

Communist Party of India (Marxist)

Central Committee

Report On Current Developments (Adopted At the November 22-24, 2002 Meeting of the C.C)

Since the last Central Committee meeting in August, important developments have taken place at the international level. This period has seen the bellicose preparations for war by the United States against Iraq. It has also seen the significant victory of the Left candidate for President in Brazil, the largest country in South America. These events show both the continuing US imperialist offensive and the increasing manifestations of resistance to it.

War on Iraq

The United States is working on a determined plan to invade and occupy Iraq. Every political and diplomatic move made by the US is designed to bring about a military attack. Behind this aggressive stance is President Bush's declaration that there has to be a regime change in Iraq. Addressing the UN General Assembly in September, Bush gave an ultimatum to the United Nations – take a decision to proceed against Iraq, or, the US will on its own attack Iraq.

Even though Iraq announced its willingness to allow UN weapons inspectors into the country on the basis of the 1998 UN resolution, the US dismissed this offer as a deception. It demanded a fresh resolution by the Security Council which can provide it the pretext to use military force. The draft resolution presented by the US and Britain contained such stringent and unacceptable provisions to Iraq which would have made it the basis for military intervention. Except Britain all the other three permanent members of the Security Council, France, Russia and China were opposed to military action. After eight weeks of protracted negotiations, the United States was forced to meet some of the objections raised by France and Russia and a revised draft was adopted unanimously.

The United States hopes to use this resolution to create conditions for blaming Iraq for not complying with its conditions and utilizing military force. The resolution calls for sending back the military weapons inspectors, Iraq making a full declaration of its weapons programme in thirty days and the inspectors reporting back to the Security Council in sixty days. While the majority in the Security Council see this resolution as the means to resolve the problem with Iraq peacefully, Bush and his loyal ally Tony Blair are planning to utilize the inspection process to put Iraq in the dock and

legitimize its military aggression. The next two months are going to be crucial.

President Bush after getting the US Congress to endorse his stand has been further emboldened by the Republican victory in the congressional elections. Military plans to occupy Iraq have been leaked out to the media. World public opinion is strongly rallying against the brazen American plans to occupy Iraq. Huge anti-war rallies are being held in all western capitals. The London demonstration in September, the Washington demonstration in October and the demonstrations in other cities of USA, Australia, Italy and Japan witnessed millions of people coming out against the US war plan. The biggest demonstration took place at Florence during the European Social Forum in November when half a million people marched.

New Bush Doctrine

President Bush has presented his strategic doctrine titled **National Security Strategy of the United States** which spells out how America will seek to retain world domination. For the first time, the document declares that it will not allow any other foreign power to “catch up with the huge lead the United States has opened since the fall of the Soviet Union more than a decade ago.” More menacingly, the document states, “our forces will be strong enough to desist potential adversaries from pursuing military build up in hopes of surpassing, or equaling, the power of the United States.” The strategy calls for preemptive military strikes against hostile countries or terrorist groups who threaten America’s security interests. It urges other countries to adopt America’s economic philosophy of free markets, free trade and low taxes. Unlike the Clinton administration, the Bush strategy does not pay much credence to enforcing non-proliferation treaties like the NPT or the CTBT. Such an aggressive doctrine poses a serious danger to the national sovereignty of all countries and in particular those countries and forces who refuse to accept American hegemony.

It is in line with this strategy that the United States has been pressing NATO to adopt a more aggressive and global posture. The NATO summit meeting in Prague in November has announced the creation of a multinational rapid action force of 20,000 troops that would allow NATO to operate against hostile forces far from Europe. The summit also decided to admit seven countries into NATO. The three Baltic republics and Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia. The first three were part of the Soviet Union and three others belonged to the Warsaw Pact. These steps are part of the restructuring of NATO in line with the US hegemonistic aims.

