

Circular of the Central Committee

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Party Central Committee met in Chennai from 27 to 30 November. This was the first time a CC meeting was held in Chennai since the Party came into the open. The meeting took stock of the developing national and international situation and the post-Bardhaman progress made by the party organisation in different states and on different fronts, and chalked out a series of tasks and targets for the coming year. The deliberations and decisions of the CC are summarised below.

1. a) Growing global opposition to US occupation of Iraq:

The opposition to US occupation of Iraq has grown remarkably within the US itself and it was reflected quite powerfully in the November 2006 mid-term elections to the US in which the Republican party suffered a major setback in both houses and in many states. The death sentence awarded to Saddam Hussein just before the elections clearly did not succeed in having any last-minute impact on the public opinion in US and the global opinion too condemned this travesty of justice. In spite of sinister American attempts to divide the popular opposition to US imperialism in the Islamic world on Shia-Sunni lines, opposition to the US-led war continues to grow across the world. The rejection of US policies is particularly pronounced in Latin America where we can discern a broad leftward shift in one country after another. The retreat that the US and Israel had to beat in relation to Iran and Lebanon respectively, the nuclear defiance displayed by North Korea and the political marginalisation suffered by the US-backed monarchy in Nepal point to the fact that the American campaign for global hegemony is now faced with greater challenges across the world.

The UPA government's pro-US foreign policy remains completely out of sync with this developing international situation. The Indo-US nuclear deal and India's strategic embrace of the US campaign for exclusive hegemony in a unipolar world is also detrimental to our own national interests. We must therefore intensify the campaign for reversal of India's pro-US policy and scrapping of the Indo-US nuclear deal.

b) Following the powerful popular upsurge that relegated the US-backed monarchy to the background, the stage in Nepal now looks set for the election of a new Constituent Assembly and the drawing of a new constitution. We hope that the republican forces of Nepal would be able to consolidate the gains of the movement under a resurgent communist leadership and lead Nepal further in the direction of republicanism and democracy.

Like Nepal, Bangladesh too is currently witnessing powerful waves of popular struggles forcing the government to concede several demands of the people including changing the composition of the election commission. Both Nepal and Bangladesh serve as inspiring illustrations of the strength of people's movement as an instrument of change.

c) The prospect of peace in Sri Lanka has once again receded following renewed outbreak of hostilities between the Sri Lankan army and the LTTE. This has intensified the sufferings of the common people in Sri Lanka, the Tamils in particular. While exploring all diplomatic avenues to facilitate restoration of peace in Sri Lanka, the UPA Government at the Centre and the DMK government in Tamil Nadu must make sure that Sri Lankan Tamil refugees in India can live in peace and with dignity.

d) Friendly relations with neighbouring countries, especially with Pakistan and China, are absolutely crucial for peace in the sub-continent. Any attempt to vitiate the atmosphere and disrupt India's bilateral ties with Pakistan and China must therefore be defeated by all means and pressure must be built on the UPA government to bring about a steady improvement and expansion in India's ties with her two big neighbours.

2. December 14 all-India Industrial Strike:

The Party extends all-out support to the industrial strike called by central trade unions on December 14. While making sure that all our trade unions play an active role in this strike, we must also try to broaden the campaign beyond the industrial arena by mobilising support from agricultural labourers, peasants, students and youths, and women.

3. Abduction of Comrade Langtuk Phangcho:

The CC has expressed grave concern over the abduction of Comrade Langtuk Phangcho, member of the Hill Party Committee and popular Party leader in North Cachhar Hills district of Assam. The people of Karbi Anglong and NC Hills have condemned this abduction and called upon the UPDS militants to release him immediately from their custody. Condemning the incident and the inaction of the state, the CC has sent an urgent appeal for his safe release to the President and Prime Minister of India and Governor and Chief Minister of Assam, and has asked all State Committees to send similar appeals through their respective State Governors and also directly.

