shiv Sena has welcomed this legitimisation of their anti-migrant hate campaign from no less than the Home Minister from the Congress party.

Migrants in Delhi and other cities are themselves the most vulnerable to exploitation and violence.

In Mumbai, for instance, the Congress Government miserably failed to curb organised violence by the Raj Thackeray and Shiv Sena brigades. In Delhi too, the collapse of a building in Laxminagar that claimed the lives of 70 migrant workers is a comment on the shameful callousness of the Congress Government of Delhi towards migrants and the question of their housing. To blame this vulnerable section of people for the growing violence against women in the city is to add insult to injury.

It must also be remembered that in Delhi, migrant women from the North East face discriminatory attitudes from the police and administration in addition to sexual violence, and migrant women working as domestic workers are especially vulnerable to sexual exploitation and violence.

It is urgently needed that rape, sexual harassment and violence against women in Delhi be dealt with sternly, and this cannot be done without challenging and changing the patriarchal attitudes and racial/regional prejudices of the Delhi Police and authorities.

8th CPI(ML) Assam State Conference

The 8th CPI(ML) Assam State Conference took place on 11-12 December, 2010 at Ramnaresh Ram Auditorium (Samhati Bhawan) of Swahid Mukul Baruah Nagar (Dibrugarh). The manch was named after Shaheed Comrade Kshitipati Das, who had laid down his life along with 7 comrades in Tripura in the Huruwa massacre in the 1980s. On the first day of the Conference an impressive mass rally was organized in the main streets of Dibrugarh town, where more than 3000 people, from both Dibrugarh district and nearby Tinsukia district participated. Most of the participants were Tea Garden and rural workers.

After the procession a mass meeting was held in the premise of Samhati Bhawan. Mass singer and leader of Sadou Asom Janasanskritik Parishad Comrade Loknath Goswami presided over the meeting. Party's State Secretary Com. Rubul Sarma, Party leader from Karbi Anglong Com. Chandra Kanta Terang, Com. Mira Tanti, Com. Premchand Singh (Manipur), Com. Vivek Das and Com. Gangaram Kol addressed the mass meeting. In the open session a Souvenir was released by Com. Hasan Swarif Ahmed, former IPTA leader and associate of Jyotiprashad Agarwala.

PB member and central observer Com. D. P. Buxi hoisted the party flag and after that Com. Chandra Kanta Terang started Shaheed Tarpan and leaders, delegates and guests paid homage to the martyrs.

A presidium comprising of Com. Subhas Sen, Anju Borkatoky, Chandrakanta Terang, Gangaram Kol, Subhasis Bhadra was formed to conduct the Delegate Session, which began with the welcome address by the secretary of Dibrugarh district committee of the party Com. Partha Dey. Thereafter, central observer Com. D. P. Buxi delivered the inaugural address of the conference.

Party State Secretary Com. Rubul Sarma placed the Draft report which was discussed by delegates on the first and second days. Following this the draft report was unanimously adopted by the house.

The conference resolved to strengthen mass movements and rise in the occasion with a campaign from the month of January itself. The conference decided to implement the call of 18 December by mobilizing all cadres and members of the party. The call will be linked up with specific issues of the state. The conference resolved to come forward with a new vision to develop and expand party work

in the state as well as in the rest of the North East.

Thereafter a 17-member Assam State Committee comprising of Com. Rubul Sarma, Vibek Das, Pankaj Das, Subhas Sen, Arup Mahanta, Naren Borah, Partha Dey, Shrubhrajyoti Bardhan, Gangaram Kol, Lila Sarma, Mrinali Devi, Rajiv Dutta, Balindra Saikia, Jiten Tanti, Mira Tanti, Bhadrawati Gogoi and Swapna Sarma was unanimously elected by the house. Com. Rubul Sarma was re-elected as the state secretary.

Central observer Com D P Buxi placed his observation in detail and called upon the house to take up the challenge of strengthening the revolutionary movement in the state.

Why WikiLeaks Must be Protected

(Excerpt from article by John Pilger)

The case of the Afghanistan war logs and the hounding of Julian Assange prove that there's never been greater need to speak truth to power than today.

On 26 July, WikiLeaks released thousands of secret US military files on the war in Afghanistan. Cover-ups, a secret assassination unit and the killing of civilians are documented. In file after file, the brutalities echo the colonial past. From Malaya and Vietnam to Bloody Sunday and Basra, little has changed. The difference is that today there is an extraordinary way of knowing how faraway societies are routinely ravaged in our name. WikiLeaks has acquired records of six years of civilian killing in both Afghanistan and Iraq, of which those published in the Guardian are a fraction.

There is understandably hysteria on high, with demands that the WikiLeaks founder, Julian Assange, be "hunted down" and "rendered". A senior official in the Washinton defence department referred me to the "ongoing criminal investigation" of a US soldier, Bradley Manning, an alleged whistleblower. In a nation that claims its constitution protects truth-tellers, the Obama administration is pursuing and prosecuting more whistleblowers than any of its modern predecessors. A Pentagon document states bluntly that US intelligence intends to "fatally marginalise" WikiLeaks. The preferred tactic is smear, with corporate journalists ever ready to play their part.

The Pentagon line - On 31 July, the American celebrity reporter Christiane Amanpour interviewed the US secretary of defence, Robert Gates, on the ABC network. She invited him to describe to her viewers his "anger" at WikiLeaks. She echoed the Pentagon line that "this leak has blood on its hands", cueing Gates to find WikiLeaks "guilty" of "moral culpability". Such hypocrisy coming from a regime drenched in the blood of the people of Afghanistan and Iraq - as its own files make clear - is apparently not for journalistic inquiry. This is hardly surprising now that a new and fearless form of public accountability, which WikiLeaks represents, threatens not only the warmakers but also their apologists.

Their current propaganda is that WikiLeaks is "irresponsible". Earlier this year, before it released the cockpit video of a US Apache gunship killing 19 civilians in Iraq, including journalists and children, WikiLeaks sent people to Baghdad to find the victims' families in order to prepare them. Before the release of last month's Afghanistan war logs, WikiLeaks wrote to the White House asking that it identify Afghan names that might draw reprisals. There was no reply. More than 15,000 files were withheld and these, Assange says, will not be released until they have been scrutinised "line by

line” so that the names of those at risk can be deleted.

A duty to publish - On 16 August, the Guardian, citing Daniel Ellsberg, described the great Israeli whistleblower Mordechai Vanunu as “the pre-eminent hero of the nuclear age”. Vanunu, who alerted the world to Israel’s secret nuclear weapons, was kidnapped by the Israelis and incarcerated for 18 years after he was left unprotected by the Sunday Times, which had published the documents he supplied. In 1983, another heroic whistleblower, Sarah Tisdall, a Foreign Office clerical officer, sent documents to the Guardian disclosing how the Thatcher government planned to spin the arrival of US cruise missiles in Britain. The Guardian complied with a court order to hand over the documents, and Tisdall went to prison.

The WikiLeaks revelations shame the dominant section of journalism, devoted merely to taking down what cynical and malign power tells it. This is state stenography, not journalism. Look on the WikiLeaks site and read a Ministry of Defence document that describes the “threat” of real journalism. And so it should be a threat.

P.S.

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