The Bush administration is indulging in this war talk at a time when the US economy is still struggling to recover from last year’s recession. The stock

markets are likely to decline for the third consecutive year, its longest such streak since 1939-41. None of the engines of the US economy, consumer expenditure, business spending on equipment are showing any substantial growth. The Federal Reserve has cut interest rates by another half percent and the rate is the lowest since the last 40 years in the hope of stimulating the economy. While the Bush administration has pushed up the defence budget to an unprecedented \$ 355 billion, the over all deficit in the current budget year has now gone up to \$ 165 billion.

Victory in Brazil

Lula da Silva, the candidate of the Workers Party and the Left alliance, won a big victory in the presidential elections held in October. Lula got 61.5 per cent of the vote compared to 38.5 for his Center-Right opponent. In the first round of elections, Lula had polled 46.4 per cent and led the race. The second round had to take place because no one got the mandated over 50 per cent vote. Lula polled 72 million votes.

This electoral victory in Brazil is of enormous significance. Brazil is the biggest country in Latin America and it has the world's eight largest economy. Brazil has so far faithfully followed the Washington consensus in economic policies. It is for the first time that a Left candidate has won the presidency who is committed to implementing an alternative set of policies.

The Left victory in Brazil comes in the wake of the widespread discontent against the neo-liberal policies all over Latin America. The failure of the attempt to oust Chavez through a military coup and the growing radicalization of the masses in Argentina after the economic collapse are some of the other major events highlighting this trend. Western media has widely commented that the Left victory signifies the rejection of the free market policies. The new Brazilian government has to wage an arduous struggle to rollback some of the more vicious aspects of the neo-liberal policies while trying to prevent a flight of capital and an economic collapse engineered by international finance capital and the big business. The victory of Lula in Brazil has enthused all the progressive forces in the world who are struggling against imperialist driven globalisation.

Korean Peninsula

Important developments have taken place in the Korean peninsula. The Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi visited Pyongyang, the first ever by a Japanese leader. Some steps were announced to normalize relations. This comes in the background of the progress made in the talks between North and South Korea to improve relations. It is at this juncture that the United States sent its envoy to Pyongyang after which the US accused North Korea of

having a nuclear weapons programme. This led to protests from Japan and South Korea demanding that North Korea give up its nuclear programme. The United States has threatened to annul the agreement it made with North Korea in 1994 for the construction of some nuclear reactors in return for North Korea stopping its production of plutonium. North Korea has refuted the charges against it made by the United States. It has stated that it is prepared to do everything to defend its national sovereignty and accused the United States of bad faith in implementing the 1994 agreement. Despite the US manoeuvres, talks between North and South Korea have continued and some further steps have been taken to establish economic ties.

The Chinese Party Congress

The 16th Congress of the CPC was held in the second week of November. The report adopted by the Congress and the amendments incorporated in the Constitution of the CPC maintain the direction set by the Party in the past one decade. The main thrust is to take economic development as the central task, develop the productive forces, improve the socialist market economy, rejuvenate the country through science and education and build a socialist country under rule of law and develop socialist culture. Strengthening the Party and its class foundations and fighting corruption is also stressed.

The amendment to the party constitution makes it clear that the CPC is the vanguard both of the Chinese working class and the Chinese people and the Chinese nation as well. The amendment also states that those who are willing to abide by the Party's programme and constitution and to work actively in one of the party's organisations and pay membership dues can apply for membership if they are workers, farmers, members of the armed forces, intellectuals or any advanced element of any other social strata.

Contrary to the big propaganda in the western media, the CPC has reaffirmed its basic commitment to build socialism with Chinese characteristics.

South Asian Region

Pakistan Elections

The elections to the National and Provincial assemblies were held on October 10. The Musharraf regime had amended the rules restricting the scope for political party leaders to contest the elections. The results have led to a hung assembly. The pro-Musharraf Pakistan Muslim League (Q) got 118 out of the total 342 seats. The PPP came second with 81 seats. The most striking result was the rise of the six party Islamist coalition, the Majlis i Amal (MMA) which has won 60 seats. The MMA has further won a majority in the North West Frontier Province and is the leading force in the Baluchistan assembly.

