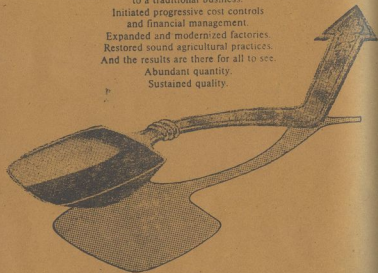


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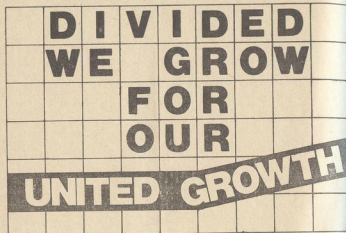
November 1989

**Gorbachov and Indian
Communists**

**The Other Side of
'Rural Development'**

**Kerala Government
Ruins Forests to Serve
Industrial Interests**

**Christianity's Use for
Domination under
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MONTHLY JOURNAL OF DEENDAYAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE, NEW DELHI

Vol. X

No. 11

November 1989

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| Phones : 526735, 526792 | |
| <hr/> | |
| | Subscription Rates |
| | Life Member : Rs. 1,000 |
| | Single Copy : Rs. 5 |
| | Annual : Rs. 50 |
| | Foreign (Air) : £ 15 |
| | or \$ 25 |
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Gorbachov and Indian Communists

By : Dr. Ashok G. Modak
Bombay University

Reading this scholarly article about Indian communists, you are reminded of Indian Muslims. Indian Muslims kept bugging the institution of Khalifat even after the Turks had abolished the Khalifa. Indian Communists are hanging on to Stalin even after Russia itself has denounced him ! Indeed they worship Stalin and Lenin as idols !

—Ed.

IT is indeed quite interesting to study how Indian Communists have reacted to the Gorbachovian reforms introduced for remedying the crisis-like situation in Soviet Union. It is equally interesting to know the assessment made by Indian comrades of the Gorbachovian diagnosis of this situation. In fact, the spread of Gorbachovism has caused severe shocks to the comrades in India. That is why a study of the responses from Indian Communists to the tunes of Gorbachov is of utmost relevance at least on two grounds.

First, Indian Communists are known for their conviction that the CPSU is the most reliable guide and philosopher for comrades all over the world. One should, therefore, enquire how communists in India have looked at the historical phenomenon such as the emergence and growth of Gorbachovism in the Soviet land. Secondly it was in 1964 that the communist movement in India split into two formations. Since then the CPI and the CPM have adopted on occasions different positions. If the CPI has tried to implement Soviet guidelines, the CPM has followed the Chinese line of thinking. For more than two decades Moscow and Beijing suffered from estrangement from each other. And quarrels between the two formations in the Indian Communist movement in all these years were reflective of the estrangement between Moscow and Beijing.

At present these two capitals seem to have developed very cordial relations with each other, as a result of Gorbachovian efforts. The study like "Gorbachov and Indian Communists" thus acquires one more dimension, as it enables us to know whether divisions among Indian Communists continue to look at Gorbachev from different angles or their assessment of Gorbachovian policies mirrors their unity in the new set up.

A SHORT REVIEW of the Gorbachovian diagnosis of the crisis in USSR is quite appropriate in the beginning of this paper. Summarisation of the reforms introduced by Gorbachov is also called for in this connection. The analysis of reactions on the part of Indian comrades to these phenomena will be a logical sequel after presenting Gorbachovian views regarding Soviet problems. Finally it will be possible for us to arrive at certain conclusions.

As for the diagnosis attempted by Gorbachov of the problems faced by the Soviet Union, it appears that the whole course has undergone a gradual unfoldment. Thus in the initial days of his career as General Secretary of the CPSU, Gorbachov blamed Soviet bureaucracy for the crisis-like situation. He also then accused several vices like alcoholism, philistinism and permissivism among Soviets youths for the stagnation of Soviet economy. He moreover observed in those days that certain features of the Stalinist model of development must be held responsible for the damage to the Soviet image. He accordingly listed such features as follow: excessive or rather exclusive reliance on state, command methods, purposeful negligence of the sector of consumer goods and services, misleading performance indicators for measuring the works of enterprise-chiefs, taut planning, free grant of resources to enterprises, administered prices, etc.

In due course, Gorbachov launched the campaign of de-Stalinisation. He in fact held Stalin responsible for bureaucracy and for depoliticisation of citizens. He further stated that the Stalinist policies and practices ultimately resulted in causing alienation or estrangement of the masses. Gorbachov later found it essential to attack the latter half of Brezhnev-years. Still, however, he blamed the circle of Brezhnevian colleagues ruling over the USSR for around two decades (and not Brezhnev alone) for the stagnant economy. But soon he concentrated his crusade exclusively against Brezhnev. Finally Gorbachov seems to have blessed the description of entire Brezhnev-era as the period of stagnation.

By November 1987, that is, by the time when Soviet masses came forward to celebrate the completion of seventy years of Bolshevik revolution, Gorbachov argued that the Soviet Union had acquired some of the systemic inadequacies, because for around three decades Stalin adopted terroristic practices, later for a decade or so Khrushchev tried to impose his own *ad hoc* and hare-brained schemes and still later for about two decades, Brezhnev cultivated structural immobilism.

Mikhail Gorbachov has indeed demolished a number of simplistic equations such as the nationalisation of means of production is equal to

resolving of all problems of exploitation; the right to work means putting a stop to all anxieties concerned with unemployment; and keeping prices of essential goods and services at low levels means facilitating the removal of poverty. The present Soviet leader has also almost said good bye to several radical innovations like the fusion of powers in place of separation of powers, presentation of the CPSU as the real representative of common people and, therefore, denial of opportunities of representation to the non-party public organisations, description of the present period as the stage of developed socialism, assumption that the USSR has already become a homogeneous society, etc. Gorbachov has, moreover, further diluted utopian notions like the achievements of communism within a short span, the withering away of religion, family and other similar institutions, rise of the egalitarian society in the Soviet land in the near future, etc. The Chief of USSR indeed feels that by exposing and attacking various ills, equations and notions, and also by implementing certain radical reforms, he can transform the stagnant Soviet economy into a dynamic and efficient system.

