

More On Phrases And Facts

Ranadive, Harekrishna and other "Marxist" propagandists declare that they never sow any parliamentary illusions; that, on the contrary, they use parliamentarism in order to expose it as a fraud; that by joining the UF Governments, which, according to their tall claim, are instruments of class struggle, they seek to develop class struggles. Let us see how these claims can be reconciled with facts. What are the facts? Did the "Marxists" fight the General Election to disillusion the people about the parliamentary road? Did they tell the people that grim class struggle, not the ballot box, would alone enable the toiling people to seize power? Did they ask the people to prepare for agrarian struggles which, according to their Programme, form the axis of the People's Democratic Revolution? Facts tell a different story. Instead of breaking the illusions of the people about the parliamentary road, they only strengthened them during the election campaign. They promised the people that if they could set up a government ousting the Congress, they would at least provide relief to the masses. Even as late as January 1968, E.M.S. Namboodiripad said in reply to the questions of a *Washington Post* correspondent: "...despite the limitations described above (the provisions in the Constitution and policies pursued by the Congress at the centre), **the State government can do small things by way of giving partial relief to the people** (*People's Democracy*, January 14, 1968). And *People's Democracy* wrote in its editorial of February 25, 1968:

"...it [the dismissal of the Ghosh ministry] is a defeat for the West Bengal and all-India Congress leadership who secretly plotted and exploited their position in the Government to satisfy their mad lust power and to **prevent the United Front Ministry from giving relief to the people at the expense of their masters — the capitalists and landlords.**" One feels tempted to ask Ranadive, Konar and Co. what relief was given by the U.F. Government to the people of West Bengal during its regime of nine months. For the Kerala experience we may refer to Namboodiripad himself, who said in reply to the *Washington Post*:

"People today have, on the contrary, even less food (and that at higher cost) than ten months ago. The problem of unemployment and lack of all-round economic development has also become worse during the last ten months." (*People's Democracy*, 14.1.68).

Therefore, the claim of the "Marxist" leaders that they were educating the people about the futility of parliamentarism is utterly hollow. For months before the elections they sought to set up electoral fronts with all sorts of reactionary and opportunist parties like the Bangla Congress, the PSP, the Forward Bloc, the SSP, the Gorkha League, the Dange revisionists, etc. The spread of revolutionary politics was to them not the main thing: the main thing was the number of seats in the Legislative Assembly they could secure. And so, during the election campaign they sowed all kinds of illusion instead of uprooting them from the minds of the people. To use the words of Lenin, "The 'mistake' of the leaders mentioned lies in their petty-bourgeois position, in the fact that instead of clarifying the minds of the workers, they are *befogging* them; instead of dispersing petty-bourgeois illusions, they are *instilling* them; instead of freeing the masses from bourgeois influence, they are *strengthening* that influence." (A Dual Power).

The claim of these sham Marxists that they used the U.F. Government as an instrument of class struggle is also no more than a demagogic stunt. After joining the U.F. Government in West Bengal, the West Bengal Committee of the CPI(M) declared:

"Further, the [U.F] Ministry is formed on the basis of a conglomeration of fourteen parties with different policies and ideologies and they are united with the aim of serving the people's interests. *It has to function on the basis of a non-class outlook* ("W.B. State Committee Reviews Elections, Charts Immediate Tasks", *People's Democracy*, 16.4.67 — Emphasis added). **In the name of a non-class outlook, these treacherous leaders made this open declaration of abandoning class-struggle and surrendering the outlook of the proletariat and its interests to the outlook and interests of reactionary exploiting classes** represented by the Bangla Congress and the like. Let us refer to Lenin again: "...the *only* choice is — either bourgeois or socialist ideology. There is no middle course (for mankind has not created a 'third' ideology, and, **moreover, in a society torn by class antagonisms there can never be a non-class or an above class ideology**). Hence, to belittle the socialist ideology *in any way, to turn aside from it in the slightest degree* means to strengthen bourgeois ideology." (*What is to be Done?*). And this is what these renegades from socialism actually did during the nine months they held office in West Bengal.

A few instances will suffice. First, while in office these renegades did not adopt any legislative measure or issue any ordinance that could serve the interests of the poor peasantry at the expense of the exploiting classes.

What prevented them, for instance, from reducing the ceiling on land holdings from 25 acres per family to, say, 10 acres per family or 2 acres per head? What prevented them from increasing the share of the share-croppers from 60 per cent of the produce (which they do not actually get) to, say, 75 or 80 per cent? They did nothing of the kind though the provisions in the Indian Constitution did not certainly stand in their way. Instead, in a Note prepared and submitted by him to the Cabinet, the "Marxist" Land and Land Revenue Minister of the U.F. Government, Harekrishna Konar, recommended: "***The Government policy should be to protect bargadars to enable them to harvest the paddy peacefully and, at the same time, to see that owners get their due share.***" Again, "*Officers*, the note said, "***should see that landowners were given their due share of the produce***" (*The Statesman*, Nov. 8, 1967).

This shameless lackey of the *jotedars* has the cheek to claim that his government was serving the interests of the poor peasantry and acting as an instrument of struggle in their hands!