For nearly a month efforts have been going on to come to an understanding to form the government. However, so far these efforts have not succeeded. The MMA has demanded that its nominee Fazlour Rehman be made the Prime Minister. The PML (Q) has been trying to rope in the PPP and some others to form the government. The regime postponed the opening of parliament in view of the deadlock. The regime has succeeded in engineering defections from the PPP whose 10 elected members declared support for the PML(Q). The fundamentalists are penetrating and consolidating their influence in the administration and state apparatus. In the election to the Speaker, in a three cornered contest, the PML (Q) got its nominee elected with 160 votes. It is expected that its Prime Ministerial candidate will also be elected by parliament.

The success of the religious parties will pose serious problems for Musharraf and his US allies. Both the NWFP and Baluchistan will have governments led by the Islamic parties who sympathise with the Taliban. The MMA has called for the withdrawal of American forces and bases from the country. The rise of the religious parties is also an indication of the growing opposition to Musharraf's alliance with the United States. Whether they are in the central government or not, the religious parties will exercise strong influence.

The rise of the Islamic parties which have gained a substantial number of seats for the first time in Pakistan must be seen in the context of the rise of religious fundamentalism in the subcontinent. In Bangladesh, after the last elections, for the first time, representatives of the Jamaat-e-Islami are in the cabinet. In India, organizations like the RSS and the Shiv Sena are part of the central government. All this provides fertile grounds for penetration by US imperialism in South Asia and a fillip to sectarian and divisive forces.

Nepal

In Nepal a serious threat is developed to the democratic system. There was a split in the Nepali Congress after the Prime Minister Deuba recommended dissolution of parliament without the approval of the party. This took place in the background of the continuing large-scale hostilities between the Maoist rebels and the army. The emergency had led to the army gaining wider powers under the king. The king dismissed the Prime Minister and formed an interim government. The prime minister belongs to the pro-royal Rashtriya Prajatantra Party. None of the major political parties were consulted in the process. The cabinet consists of strong loyalists and some defectors from the other parties. The October 4 coup has set in motion the events which have resulted in the virtual suspension of the constitution, the bypassing of political parties and the creation of a pliable government. The major parties, the CPN(UML) and the Nepali Congress have opposed the king's moves. The

CPN(UML) has begun an agitation for a representative interim government as a prelude to early elections.

Sri Lanka

The talks between the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE under the auspices of the Norwegian mediation have progressed in Thailand. During the second round of talks, three important decisions were taken. Steps to start de-escalation of conflict, an agreement to look at the political models available and a joint effort to seek international assistance to rebuild the North-Eastern region. Three committees are to be formed to follow up the decisions taken. These developments have been welcomed by all sections in Sri Lanka and raised expectations among the people for a breakthrough which will restore peace.

Opposition to Imperialism & Terrorism

The three months since the last central committee confirms what our Party Congress had stated. US imperialism has today embarked upon a new phase of aggressive domination which is marked by the amoral use of its military strength. Iraq is the target of the next imperialist aggression. Terrorist attacks have also taken place in a dramatic fashion. The Chechen rebels siege of the Moscow theatre saw the death of a number of hostages when the security forces stormed the theatre. In Bali 180 tourists lost their lives in a bomb attack. Despite America's much vaunted war against terrorism, the indiscriminate use of military force will only give a fillip to such terrorist outbreaks. At the same time the recent period has seen the forces opposed to imperialism and war asserting themselves. Apart from the Brazilian elections, there have been huge anti-war demonstrations all over the world.

In India, at our Party's initiative, a Committee Against War on Iraq was set up in Delhi. It consists of various political parties, mass organisations and prominent individuals. The first anti-war demonstration was held on November 14. In all states, we should set up such broad-based committees and launch campaigns as the US threat of war is still real and imminent.