From alcoholism and permissivism to de-Stalinisation and de-Brezhnevisation

The reforms implemented by Gorbachov can be classified broadly into three groups. The first group comprises economic measures like granting operational autonomy to enterprises, involving chiefs of enterprises, in the processes of decision-making at the industry level and if possible at the above levels as well, offering work collectives the freedom to elect managers, replacement of the free grant of resources to enterprises by the introduction of wholesale trading in resources, legalisation of the private sector in small-scale service activities, decentralisation in the state sector and positive encouragement to the growth of the non-state sector. The second group consists of legal and constitutional measures like asking people to consider governmental rules and regulations as prescriptive rather than proscriptive, as prohibitive rather than recommendatory, replacement of the presumption of guilt by that of innocence, and informing the masses to treat any disregard of a court's verdict as equivalent to contempt of court. The third group of reforms deals with measures pertaining to the field of Soviet polity. There have indeed been implemented very significant suggestions such as separation of party from state, and state from society, boost to the non-party mass organisations, granting people freedom of expression, creating multi-candidate constituencies in elections, weakening of censorship, conversion of Soviets at all levels into genuinely representative houses, etc.

WHILE STUDYING the reactions of Indian communists to the Gorbachovian analysis of Soviet problems, one should keep in mind that Indian comrades do have their own perceptions about the appraisal of past happenings in USSR, that they hold certain convictions and notions regarding the course of developments undergone by the USSR.

To anybody it is obvious that there is a remarkable gap between the perceptions held by Indian Communists and those of Gorbachov regarding the assessment of Soviet history. In its statement published on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the October Revolution, the Central Committee of the CPM pointed out how "the society in USSR is free from crisis and unemployment and is securing the full benefit of technological development for the common man."¹ Comrade S.G. Sardesai, a senior leader of CPI, stated in one of his articles in March 1988 that "no other country had recorded such magnificent achievements as the Soviet Union during the last seventy years."²

Gorbachov does not, however, appear to be satisfied with the achievements of the socialist system in the USSR. It is true that he is proud of certain aspects like improvement in the living standards of people within a short span, spread of education and provision of health care, the armed strength being comparable to that of USA, etc. One should note at the same time that Gorbachov tries to measure achievements of a socialist system with a different yardstick. He perhaps feels that the socialist system should create conditions for the full and free development of every individual, that it must create the possibility for the humanisation of social relations and that it must humanise the citizen's relation to work and to administration of society. Gorbachov has bluntly stated that the socialist system that took root in the USSR in the latter half of 20's and 30's caused incalculable harm to the development of the individual. Given below are two significant extracts from the speech delivered by Gorbachov on 2nd November 1987.

"To understand the situation of those years it must be borne in mind that the administrative command system, which had begun to take shape in the process of industrialisation, and which had received a fresh impetus during collectivisation, had told on the whole socio-political life of the country. Once established in the economy, it had spread to its superstructure; restricting the development of the democratic potential of socialism and holding back the progress of socialist democracy."³

"..... At that time methods dictated by the period of struggle against the hostile resistance of the exploiter classes were being mechanically transferred to the period of peaceful socialist construction, when conditions had changed cardinally. An atmosphere of intolerance, hostility and

suspicion was created in the country. As time went on, this political practice gained in scale, and was backed up by the erroneous theory of an aggravation of the class struggle in the course of socialist construction."⁴

Gorbachov indeed feels immensely sorry over the absence of democratisation in the thirties, which resulted in the strengthening of the personality cult, the violations of legality and the wanton repressive measures which caused horrible tortures to thousands of people.

Tragically enough, the gains which were achieved by the Soviet Union in the field of economy in the thirties began to vanish in the thin air in the post-Second World War years. And the decades of 1970s and 1980s actually saw a stagnation in the Soviet economy. The present leader of CPSU informed his audience at the 27th Party Congress that the targets for economic development set in the CPSU Programme, and even the lower targets of the 9th and 10th Five Year Plans, had remained

Remarkable gap between the perceptions of Gorbachov and Indian Communists

unattained.⁵ To the present Soviet leadership, the whole course of Soviet development, not only in the socio-political fields but in the field of economy as well, appears to be pathetic. One may accordingly observe that the *quid pro quo* arrangement which was proposed probably by the authorities of Soviet Union in 1930s to the masses at large between concrete damage to the socio-political aspects of society and the abstract future gains pertaining to the economy ultimately proved to be bankrupt.

If the review made by Indian Communists of the course of Soviet history in general seems to be at variance with that by Gorbachov, the assessment of Stalin's role in particular attempted by the former is equally different from that offered by Gorbachov. It may appear that Indian Communists share with Gorbachov the same view-point regarding Stalin. And Indian comrades very much wish to underscore the apparent impression, "People's Democracy", the CPM newspaper as well as "New Age", the CPI organ, commented on the Gorbachovian assessment of Stalin in a similar vein. The former thus made the following observation: "Here, therefore, is a balanced assessment which steers clear of the earlier assessment which attributed all the gains of socialist system to Stalin and the subsequent (Khrushchev) assessment in which Stalin was projected as the source of evil in Soviet society".⁶

The observation made by "New Age" in this matter ran as follows: "Contrary to the guesswork of imperialist press, Gorbachov took a very balanced position..."⁷ It is true that in his speech on 2nd November 1987, Gorbachov did try to balance minuses with pluses of Stalin. As evidence, one can quote a particular extract from his speech: "To remain faithful to historical truth we must see both Stalin's incontestable contribution to the struggle for socialism, to the defence of its gains, and the gross political errors, and the abuses committed by him and by those around him, for which our people paid a heavy price and which had grave consequences for the life of our society."⁸

Indian Communists conveniently ignore the last sentence of this extract. Actually, this sentence informs us that according to the thinking of the present Soviet leadership, the roots of most of the damaging features of Soviet polity are observable in the Stalin-era. Thus the above mentioned speech informed people that Stalin used civil war methods in the period of peaceful socialist construction, that he believed in the erroneous theory of an aggravation of the class struggle in the course of socialist construction, and so on. The same speech moreover stated that the Stalin-era has left behind a disastrous legacy which comprises of a faith in the universal effectiveness of rigid centralisation, the abuse of power, the lack of democratisation, the violation of legality, etc.