4. Some Burning Issues of the Day and our Tasks:

a) Agrarian crisis continues to intensify across the country with hundreds of suicides being recorded every month in Vidarbha alone. Even as landless and poor peasants fight for distribution of ceiling surplus and other redistributable land for purposes of cultivation, central and state governments have launched a land-grab campaign, forcibly dispossessing farmers and adivasis of their land and converting tens of thousands of acres of cultivable land into so-called Special Economic Zones. These zones are nothing but Special Eviction Zones for the people depending on that land for their livelihood, Special Exploitation Zones for people who secure employment in these zones and Special Exemption Zones for corporate houses who will enjoy subsidies resulting in a loss of revenue amounting to more than Rs. 1,00,000 crore according to the Finance Ministry's own official estimate. We must demand complete scrapping of the SEZ policy and pro-peasant amendments to the land acquisition act. The Party must increase its efforts to revitalise our peasant organisation and forge stronger ties with the middle peasantry in their struggle to defend their land and livelihood.

b) Instead of extending NREGA to the whole of the country, central and state governments are busy making a mockery of the whole legislation. This has caused acute resentment among the rural poor and the state everywhere has unleashed severe repression to deal with the agitation exposing violations of NREGA provisions and demanding strict implementation of the Act. Our experience shows that wherever serious attempts are being made on the AIALA front, we are getting quite encouraging response and there is considerable scope for the expansion of the organisation and

systematic intensification of the movement. The entire Party must continue to pay utmost attention to the task of expanding and consolidating our work on the agrarian labour front and increase the organisational capacity and dynamism of the AIALA.

c) The report tabled by Sachar committee on the conditions of Muslims in the country has documented the gross under-representation of the community in terms of education, employment and development opportunities. This has knocked the bottom out of the RSS-BJP propaganda regarding 'appeasement of Muslims' while also exposing the sordid state of affairs in states like West Bengal, Bihar and UP, states that have been dominated by parties claiming to be secular and concerned about the welfare and participation of Muslims. While the committee was not allowed to examine the level of representation of Muslims in the armed forces and the report has already been cleansed of some explosive findings like the over-representation of Muslims in the jails of Maharashtra where almost every second prisoner is a Muslim, the findings of the report can and must be utilised to organise a powerful campaign on the issue and forge stronger links with the community and ensure greater Muslim participation in the democratic movement.

d) Several incidents of barbaric assaults and atrocities on dalits have come to light in different parts of the country. The shocking incident at Kherlanji has exposed the kind of backing that anti-dalit forces get from various wings of the state, a reason why dalits feel all the more angry and are rightly directing their anger against the state. Recent incidents have also highlighted a growing mass disillusionment with the dominant trends of so-called dalit politics in the country. While opposing every incident of atrocities on dalits, we must make concerted attempts to radicalise the dalit anger and transform it into a powerful democratic movement.

5. "Our Country, Our History, Our Freedom, Our Rights" Campaign

As already noted, 2007 marks the 150th anniversary of India's First War of Independence. It is also the birth centenary year of Bhagat Singh and the 40th anniversary of the great Naxalbari uprising. To celebrate the glorious tradition of people's revolts against injustice, oppression and imperialist plunder and domination and link it to the live agenda of ongoing people's struggles, the CC has planned a two-month-long campaign from March 23, the martyrdom day of Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev to May 25, the 40th anniversary of the Naxalbari Day. The campaign will be launched with a powerful all-India rally in Delhi and be marked by a series of diverse decentralised programmes in different states and will culminate in Kolkata on the Naxalbari Day. All our mass organisations will have to take all-out initiative in implementing this special campaign to spread the message of the Party and our movement.

The people's charter to be highlighted in the course of the campaign will comprise the following major points: (i) scrapping of SEZ policy and defence of peasants' inalienable right to cultivable land, (ii) stopping peasant suicides and starvation deaths (iii) strict implementation of NREGA, and its extension to the whole of the country on improved terms, (iv) legal guarantee for right to education, right to work and right to health, (v) restoration of alienated tribal land and rehabilitation of all project-displaced people, (vi) embargo on indiscriminate entry of foreign investment, especially in sectors like education and retail trade, (vii) regularisation of unorganised workers and guaranteeing their basic rights, (viii) end to violence and discrimination against dalits, adivasis, women and minorities and ensuring greater opportunities for all disadvantaged sections, (ix) scrapping of black laws like Armed Forces Special Powers Act and end to state-sponsored violence against the people like Salwa Judum in Chhatisgarh (x) scrapping of Indo-US nuclear deal and reversal of pro-US foreign policy.

CPI(ML) Welcomes Sachar Committee Recommendations

Condemns Suppression of Data on Prisons and Army as UPA Government's Surrender to Communal Pressure

The CPI(ML) has welcomed the findings and recommendations of the Sachar Committee on the status of Muslims in the country. The Party said that the data revealed a shocking level of systemic backwardness, discrimination, neglect and exclusion that is as disturbing and violent as any communal riot.