National Situation

The major developments which took place in the last three months are the Jammu & Kashmir elections leading to the defeat of the National Conference and the formation of a new government there. The events in Gujarat continue to have its impact on the national scene with the provocative activities of the RSS-VHP combine. The crisis in the Mayawati government in Uttar Pradesh has resulted in a serious blow to the BJP's position with significant defections from it. The controversy over the sharing of the Cauvery waters dominated the scene in Tamilnadu and Karnataka for a number of weeks. The period also saw a sharp controversy over disinvestments within the government and growing resistance to the privatisation of public sector units.

Jammu & Kashmir Elections

The Jammu & Kashmir elections were held in the background of the extremist groups backed by Pakistan making concerted efforts to disrupt the polls through large-scale violence. Despite these attacks, 43 per cent polling was recorded. In most places people were determined to come out and exercise their franchise and the polling would have been higher if peace and normalcy could have been ensured.

The defeat of the National Conference is of immense significance. Since the Election Commission ensured that no rigging would take place through the state machinery, the results have been more in tune with the people's wishes. The National Conference paid the price for its opportunism in allying with the BJP at the Centre, a party which rejects Article 370 and autonomy for the state. The betrayal by the National Conference of its own secular traditions has been punished by the people in the valley. The misrule and corruption in the Farooq Abdullah government also contributed to the popular discontent. The Congress and the PDP gained in these elections, the former in Jammu and the latter in the valley. While the National Conference was reduced from 57 to 28, the Congress won 24 and the PDP 16. The Panthers Party won 4 seats from Jammu. The CPI(M) won two seats. Com. Tarigami retained the Kulgam seat polling 56 per cent of the vote. The Party won the Wachi seat. It came second in two other seats Devsar and Phunshali Bag. In all these four seats in Anantnag district and one in Pulwama, the main contest was between the CPI(M) and the PDP with the National Conference coming third.

The good performance of the Party in Anantnag district and neighbouring areas is a result of the hard work among the people during the last six years by the Party there which has earned it the confidence of new sections of the people. It is also a recognition of the state unit's record of consistently defending the people's interests in a situation where they are subjected to the

depredations of the extremists and the oppressive steps taken by the state machinery. During the election campaign, three comrades were killed by the extremists in the Kulgam constituency.

Though the National Conference was rejected by the people, no other party was in a position to form the government by itself. It became essential that the Congress and the PDP come to an agreement to form a coalition government. The problem centred around which party would get the Chief Ministership. After prolonged talks finally it was decided that Mufti Mohammed Sayeed will take over the Chief Ministership for the first three years. The formation of the government has been met with hope and expectations among the people who wish to see peace and normalcy restored. A common minimum programme has been drafted which contains certain positive features such as the commitment for a political dialogue, an end to militant violence, respect for human rights, an end to the misuse of draconian laws and steps for economic development, employment generation and equitable distribution of resources to the three regions of the state, Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh. However, the programme is silent about the need for providing autonomy to the state of Jammu & Kashmir. The CPI(M) has pointed out this absence in the common minimum programme and stated that it is necessary to focus on the issue of autonomy to advance the political dialogue to meet the aspirations of the Kashmiri people.

Gujarat

After the last Central Committee meeting, the Supreme Court took up the Presidential reference on the Election Commission's decision regarding elections in Gujarat. The Supreme Court at the outset stated that its opinion on the reference would not have any direct bearing on the Gujarat situation. The game of the BJP to hold early elections was effectively foiled. The Court's judgement on the presidential reference has rejected the BJP's stand that it is mandatory under Article 174 to hold elections to fulfill the condition that there can be no more than a six-month gap between two sessions of an assembly even if the assembly is dissolved. The Court took the stand that the six-month period applies to a living assembly and not after it is dissolved. Secondly, the judgement has upheld the stand of the Election Commission that under Article 324 it is fully within its powers to decide the date of elections. After the Court clarified that it is duty of the Election Commission to hold elections at the earliest and ruled out the imposition of president's rule under Article 356 based on any interpretation given to Article 174. The CPI(M) had taken the position during the court proceedings that Article 174 is applicable only to a live assembly and not to a dissolved one. It had also argued that since this clause is not applicable to a dissolved assembly, the other two points of reference concerning Article 324 and 356 are irrelevant. The Supreme Court has upheld this position.