We have already stated that from the viewpoint of Indian Communists, Gorbachov acknowledges Stalin's contributions and distances himself to that extent from Khrushchev. Actually Gorbachovian criticism of the Stalin-era "goes far beyond the critique at the time of Khrushchev."⁹ It has indeed created a space for a fundamental analysis of the Stalin period.¹⁰ Thus the impression which Indian comrades wish to give us that Gorbachov is mild compared to Khrushchev in his treatment of Stalin is erroneous.

Gorbachov is not ready to give any benefit of doubt to Stalin. He is equally blunt in this context. "It is sometimes said that Stalin did not know about instances of lawlessness. Documents at our disposal show that this is not so. The guilt of Stalin and his immediate entourage before the party and the people for the wholesale repressive measures and acts of lawlessness is enormous and unforgivable. This is a lesson for all generations"¹¹

Communists in India subsequently realised that Gorbachov is bent upon a systematic denunciation of Stalin and that the present Soviet intelligentsia and mass-media are equally eager to get rid of all relics of

Stalin-era. They, therefore, launched an attack on the present Soviet style of condemning the entire Stalin-era. One can here refer to the attack made by B.T. Ranadive on Dimitri Kazutin, a Soviet commentator, when the latter wrote an article in appreciation of the decision to construct a monument in honour of the victims of Stalin-era. Dimitri Kazutin put forth his views in a very outspoken manner:

"Stalin, the master-mind of the great terror has been found guilty of the greatest crimes. Nevertheless there are people who worship him as before. Their circle is growing smaller but they exist and we must help them extricate themselves from this world of myths. Has not the time come to put their idol on trial? A public and open trial? It may be that this tribunal of justice, this tribunal of historical truth and conscience, will at last make the heirs understand what kind of heritage they are laying claim to."¹²

Indian comrades are raving mad against Russian reformists

Comrade B.T. Ranadive, who has been fond of narrating Stalinist glories, naturally reacted very vehemently to the current denunciation of the Stalin-era. He declared that Soviet intellectuals like Dimitri Kazutin are "mad people" and that "their incoherent utterances" deserve to be attacked promptly and bluntly. His attack is worth quoting here:

"In the present world atmosphere, where Leninism has become taboo for several parties calling themselves communist, few realise that without a constant and incessant battle for the Marxist-Leninist path under the leadership of the Bolshevik party, the revolution would have been smothered by deviationists who were never accepted by Lenin. The fact that this did not happen goes to the credit of the Bolshevik party headed by Stalin, who firmly upheld the banner of Leninism. The most outstanding role in this was played by Stalin, whose role is today being belittled by a howling crowd of opportunists and revisionist scoundrels."¹³

Ranadive in fact got so much annoyed over the publication of Kazutin's article in an issue of "Moscow News", that he recommended the rechristening of this weekly as "Washington News". The veteran CPM leader offered a strong defence for Stalin in his address at the seminar organised by the Students' Federation of India at Calcutta on 23 February 1989. He found Stalin's restrictions on democratic practice

as justifiable on the ground of preventing a civil war in the wake of the socialist reconstruction. He naturally expressed his anger over the current Soviet habit of blaming Stalin for all the ills of the country. He informed his audience that the CPM had reservations regarding the "new thinking" of Gorbachov whereby more democracy was allowed in all spheres of Soviet life. He actually adopted a challenging posture: "It is being said that Stalin had made mistakes. But who can say that Gorbachov is not making mistakes now?"

It seems that Indian Communists continue to have a bond of affection for Lenin, and for Stalin as well. Members of CPM in fact go to the extent of paying almost religious respects to the portraits of these two leaders during their congresses and meetings. Gorbachov and his colleagues have on the other hand decided to treat Stalin as a murderer of the Leninist legacy. Once Gorbachev himself stated that the Stalin-era witnessed a departure from Lenin's policy towards the peasantry and that at present the creative spirit of Leninism in theory and practice deserves to be revived—a green signal was given to academicians at large to undertake new probes into Stalin's policies and patterns.¹⁴ Thus Anatoly Butenko pointed out that Stalin committed errors even while Lenin was still alive—in particular, on the nationalities question—and Boris Bolotin stated that Stalin's refusal to accept the market in conditions of socialism and his opinion that the market and a planned economy were incompatible to each other, caused disasters in the economy of USSR.¹⁵

It was the official decision taken in 1961 to remove the dead body of Stalin from the mausoleum in Red Square which prompted Yevgeni Yevtushenko, a leading dissident poet, to raise the question whether Stalin's successors would succeed in removing Stalin's relics from their behaviour.¹⁶ And Gorbachov seems to be merely complying with the desire expressed in that question. That is why, Yevtushenko, stated in the recent past that present leaders attended his poetry readings in the late 1950s and early 1960s in clubs, factories and theatres, and that their policy of Glasnost "is merely an echo of our poetry."¹⁷ The echoing of this sort led *The Economist* of London to compare Perestroika with reformation in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries when radical reformers attacked corruption in the church, reinterpreted doctrine and questioned the infallibility of the Pope.¹⁸ Tragically, Indian Communists have placed Stalin in the rank of infallible Pope and thus carried forward the legacy of those who opposed the forces of Renaissance and Reformation of Europe!

What appears to be highly shocking for Indian comrades is the sanction given by Gorbachov to the policy of rehabilitation of demons

in communist mythology. Thus former leaders like Bukharin, Zinoviev, Kamenev and Radek who were almost unpersoned for decades, have recently received posthumous honours at the hands of Gorbachov and company. Even Trotsky has been rehabilitated partially, if not completely. And if Nikita Khrushchev has been given back a status due to him, Leonid Brezhnev, the comrade who rushed to revive Stalinism, is being denounced almost continuously. The rehabilitation particularly of Bukharin and Khrushchev irritates Indian Communists, because whereas the former reminds us of a courageous dissident who fought against Stalin, the latter brings to our notice the significance of de-Stalinisation in the process of democratisation. As Communists in India continue to worship Stalin or treat him as a notable figure at least, personalities like Bukharin and Khrushchev appear to them as inauspicious elements. These very personalities, however, look respectable to the present generation in USSR, as they inspire the latter to go miles ahead on the path of democratisation.