It has nailed the Sangh Parivar's myth of 'Muslim appeasement', revealing that in fact even in states ruled by the so-called 'secular' formations, including Congress, RJD, SP and CPI(M), Muslims face deprivation and discrimination. The Party however said it was disturbing that the Sachar Committee Report finally tabled in Parliament failed to include the data on over-representation of Muslims in prisons, though it recorded their gross under-representation in jobs and educational institutions. It reminded that when the Committee had sought data from the military, the BJP had whipped up a frenzy, and the UPA Government has succumbed to the communal pressure. The Sachar Committee was not permitted to access data from the Armed Forces, and it was also 'demoted' from a 'Prime Minister's High Level Committee' directly under the PMO, to merely under the Ministry of Minority Affairs. The data on prisons and armed forces reveals the worst aspect of Muslim status - the fact that they face suspicion and persecution at the hands of the State. For such data to be suppressed under communal pressure is a matter of shame for the UPA Government.

BJP leader Ms. Sushma Swaraj has spoken of the plight of Muslim women in order to attack the very basis of the Sachar Committee. Her purported concern for Muslim women is strange, since she belongs to the Party for which rape of Muslim women has been an act of pride. The Sachar Report has pointed out how such rapes have a 'ripple effect' on Muslim women, far from the original place of perpetration. Even the Allahabad HC has recently recognised that the gang-rape of a 15 year-old and her mother in Mau, and their subsequent intimidation to thwart their bid for justice, is reminiscent of Gujarat. Ms. Swaraj should recall that the BJP has fielded the ringleader of the Mau gang-rape as their Mayoral candidate in local polls. The CPI(ML) called for the speedy implementation of all the recommendations of the Sachar Committee, including that of reservations for the deprived sections among Muslims under an MBC quota.

Bhagat Singh Birth Centenary Celebrations

Convention in Chennai

Following the 4 day Central committee meeting held in Chennai, an impressive convention was held on December 1 to mark the Bhagat Singh centenary celebrations. The convention begun with passing of the resolutions condemning Khairalanji incident and barbaric atrocities and oppression. The convention was addressed by Comrade Dipankar Bhattacharya as the main speaker. Attacking the systematic misinterpretation of history by the ruling classes on the freedom struggle, nation hood and national hero's, etc., Com. Dipankar forthrightly traced the history of 1857, Bhagat Singh and Naxalbari from a people's perspective. He called upon the Party to prepare for the March 23 National Rally to be held in Delhi on Bhagat Singh's martyrdom day, and to make it a resounding success as well as a fitting tribute to the martyred national hero and to use this occasion to send a

clear message of workers and peasants under the banner of revolutionary communists to the rulers of India. He called upon the struggling forces and the masses for a wider unity and said that the big battles ahead need big numbers and bigger unity. He expressed his hope and confidence and said let the message from Chennai witness newer and newer waves of peoples' struggles and movements. Large number of party activists, workers and left-intellectuals attended the convention. Central committee Members, S. Kumarsamy, Krishna Adhikari, V. Shankar, Dharendra Jha and Prabhat Chaudhary, were also present. Balasundaram, State Secretary, presided over the convention. The convention hall was filled with emotions and heavy applause when comrades of Party's Chennai City Committee contributed a sum of Rs. 10,000 to the Com. Bant Singh's rehabilitation fund.

Obituary

Comrade Ramanand Rai

Comrade Ramanand Rai, 90, passed away on 16 Nov., '06. Born in 1922 in a poor peasant family, Comrade Ramanand Rai joined in the freedom struggle after completing the sixth standard. He was arrested in 1942 during the 'Quit India' movement for hoisting flag at the police station and picketing on the rail tracks. He joined the communist party in 1950 and during the reorganisation years, joined the CPI(ML). His dedication for the people's cause and for the revolution will always remain a great source of inspiration for us, and his affectionate nature and simplicity will be remembered always particularly by the younger comrades. A memorial meeting was organised in his native village Amarpur in Begusarai district on November 27 which was attended by a large number of people and prominent citizens. The meeting was addressed by Comrades Shivsagar Sharma, Chandradev, Pramila Patel and others, and was presided over by Dr. Shambhu Kumar.

Make the All-India Industrial Strike,

called by central trade unions on December 14,

a Resounding Success

P.S.

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