In the last two months Narendra Modi conducted five rounds of his “*gaurav yatra*”. It was marked by violent anti-Muslim speeches. One of the worst speeches was recorded and broadcast by the media. This was followed by the vituperative remark made by the VHP leader Togadia who has been using abusive language against Sonia Gandhi and all those opposed to the communal stance of the VHP. A concerted effort is being made to foment tensions and keep alive the communal tensions.

The terrorist attack on the Swaminarayan temple in Gandhinagar was a shocking event. It led to the massacre of thirty innocent people including children. This is clearly a retaliatory action by the extremist elements which will heighten the communal divide. The attack on the temple shows how terrorist violence by minority extremist elements in response to the mass violence by the majority communalists will feed each other and vitiate the atmosphere. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad gave a bandh call on October 28 which was observed in a number of states. In Maharashtra the Shiv Sena gave such a call. The BJP and the state government ensured that there is no violence in Gujarat this time indicating that the post-Godhra situation would not have developed without the state government’s connivance.

The elections to the Gujarat assembly have been announced and it will be held on December 12. In the last Central Committee meeting we had taken the stand that a one-to-one fight in Gujarat should be ensured to defeat the BJP. There seems to be no likelihood of a broader understanding emerging between the Congress and other secular parties. Both the NCP and the Samajwadi party will be fighting independently. Our Party should maintain its appeal to the people to unite and support the strongest secular candidate to defeat the BJP.

Uttar Pradesh Government Crisis

In UP, Mayawati has been trying to consolidate her position by announcing certain pro-dalit policies. At the same time she has been unwilling to confront the BJP on any issue. She withdrew certain policy announcements when the BJP objected to them. Apprehending efforts by the Samajwadi Party to weaken her coalition, she went further and tried to cement her alliance with the BJP.

As per the Supreme Court's direction, the UP government had to take a decision on the question of re-issuing the notification to refer the Babri Masjid case to a Special Court. L.K. Advani, Murli Manohar Joshi and other BJP and VHP leaders are the accused in the chargesheet filed by the CBI. On their appeal to the High Court, on a technicality, the earlier notification was struck down and the court had stated that the government is free to issue a

fresh notification. By refusing to do so, Mayawati has shielded the top leaders of the BJP-RSS combine and hopes to strengthen her coalition.

She went further and invited L.K. Advani to address the rally organised by the BSP on September 28. At this rally, an announcement was made that the BJP and the BSP will jointly fight the next Lok Sabha elections. Despite all these efforts by Mayawati, the inherent contradiction in the alliance between the BJP and the BSP cannot be suppressed. In our Central Committee report in May, we had pointed out that the conflict between the upper caste base of the BJP and the dalit base of the BSP is bound to happen. It has now erupted in the form of the revolt by 12 BJP MLAs who have withdrawn support to the government. They mainly belong to the Rajput caste and they are not willing to tolerate a Mayawati-led government. The Samajwadi Party had rallied these rebel BJP MLAs and seven of the independents who had earlier declared support to the government. The government is clearly in a minority in the assembly with its strength below the required 202. But the Government of UP who belongs to the RSS has consistently refused to call an assembly session to test the majority of the ruling coalition.

The real loser in this process has been the BJP. With a revolt by a section of its upper caste MLAs, the support base of the BJP has got further eroded. Already in the assembly elections held in February this year, it had been relegated to the third position.