'The Economist': "Glasnost and Perestroika are like Renaissance and Reformation"

THERE ARE differences in the perceptions regarding reforms as well. Gorbachov has not only decentralised the state sector, he has encouraged the growth of non-state sector as well. He has, moreover, underscored the significance of his refrain: "Profit or Perish". His realisation that the growth of risk-free society in the USSR (with all salient features like job guarantee, availability of bare necessities at low prices and the possibility of getting residential quarters against cheap rents) has made the economy stagnant, is the cause of his campaign against vulgar egalitarianism. Ranadives and Rejeshwar Raos are obviously angry with Gorbachov for introducing such moves. They all fear that socialist consciousness will completely disappear in the Soviet economy if privatisation continues to receive encouragement as a result of economic reforms. To a large extent, these fears are legitimate. Once people are allowed to run after private gains, the production of mass consumption goods and services like parks, grounds, health clubs and welfare centres is likely to suffer. Secondly, if people at large are asked to profit or perish, they would engage themselves rather whole-heartedly in profit-making activities, thus devoting little or no time to disinterested social activities. Thirdly, present economic reforms will facilitate the domination of relics of capitalism over hints of communism in the transitional stage of socialism.

Soviet leadership has nonetheless decided to legalise the private and cooperative sectors, because the goal of making Soviet economy dynamic within a short span leaves them no other option. Indian Communists thus stand on a sound footing when they present this reasoning while criticising Gorbachov reforms. They need not, however, indulge in making predictions about the consequences of present reforms, as the spirit of socialist consciousness has almost disappeared in the course of seven decades or so in the USSR. Sumanta Banerjee has rightly stated that "consumerist values of the capitalist West tend to influence the aspirations of the average citizen of the USSR and China." And this is inevitable; because when the leadership tries to adopt techniques of bourgeois system to build a socialist economy in a backward country in pursuance of a crash programme, the people also opt for bourgeois values in their lives.¹⁹ It is indeed obvious that the defence of socialist orthodoxy against the onslaught of liberal reformers does not ensure the growth of socialist consciousness.

COMRADES in India have, moreover, expressed their worry regarding the decline in the influence of CPSU as a consequence of the implementation of reforms such as separation of party from state, weakening of censorship, encouragement to non-party mass-organisations, offering of unlimited freedom of expression, etc. Again, apparently, the CPSU will lose its control over society if the present reforms are implemented. There are, however, two riders to the observation made above. First, the thinking that the CPSU presently holds sway is itself questionable. The jokes cut by people at the cost of the party are illustrative of the lack of Party credibility among the people. Here is one joke from the 24th CPSU Congress in Moscow:

The inaugural session is going to begin its course at 11.00 a.m. on a particular day. Around 10.30 a.m. a lady enters the hall where the session is going to be held. She can't find her seat; therefore the man in charge of the seating arrangement offers his services to the lady. "Madam, please let me know whether you are a farmer or a worker or a teacher or a clerk?" The lady replies:—"I am neither a farmer, nor a worker, nor a clerk, nor a teacher". "Then who you are, Madam? Kindly inform me, because I am supposed to look after the seating arrangements in the hall. And everybody in the audience should occupy his or her seat before dignitaries like Brezhnev, Podgorny, Kosygin, Suslov and others come to the dais. So please tell me who you are? I will accordingly help you." The lady says: "I am a prostitute." The hall manager promptly makes the following request: "Then, madam, you should rush and sit in a chair placed on the dais only!" It is hardly necessary to point out how the CPSU leadership is looked at by the people.

Secondly if the party succeeds in winning and influencing the masses in a free, frank and fearless atmosphere, that will be a great achievement as that will reflect the authority of the party. If at present the CPSU is appreciated by a few sycophants it is an indication of its power. And the fact that authority that is dependent on intrinsic merits is much better than power that relies on position in hierarchy, is obvious. Thus the reforms oriented towards democratisation will actually enhance the authority of the party. Unfortunately, comrades in India do not realise the importance of authority. They probably still continue to believe in the doctrine of proletarian dictatorship. And this doctrine has been very lucidly and aptly defined by Mr. Jean Kanapa, one of the top leaders of the French Communist Party in the following words:

"If one considers that in order to instal socialism in France, it is necessary to have recourse to the dictatorship of the proletariat, as was done in Hungary (and also in the Soviet Union and elsewhere), then it is necessary to state that one must ban the opposition parties, establish censorship, deprive part of the population of the freedom of expression,

Gorby says 'Profit or Perish'— and no 'vulgar egalitarianism'

association, demonstration, etc; and one must and tell the French workers: 'this is one of the consequences of what the communists propose to you, because the dictatorship of the proletariat, no matter what its form, is exactly (not entirely but exactly) this'."²⁰

Incidentally Comrade Namboodiripad, veteran CPM leader, opposed the concept of Eurocommunism on the ground that as per this concept, civil liberties and democratic rights are not just bourgeois notions but must be an integral part of a socialist or communist society. He has written in this context:

"The doctrine of the proletarian dictatorship, internationalism, hegemony of the working class in the democratic struggles are the logical culmination of the doctrine of class struggle and the reality of imperialism's ferocious attack. That is why, the CPM adheres to these basic tenets of Marxism-Leninism and does not want to abandon them."²¹

The criticism made by Indian Communists, of the present drive of democratisation in the USSR, is thus in line with the stands taken by them from time to time in the past. That they are dogmatic, whereas Gorbachov and his colleagues are pragmatic, is obvious. It is no wonder,

therefore, that if the former continue to espouse Communist theory and practice, as a Pavlovian reflex, the latter have shaken the orthodoxy to its roots.