Secondly, when the struggle of the Naxalbari peasantry against evictions started, a struggle which, as Konar has admitted, was just, Konar's government issued hundreds of warrants for arrest of the leaders and ordinary peasants. Instead of withdrawing those warrants and putting in prison the *jotedars* who were evicting share-croppers in defiance of the existing laws, Konar shamelessly advised the peasants and their leaders to surrender to the police and not to evade arrest — in other words, to surrender to the *jotedars*. Even before listening to the communist and peasant leaders of Siliguri, he openly condemned their alleged excesses. His government unleashed the police against the peasants fighting for their just rights, and the police fired upon and killed eleven of them, of whom seven were women and two children. As a member of the

Cabinet Mission that visited Siliguri, Konar called upon the peasants to withdraw their movement or to face the brutal repression that would follow. There was not a word in the statement issued by the Cabinet Mission condemning the looting, arson, murder, etc., which were being perpetrated by the goonda gangs organized by the Congress and the SSP. Then two things happened. On the one hand, the State Government, of which the "Marxists" were members, acted in close co-operation with the Central Government in using the state machinery to try to suppress the struggle of the peasantry. They sent several contingents of the armed police to the area, set up a large number of police camps and sought to terrorize the peasantry by firing upon peasants and making indiscriminate arrests. On the other hand, the leaders of the CPI(M) dissolved the Darjeeling District Committee and Siliguri Local Committee of the Party, which were leading the struggle, without going through even the formality of a charge-sheet against them, set up ad hoc Committees in their place, expelled the militant comrades from the Party and started a vicious campaign of lies and slander against them and all others who supported the cause of the Naxalbari peasantry. The militant comrades were dubbed "left adventurists," "CIA agents", etc. etc. They published from time to time the names of militant comrades and even of sympathizers who opposed their counter-revolutionary line so that the police could easily identify them. This was, indeed, class struggle *par excellence*!

Thirdly, frightened out of their wits that the message of Naxalbari might spread to other areas, these sham Marxists helped to set up police camps, camp courts, etc., in different districts to put down by fire and sword all resistance of the poor peasantry against the most abominable kind of feudal exploitation. Reporting that measures were finalized at a meeting of senior district officials and member, Board of Revenue, with Harekrishna Konar, *The Statesman's* Staff Reporter said:

"One hundred police camps will be set up throughout the district (24 Parganas). There will also be mobile courts with magistrates to settle disputes." (*The Statesman*, 18.11.67).

And in various places, besides Naxalbari, the police fired upon militant peasants and arrested hundreds of them during the U.F. regime.

At the same time, this bunch of traitors tried to sabotage the struggle of the poor peasantry from within. On October 20, 1967, *The Statesman* reported: "**As secretary of the Krishak Sabha, Mr. Konar had also issued circulars to his organization's units asking Sabha workers to impress upon the bargadars the need for avoiding clashes with jotedars who might try to use force to take away paddy from the fields.** The Sabha should organize its workers so that bargadars could deposit their produce at panchayat khamars. Thereupon BDOs (Block Development Officers) and JLROs (Junior Land Revenue Officers) should be requested to distribute paddy, after thrashing, among bargadars and jotedars." This is, indeed, quite a novel way of developing class struggle — perhaps the Indian path which our "Marxist" leaders have discovered!

Fourthly, according to a report in the Bengali daily *Jugantar* of November 22, 1967, 120,000 men lost their jobs and there was lock-out in 269 mills and factories in West Bengal between March and September 1967 — the first seven months of the U.F. regime. Nothing, absolutely nothing, was done to curb the capitalists. But every step was taken to paralyse the militant

activities of the workers. Even the general strike, that had been declared for September 11 to resist the offensive of the big bourgeoisie, was called off. At the same time, the "Marxist" Deputy Chief Minister was prating about industrial peace. On October 6, *The Statesman* reported: "We do not want strikes and lock-out. We seek an amicable settlement of labour disputes,' commented the Deputy Chief Minister Mr Jyoti Basu (CPI-M) after the Cabinet meeting." On October 27, Jyoti Basu said in Madras that "the West Bengal Government's policy was not more strikes and lock-outs but more production (*The Statesman*, 28.10.67). Jyoti Basu, according to a report in *The Statesman* of October 24, said: "The West Bengal Government acknowledged the fact that efforts should be made to harmonize relations in industry. It had therefore decided to meet industrialists and trade union leaders soon . . . Mr. Jyoti Basu felt the trade union leaders were partly responsible for the present state of affairs." This was certainly the way of developing class struggle with a vengeance! To develop it still further they sent the police to fire upon and arrest workers, at Dum Dum, Birlapur and other places.

Fifthly, the U.F. Government did absolutely nothing to curb the activities of black-marketeers and profiteers. The price of rice soared to the all-time high of Rs. 4.00 and Rs. 4.50 per kg. Levy orders on *jotedars* were withdrawn and a paltry amount of 55,000 tons was procured by the U.F. Government from the distress sale by the poor peasantry. The "Marxist" leaders asked the people not to de-hoard stocks of food themselves but to inform the police or the BDO's of such stocks. These "Marxists" were quite enamoured of the police and the bureaucracy of this semi-colonial, semi-feudal state!

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