An opportunity to defeat the ruling alliance came up during the by-elections to the legislative council. There was only one opposition candidate against the ruling alliance candidate. The Congress which has so far refused to commit support to an alternative government led by the Samajwadi Party abstained in the voting. It has 24 MLAs. As a result, though the ruling coalition could get only 194 votes, eight less than majority, it still won the election. The vote proved the opposition contention that Mayawati has lost her majority in the assembly. The Congress party's stand is guided by narrow considerations, its state unit is against extending support to Mulayam Singh. The demand that the assembly be convened for testing the majority of the government must be pushed ahead. The fall of the BSP-BJP government will be a major setback for the BJP at the national level.

Drought & Food Security

The central government has shown a callous and negligent attitude to the demand for funds to meet the drought situation. All the affected states have demanded a total of Rs. 35,000 crore to compensate for the damages and for relief work. So far, only Rs. 2,000 crore has been dispersed by the Centre. Many of the state governments have also failed to respond properly to provide relief to the rural poor badly hit by the drought. With the worst

drought in recent years, the problem of food shortage has led to hunger and malnutrition. Hunger related deaths have been reported in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and other places. The shocking state of affairs regarding the public distribution system has been confirmed by the minister for agriculture Ajit Singh has admitted recently that the public distribution system has collapsed. In such a situation, six crore tonnes of food grains are rotting in the godowns while the rural poor go hungry. The BJP central government is fully responsible for this criminal state of affairs.

We must demand that urgent steps be taken to expand the Antodaya scheme of supplying foodgrains at Rs. 2 per kilo. The prices of foodgrains supplied for the BPL category should also be reduced. The targeting in the public distribution system has failed and universal public distribution must be restored.

Opposition to Privatisation

The Central government was poised to sell-off the shares of the giant oil companies like BPCL and HPCL through a strategic sale of 26 per cent equity. There has been widespread opposition to this move to privatise the strategic oil sector. The Petroleum Minister, Ram Naik, raised certain objections on the procedures. George Fernandes also went public in asking for review of disinvestment policy. The Cabinet Committee on Disinvestment was forced to postpone the decision on the two oil companies for three months. Certain other ministers have also been expressing reservations on the disinvestment proposals for the enterprises connected with their ministries.

A significant movement developed in Orissa opposing the privatisation of NALCO, the profitable aluminium-producing unit. All the political parties have come out against it. There was a statewide general strike on this issue. Various mass organisations and parties are conducting separate or joint protest actions. The ruling party, the BJP and the Chief Minister were also forced to come out against the sale. For the first time, the fight against privatisation of public sector units has assumed the proportions of a mass movement. This has compelled the government to postpone the disinvestments proceedings.

In Bihar, there has been a bandh called by the Left parties on the closure of the Barauni fertiliser plant. In Kerala, a movement is being conducted to oppose the privatisation of the FACT factory. Increasingly, the reckless drive for privatisation spearheaded by Arun Shourie is meeting with growing resistance. On the other hand, big business and foreign financial circles are putting maximum pressure on the Indian government to go ahead with the privatisation.

The Centaur Hotel resale scandal has exposed the seamy side of privatisation. The hotel was sold to a company whose owner is close to the RSS. He in turn resold the hotel in four months making a profit of Rs. 32 crores. The undervaluation of PSU units is also confirmed in the BALCO sale by the CAG report.

The situation is developing favourably for widening the resistance to the privatisation drive as many of the bourgeois parties are also feeling popular pressure on this issue. We must plan out more concerted actions both at the Party level and the trade unions to halt the privatisation of the public sector units.

Cauvery water problem

During this period, the problem of sharing the Cauvery waters between Karnataka and Tamilnadu became acute. This year, because of poor rainfall, there was a genuine problem affecting the farmers, both in Karnataka and Tamilnadu. The 'Kuruvai' crop in Cauvery delta in Tamilnadu was severely damaged because of the lack of supply of water. In Karnataka, because of poor inflow, the requirements for irrigation and drinking water could not be met adequately.