SUCH A FAITH in dogma has led Indian comrades to attack new trends introduced by Gorbachov in the field of foreign policy as well. The resolution passed by the Central Committee of CPI(M) in May 1988 launched a solid attack on these trends. Gorbachov highlighted these trends in his report submitted on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the October Revolution. That is why, the CPM attack was centred on this report only. The extracts given below from the CPM resolution are indicative of the mood of Marxists in India :

(1) "Gorbachov's presentation seeks to make a case for growing modification of the contradictions of the period, for avoiding confrontation between the people and imperialism and suggests ways in which the interests of the people and the working class can be reconciled with the interests of the imperialists and capitalists."

(2) "Comrade Gorbachov's report is significant... It is based on assumptions which are at variance with the many formulations and estimates made by the CPSU in the analysis of the international situation made in the report of the 27th Congress of the CPSU."

(3) "Our Party has reiterated its understanding of the present epoch and judged the developing international situation in the context of intensification of the four major contradictions of our period. It was never suggested that any of these was getting modified, opening the prospect of settling problems without class struggle."

(4) "Peaceful coexistence between states of different social systems does not mean a call for cessation of class struggle in capitalist and Third World countries. Our Party has fought against this opportunist interpretation..... Peaceful co-existence has now assumed vital importance in the background of the danger of nuclear war."

(5) "It is argued that even the imperialists want to recognise that we are all inter-dependent and must live in cooperation with each other because of the fear of mutual destruction. With this argument other contradictions, social contradictions of the period are taken out of sight."

(6) "Once again there is an appeal to forget class contradictions between the two worlds. It is not remembered that the imperialists have avoided war against each other in order to preserve their strength and unity, against the socialist camp. This is the class reason for maintain-

ing peace amongst themselves. How can they be asked to forget this class objective and persuaded to be peaceful towards all-including Soviet Union and socialist camp."

(7) "The report says that inequitable trade remains a fact that will eventually culminate in an explosion..... Some western leaders are now sober enough to think of avoiding this explosion. It is said that it is in the interest of humanity and the inevitable law of the integral world that such explosion of Third World countries should be avoided... In a nutshell, here as well we are facing a historic choice dictated by the laws of a largely interconnected and integral world. *The choice is that the Third World countries must tolerate the exploitation of the imperialist countries and should not think of creating a disorder..... This is the logic of the integral world.*" (Emphasis added).

(8) "It is amazing to find that the Non-Aligned Movement is clubbed with an organisation like the Islamic Conference. It only helps to give a false status to the reactionary organisations and creates confusion. The NAM cannot be put on the same level as other organisations which neither represent the people nor firmly support the struggle for peace."²²

The reflex actions of Indian Communists remind you of Pavlov's dog !

The CPM has indeed made very valid observations regarding the new trends in Soviet foreign policy. It has thus alleged (i) that Gorbachov has unnecessarily called for the modification of contradictions of the present times; (ii) that he has made a claim regarding the emergence of an integrated world, when actually capitalist countries continue to indulge in parochial and disruptive practices; (iii) that he has asked Third World countries to bid good-bye to confrontation against imperialist powers; (iv) that he has clubbed the Non-Aligned Movement and the organisation of the Islamic Conference in the same category and accordingly offered a very honourable status to a theocratic activity.

While appreciating the frankness of such criticisms, we venture to put certain questions to Indian Marxists. First, how far are the present trends in Soviet foreign policy really new ? Is it not, in other words, a fact that eagerness to adjust with capitalist countries has been a constant feature of Soviet foreign policy ? If it is so, why did not Indian Marxists subject previous Soviet leaders to the same type of criticism ? Secondly, are the trends likely to affect Soviet-India relations ? Why are Indian

Communists silent on this issue? Thirdly, why did Indian Communists change their stand later on? Why was the criticism mentioned above replaced afterwards by an appreciation of Gorbachovian foreign policy?

The first question highlights the fact that, like Gorbachov, previous Soviet leaders also modified contradictions and avoided confrontation. There is much evidence which substantiates this point. Thus Joseph Stalin withdrew Soviet forces from Greece in the closing years of the Second World War. He, moreover, found it expedient to avoid a fight against capitalist countries even when they rendered full support to the anti-Soviet moves of Yugoslavia in the immediate post-Second World War years. Later Nikita Khrushchev succumbed to the pressures from the USA and withdrew missiles from Cuba, in the vicinity of USA. Still later, Leonid Brezhnev extended a hearty welcome to Richard Nixon in spite of the mischief played by the latter in Vietnam. The Soviet Union indeed continued to strengthen friendly relations with countries such as Iran, Egypt and Indonesia even when they crushed communist movements. Somebody has therefore stated that whereas for Lenin, the policy of peaceful coexistence with capitalist countries was a tactical move, for Stalin it was a strategy and, for all post-Stalin leaders, it has become a programme in itself. Thus the readiness to develop cordial relations with capitalist countries is not a very unique or exceptional feature of the present Soviet foreign policy. One can, therefore, put a legitimate question to the Indian Marxists as to why they appreciated the previous foreign policy moves of the Soviet Union. And if they admired all such moves, how far are the attacks made by them on Gorbachovian actions consistent with the past.

Indian Marxists have objected to the Gorbachovian application of parity to the NAM and the Organisation of the Islamic Conference. They are, no doubt, right in this regard. But the fact that the report submitted by Leonid Brezhnev to the 26th CPSU Congress in 1981 glorified the role played by Khomeini revolution reminds us that Randavies and Namboodiripads were conspicuously silent in the pre-Gorbachov era. The legitimate objection thus raised by Indian comrades to the unbecoming Gorbachovian reference to Islamic countries is indeed another instance of inconsistency on their part.

The present Soviet efforts to go to any length for pleasing Chinese leaders are going to affect Indo-Soviet relations. Soviet leaders are likely to distinguish between "brother China" and "friend India". They did distinguish in these terms in October 1962. Soviet moves to be friendly with China have already affected Soviet-Vietnam relations. The Communique that was published in Beijing at the end of the visit of Gorbachov there, devoted two separate paragraphs to highlight the differences

between Soviet Union and Vietnam on the issue of Kampuchea. Similarly Moscow is likely to have differences with New Delhi on certain issues; and these differences would acquire new dimensions as a consequence of the present Soviet appeasement of China. Indian Communists are of course silent in this matter.

Curiously enough, the paper presented by Comrade Namboodiripad on 19 February 1989 at a seminar in New Delhi gave indications that Marxists in India have revised their perceptions on the international questions. That paper indeed marked a break from the resolution on new trends in Soviet foreign policy adopted by the CPM in May 1988. We have already summed up the content of this resolution which had roundly criticised the new(?) Soviet policy of offering concessions to imperialist countries. Later, however, Comrade Namboodiripad supported the line of Gorbachov on the ground that recent times have witnessed a transformation of the class struggle into a struggle for saving humanity from impending destruction which would encompass the whole world. Mr. Namboodiripad observed in his paper that a broad all-embracing peace movement has developed in the world and once he recognised the significance of the global peace effort, it was possible for him to offer justification for the ideological concessions to the West. The CPM leadership

Once again, for Russia, China could be 'brother', and India, only a 'friend'

found it necessary to revise its thinking on international questions probably because of the important break-through in respect of Afghanistan, Palestine and Namibia in pursuance of the adoption of Gorbachov Doctrine. Such early and striking successes flowing from the doctrine must have made a deep impression on Namboodiripad and his colleagues. It was, moreover, the sidelining of Mr. Ligachev and company in the USSR which must have compelled CPM leaders to revise their perceptions. The CPM must have realised, that in view of the decline in orthodox elements in the CPSU, it could not afford to follow pro-Stalinist positions. The editorial comment made by the Times of India on this issue was quite apt: "Given the track record of Indian official communists to intellectually and ideologically follow-the-leader, such realisation was bound to come sooner or later."²⁸

The discussion made so far enables us to reach certain conclusions:

(A) Mikhail Gorbachov has decided to pursue the path of truth, and to undertake, in pursuance of this path, the task of free and frank assessment

of the Soviet past. He knows that previous Soviet leaders did not undertake such a task, that they tried to suppress inconvenient truths and that there has, therefore, arisen a wide gap between official presentation and popular perception of past Soviet events. Mr. Gorbachov thinks that as a consequence of this gap, official policies and acts have lost their credibility with the Soviet masses. In the present circumstances when broad participation of the masses is indispensable for the upliftment of Soviet economy, a communication gap between government and people needs to be bridged as quickly as possible. The critical assessment of previous events and policies undertaken by Gorbachov thus appears to be essential in the present context. Indian Communists do not probably share this view. They are perhaps afraid of certain implications and consequences of the frank analysis of Soviet history. They seem to think that as a result of such analysis, the past of the USSR would cease to inspire people and that Perestroika or the process of reconstruction would be endangered. There is indeed a gulf, between Gorbachov and Indian Communists, in the sense that whereas the former believes in reconstruction on the basis of honest analysis of past events, the latter rely on glorification of such events and on reconstruction on this ground.

(B) Indian Communists naturally do not share the Gorbachovian viewpoint of Stalin years. They think that it was Stalin who guarded the interests of socialism. From their viewpoint, Stalin carried forward the legacy of Lenin. Gorbachov and his colleagues on the other hand hold a different viewpoint. They consider Stalin as a great believer in command methods. They, therefore, observe that Stalin broke a link between socialism and democracy, that he demolished the legacy of Lenin and that he damaged the image of USSR.

(C) If Indian Marxists fear that the present economic reforms in USSR might accelerate the spread of consumerism, Gorbachov thinks that all these reforms might invigorate the entire climate and might accordingly encourage people to harness their energies fully for the development of Soviet economy.

(D) Regarding political reforms as well, Marxists in India have expressed their anxieties. They feel that the current trends of liberalisation might weaken the hold of CPSU and thus there might arise challenges for the unity of USSR. The present Soviet leader, however, wishes to enhance the authority of CPSU and has therefore introduced certain reforms oriented towards democratising the polity there. He seems to believe that the CPSU should win and influence the masses through dedication and commitment. The freeing of Soviet media, the invitation to non-party mass organisations to send their representatives to the newly formed

Congress of people's deputies and the general freedom of expression granted recently, all these measures have undoubtedly created new challenges for the CPSU. Gorbachov, no doubt, expects that party members should prove their mettle in the new circumstances. In this sense, he prefers authority to power and appears to be confident that the CPSU would pass this test.

(E) The CPM leaders initially attacked new trends in Soviet foreign policy as well. They stated in May 1988 that the present Soviet efforts to avoid confrontation against capitalist countries, would finally prove disastrous. They attacked then the implicit Gorbachovian call to Third World countries to try to sink their differences with imperialist powers. They also then criticised the present Soviet policy of clubbing NAM and Islamic Organisation together. In fact, previous Soviet leaders also adopted mild postures vis-a-vis capitalist countries. They, moreover, glorified the Khomeini revolution in Iran. Surprisingly, Indian Communists did not criticise these policies. The resolution passed by the Central Committee in May 1988 was thus inconsistent with the past record of Indian Communists. Subsequently, Comrade Namboodiripad changed his stand and came out with a justification for the new thinking in Soviet foreign policy. Incidentally, the record of CPM is comparatively

"Our hearts demand change, our eyes demand change"—Moscow Rock Song

better than that of CPI. The former did express its reservations in 1960, when Nikita Khrushchov attempted to revise the Soviet foreign policy. But what Indian Marxists did then was to express sort of displeasure; in May 1988 they showed anger against Gorbachov and since February 1989 they have reconciled with the line of thinking adopted by Gorbachov. What amuses us most is the fact that Indian Communists have forgotten their own rhetoric about anti-imperialism, non-alignment and peace. What is intriguing is the devaluation of doctrinal concepts by mechanical attempts to apply them to policies and trends for which the doctrine provides no sanction. Why should not communists in India, like their counterparts in some other countries, admit honestly that old ideas and beliefs are no longer valid, that the doctrine itself must be drastically overhauled?