On the petition from the Tamilnadu government, the Supreme Court gave an interim order directing Karnataka to release 1.2 tmc of water every day till the Cauvery Rivers Authority (CRA) could meet and take a decision on a sharing formula. The Cauvery Monitoring Authority could not come to an acceptable formula on distress sharing. The CRA, which met before the Prime Minister left for the United Nations, decided to allocate 0.9 million cusecs of water to Tamilnadu. Karnataka, after releasing the water for a few days stopped doing so after the suicide by a protesting farmer. There was a series of protest actions in Karnataka against releasing water. Jayalalitha went to the Supreme Court again on this matter.

On both sides, the state government called all-party meetings. Our state Party units attended these meetings. In Tamilnadu, the resolution proposed by the government was not acceptable to us as it contained a demand that the Centre should take over the reservoirs in Karnataka. In the all-party meeting held by Karnataka Chief Minister, S.M. Krishna, in Delhi, there was no commitment to continue the supply of water of any quantum to Tamilnadu.

Given this situation and our stress for an amicable solution, our state leadership did not join the respective all-party delegations to the Prime Minister. This is in keeping with our stand that we should not line up with

the bourgeois parties on unreasonable demands which can only exacerbate the problem and rouse chauvinism.

The PB and both the Karnataka and Tamilnadu state committees issued statements stating that the Supreme Court direction to Karnataka to release water must be implemented, while the CRA must immediately meet to try and work out an amicable solution.

With the bout of rains both in Karnataka and Tamilnadu in recent weeks, there has been a easing of the water shortage which has prevented the situation getting worsened.

Tripura

After the CC meeting, we had taken up with the Congress President, the question of their alliance with the extremist INPT. The Congress is going ahead with its opportunist alliance. On September 8th, they organised a joint rally with INPT at Agartala. Because of the outcry against Hrangkhawl's speech in Geneva supporting secession, Hrangkhawl was persuaded to make a statement in the rally that he believes in the Indian Constitution. A case has been filed against Hrangkhawl for his seditious speech. In protest, the INPT called for a 48-hour rasta roko which was supported by the Congress. The protest fizzled out after the first day.

The Left Front held a rally on September 14th which had a huge attendance and gave an effective reply to the Congress-INPT rally. The attacks by the NLFT are continuing targetting our comrades in the tribal areas. We will have to continue to expose the dangerous nature of the Congress alliance for the forthcoming assembly elections in February 2003.

Jhajjar Killing of Dalits

The continuing atrocities on dalits and the vicious efforts by Hindutva communal organisations to whip up mass sentiments on issues such as cow slaughter was seen in the horrific incident of the lynching of five dalits in the Jhajjar district of Haryana. The rumour was spread that a cow was killed and was being skinned by these persons. A mob of people instigated by the VHP attacked the five persons and killed them after dragging them out of the Duleena police post.

The Haryana government refused to take prompt steps to arrest the guilty persons and punish the police officials guilty of dereliction of duty. It is only after a public campaign and protest that some symbolic steps were taken. The Jhajjar incident illustrates the type of attacks taking place all over the country against the dalits and minorities by the upper caste chauvinists or the rabid

communal forces. In the case of Jhajjar, our Party sent its delegation immediately to the spot and was active in the protests launched against the incident. Other such attacks are taking place. A recent incident being in Jalaun Uttar Pradesh where two lower caste men and an upper caste girl were killed by a thakur landlord.

Violence Against Women

Attacks on women in the form of sexual violence, revenge attacks motivated by caste chauvinism and crimes against women in general are a growing phenomenon. In all such incidents and atrocities such as in Jhajjar, our Party must immediately intervene and mobilise the democratic forces to oppose such vicious caste and gender based violence.