(F) Soviet Union has recently witnessed a feverish demand for change. One of the popular Rock songs there proudly proclaims: "Our hearts demand change, our eyes demand change!" Indian Marxists who are nostalgic about a familiar socialist landscape find it extremely difficult

to adjust themselves "to a situation in which the past has become unpredictable and the future is problematic."²⁴ They indeed face a very unique dilemma. On the one hand they have a fund of affection for the Soviet history; for the theories propagated there and for the practices undertaken there. They therefore, oppose any criticism against these matters. On the other hand they love the Soviet leadership which considers criticism against these very matters as indispensable and useful. It appears that a wonderful way has been found out by Indian Communists. They have rendered over-all support to Gorbachov reforms but have tried to draw consolation from this or that aspect of these reforms! Comrade S.G. Sardesai thus made the following comment while reviewing Gorbachov's book, *Perestroika* :

"Gorbachov's approach could create the impression that the author has become an altruist humanist, oblivious of the grim class and national contradictions between the haves and have-nots of the world, between capitalism and socialism. A careful reading dispels any such impression."²⁵

Comrade Sardesai further pointed out that Soviet citizens have now been given maximum freedom of discussion and action under, of course, the broad guidance of the CPSU. According to Sardesai, Gorbachov has thus emphasised the indispensability of CPSU. Comrade B.T. Ranadive stated in his article published in one of the issues of "Marxist" in 1987 that the struggle against bureaucratic tendencies in USSR, underscores the necessity to offer citizens there, firm guarantee for individual liberties. Ranadive thus defends Gorbachov reforms in Soviet polity.

I can only conclude this paper with the following quote from S. Nihal Singh :

"The new Communism unfurled by Gorbachov represents personal tragedies for the Indian Communist leaders. Convinced of the infallibility of the beliefs handed down to them, they now find their world collapsing around them. Gorbachov, for many of them, is talking a strange language. Lenin still remains the unquestioned icon, but, for how long? There is no doubt where the Indian Communist leaders would be were they to be participants in the Soviet debate. They would be firmly on the side of conservatives."²⁶

END-NOTES

- (1) See *People's Democracy* (New Delhi), 1 November 1987.
- (2) S.G. Sardesai : "What Perestroika is all about", *New Age* (New Delhi), 20 March 1988, P. 11.

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- (3) Mikhail Gorbachov, *October and Perestroika : the Revolution Continues* (Moscow, 1987), P. 25
- (4) *Ibid*, PP. 25, 26.
- (5) *XXVII CPSU Congress : Political Report ... delivered by Mikhail Gorbachov* (Moscow, 1986), P. 27.
- (6) See *People's Democracy* (New Delhi), 15 November 1987, P. 5.
- (7) *New Age* (New Delhi), 29 November 1987, P. 8.
- (8) See n. 3, P. 25.
- (9) Bas Wielenga, "Moscow on the Move : Gorbachov's Balancing Act" in *Economic and Political Weekly* (Bombay) January 2-9, 1988, P. 34.
- (10) *Ibid*.
- (11) See n. 3, P. 26.
- (12) Quoted in S. Prasannarajan, "Why aren't the Indian Deng Xiaopings asked to go?" in *Times of India* (Bombay), 12 June 1989.
- (13) *Ibid*.
- (14) See n. 3; P. 24 and P. 34.
- (15) *The Stalin Phenomenon* (Moscow, 1988), P. 7 & P. 32.
- (16) Yevgeni Yevtushenko, "We carried him away, threw him out of the mausoleum But how shall we remove Stalin from within Stalin's heirs?"
- (17) See "Poet of Protest" *Indian Express* (Bombay), 20 March 1988.
- (18) "Luther Calvin Gorbachov" *The Economist* (London), 25 June 1988, P. 53.
- (19) Sumanta Banerjee, "Curse of History" in *Economic and Political Weekly* (Bombay), 15 October 1988, PP. 2158, 2159.
- (20) Quoted in Pradip Bose, "The Story of BJP And CPM-I" *Times of India* (Bombay), 22 October 1987.
- (21) E.M.S. Namboodripad, *Euro-communism and India* (New Delhi) P. 25.
- (22) See the Document 'The CPI (M)'s view of the Soviet Union today' published in a series of articles in issues of *Daily Telegraph* (Calcutta), 10-19 August 1988.
- (23) "Comrades And Friends", *Times of India* (Bombay), 21 February 1989.
- (24) Sham Lal, "Reform and Reaction : A Tale of Two Cities", *Times of India* (Bombay), 3 June 1989.
- (25) See n. 2.
- (26) S. Nihal Singh, "Indian Communists In Trouble : Shock Waves From Moscow", *Times of India* (Bombay), 4 July 1988.

The measure of a man.....

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The Other Side of 'Rural Development' In India

By Ranjit Singh

THROUGHOUT the developing nations of the world, the strategy of planned development is to adopt Modern (Western) science and technology (MST) as if it was a panacea for all their ills. The policy planners as well as the political leaders appear to believe that the MST is culturally unbiased, socially un-prejudiced, morally just and economically efficient, and therefore, is a prerequisite for all the societies in search of a better life and egalitarian society. Unaware of what the British historians had to say on the pre-British records of Indian trade & industry, the architect of the present-day India, Pandit Nehru wrote "I feel sure that it was a good thing for India to come in contact with scientific and industrial West. Science was the great gift of the West and India lacked this and without it, she was doomed to decay...."

A Government of India advertisement said, amongst other things, that, "40 years ago, in 1947 we inherited a colonial economy with agriculture, industry, science...almost everything stagnating. Our food production was inadequate and we had to import to feed our masses. Our industries were far and few. People particularly the weaker section remained a neglected lot. Today in 1987. self sufficiency in foodgrains.... some 10 crore people brought above the poverty line. Literacy rate more than doubled.we have the 3rd largest number of scientific technical manpower..... our country ranks among the top 10 industrial nations and is the 7th nation in the world to send its own satellite with its own rocket."² No doubt the gains have been substantial and the achievements impressive. However, those who have paid the price of development in the past four decades are not usually the people who enjoy its benefits today. The development has not only brought disguised devastation of the national ecosystem but has also degraded the quality of life of the innocent inhabitants of the rural and tribal India.