Communalisation of Education

The NCERT published two social science textbooks for Class IX and Class VI. These books confirm the sinister design of the BJP-led government to teach history linked with the communal outlook. The assassination of Gandhi by Godse is omitted; the caste system is justified “as flexible in the beginning” and the role of Communists in the freedom struggle slandered. The judgement of the Supreme Court in the National Curriculum Framework is being used by HRD minister Murlu Manohar Joshi and his cohorts to push for further de-secularisation of the syllabus and educational system. There is a governing body of public opinion and parents of children who are concerned about the unhealthy trends. The Party should support the demand that the syllabus and textbooks be thoroughly reviewed and discussed before they are put into place.

Tamilnadu Act On Conversions

The Jayalalitha government suddenly issued an ordinance against conversions. The ordinance had draconian provisions for punishing those involved in religious conversions by use of force or allurement. The punishment extends to fine upto Rs. 50,000 and imprisonment upto 3 years. If the convert persons happens to be SC/ST or women, the penalty would be higher upto Rs. 1 lakh and imprisonment upto four years. Despite widespread protests by the opposition parties and the minority organisations, the ordinance has been now made into an act through legislation in the assembly. Only the BJP and RSS welcomed the ordinance. The AIADMK government has enacted this law clearly with the political motive of winning over the Hindu organisations. It had earlier announced measures such as free lunch to devotees in temples by the government. There is no check on the activities of the Hindu communal organisations particularly their minority baiting

campaigns. Our Party has vigorously opposed the anti-conversion law and alongwith other secular parties conducted a strong campaign against it.

Withdrawal of Troops from Indo-Pak Border

The government in the third week of October decided to withdraw the army from the forward positions on the border with Pakistan. The full-scale mobilization of troops and equipment on the Indo-Pakistan border took place after the terrorist attack on parliament in December last year. For ten months, the unprecedented deployment continued with ten lakh troops from both sides ranged across the international border and the line of control in Jammu & Kashmir. This reflected the serious escalation of tensions between the two countries. The CPI(M) had pointed out the mobilization of forces on the border and the resultant confrontation would divert attention from the basic issue of terrorist violence directed against India. The threat of a war and a nuclear confrontation would become the primary concern of the world. Two serious terrorist attacks took place during the period of border mobilisation. These further aggravated tensions and questions arose whether terrorist attacks by hardcore gangs could be stopped by such strategy. The Vajpayee government's approach was to get the United States to intervene in the Indo-Pakistan stand off, which it did in a big way.

Now that the troops withdrawals are taking place on both sides, the Vajpayee government has to consider other options. Provocative acts of violence will continue from the extremist groups based in Pakistan. To abjure talks with Pakistan cannot be the response to them. India has to resume dialogue with Pakistan at the appropriate level after taking further de-escalating measures.

Conclusion

In the coming period the Party should pay attention to organising a broad-based campaign to mobilise the people against the imminent threat of US aggression on Iraq. Anti-war committees should be constituted.

All efforts should be made to rally the people and democratic opinion to ensure the defeat of the BJP in the forthcoming Gujarat assembly elections.

December 6 marks the tenth anniversary of the demolition of the Babri Masjid. This day should be observed for exposing the designs of the RSS-BJP combine and to rally all democratic forces in defence of secularism.

The struggle against privatisation has assumed sharp focus. The Party should take initiative to build a united resistance to sale of PSUs like NALCO, HPCL, BPCL etc. The Party should also oppose the attacks on labour rights as proposed in the National Labour Commission.

The problem of the peasantry and agricultural workers since the drought and the continuing fall in prices should be taken up for developing local movements and forcing the governments to provide relief.

The Party should actively intervene and take up the attacks on dalits, adivasis and women which are increasing. The Central government circular to evict encroachers from forests will affect tribal people badly. We should organise protests demanding the circular be withdrawn.