Self-sufficiency in foodgrains is our most important achievement. New seeds of high-yield variety (HYV) have been brought from various countries. These seeds required heavy doses of chemical fertilizers, much of which had to be imported. More water at regular intervals was required to enable the plants to utilize the fertilizers. These seeds and their rate of growth, not being adapted to the natural environment, required protection against pests, insects and diseases, which again required imported chemicals. And the "protection" was not only shortlived but introduced of greater destruction.

The HYV seeds have created a vicious circle in the Indian agriculture. The farmer has to buy his seeds, fertilizers, insecticides, pumping sets etc. from various government agencies and sell his produce to pay for these inputs, on their terms. Most of the chemicals added to the soil or sprayed over the plants are passing on into the vegetation, the fish, the animals and ultimately into the blood of man himself. The circle is complete, deadly poisons invented by man to annihilate other forms of life have come upon the *homo sapiens*. Shri R.P. Singh reports: "The average Indian daily diet contains about 0.27 mg. of DDT which is the highest level of accumulated DDT in body tissues in the world.....the average daily intake of DDT and BHC is respectively 24% and 10% more amongst the non-vegetarians as compared to the vegetarians." WHO had estimated in 1975 that 5,00,000 people are affected by the contaminated food in the Third World countries of which 5000 die every year. No Indian agency has yet cared to ascertain the number of deaths due to the contaminated food because of their superstitious belief that MST (modern science and technology) cannot go wrong.

The Madras Group of Patriotic People's Science and Technology (PPST) movement reports: "Not only have many of the these 'high-response varieties' displaced and eliminated traditional varieties, thus causing loss of valuable genetic material, but these new strains being vulnerable to many pests and diseases, have often brought about large-scale crop failures. Pesticides used to kill off the major pests, have left the crops exposed to the attacks of minor pests which have become major in their own way. In addition, pests have also acquired considerable immunity to the less potent chemicals, and have even gone to break down these chemicals into harmless compounds through acquired drug resistance. Similar has been the problem with weeds etc: these toxic chemicals destroy a number of beneficial organisms, bacteria etc, which provided life support to agriculture in the past. A lot of these toxic chemicals being used find their way into water sources and the human body, wreaking havoc to plant, aquatic animal and human life. *With every disappearing plant, nearly ten to thirty dependent species of insects and higher animals and other plants also slowly die out.* Large quantities of water used, without adequate drainage, expose large tracts of highly fertile land to salinity build-up. In the name of development projects, large areas of wild genetically rich and diverse forest areas are being regularly cleared to make way for man causing irreparable damage and loss to the nation's genetic pool. Further, food grown under the chemical farming system is less nutritious and lacks many of the other beneficial properties that traditional varieties possessed. With the growing elimination of traditional varieties, even those who advocate and propagate chemical farming are under a

severe threat, as they will no longer have access to these varieties to incorporate desirable characteristics in their new varieties. In other words, it is a situation where everyone stands to lose but the most severely threatened are the poor farmers, whose very existence and survival is at stake."⁴

The longterm effects of the artificial agriculture and the chemical warfare against the natural genetic varieties of micro-organisms and the soil fertility systems are hidden from the people who are going to suffer most. Multinational companies and the government agencies, while making tall claims about the short-term benefits of such practices, do not inform the farmers adequately about the harmful after-effects. For example, none of the rural development agencies has informed the village farmer of the 700 million acres of fertile land having been lost because of the artificial agriculture methods and the chemical warfare against the weeds, pests and insects in the United States of America, though much publicity is

Gene pool dissipation, disease-prone crops, havoc to all life by toxic chemicals and longterm infertility of soil are the "gifts" of "scientific" agriculture

given to the high per-acre yield there. One million people starved to death in Ethiopia during the drought of 1985. Droughts had been frequent in Ethiopia but starvation deaths were not. It is a new phenomenon. Introduction of the HYV seeds has led to the total crop failure. Those farmers who had sown indigenous "low-yield varieties," capable of standing drought conditions were the only ones able to get some yield. An Indian research centre has traced the 1987 drought and crop failure in the Dharwar district of Karnataka, not to the low rainfall but to the failure of hybrid sorghum and destruction of the indigenous genetic variety.⁵

Agriculture in India has not only been an economic activity but a way of life, a philosophy to understand the world around. When Lord Buddha preached compassion and nonviolence, he was simply explaining the ways of Indian agriculture, in which a man lives in complete harmony with everything else present in nature. The forests provide fodder for the animals, fuel and house construction material for man, a protective cover for the soil, and a collection system for the underground aquifers. Cattle

in turn would provide milk, draught power, fertiliser and the leather. A sort of mother-child relationship developed between the man and his environment in India. The social and economic life was so wholesome and fulfilling that it gave birth to the best in science, technology, art and literature. A British historian, Robertson, had commented in 18th century that "In all ages gold and silver, particularly the latter, have been the commodities exported, with the greatest profit, to India. In no part of the Earth do the natives depend so little upon foreign countries, for either the necessities or the luxuries of life. The blessings of a favourable climate and fertile soil, augmented by their own ingenuity, afford them whatever they desire. In consequence, trade with them has always been carried on in one uniform manner, and the precious metals have been given in exchange for their peculiar production, whether of nature or of art."⁶

When in 1893 the British Government commissioned Dr. John Augustus Voelekar to suggest improvements in Indian agriculture based on modern and scientific methods, he found that the Indian agriculture is amongst the best in the world. Various scientific practices being developed in the West are neither suitable nor necessary. The chemical fertilizer will just not be good, the wooden plough is more suited to the India soil conditions. Voelekar suggested a revision of the forest policy to allow the villagers free access to the forest. The losses in revenue due to the loss of timber etc will be more than offset by the growth of agriculture and hence agricultural revenue, he argued. However, the successive governments, British and Indian, have engaged in gradually introducing all that Voelekar had warned against. The introduction of hybrid seeds, chemicals and farm machinery, in the name of modernisation crushed the creativity and self-reliance of the village farmer. It has made him dependent on the government agencies and the multinational companies. It has exposed the innocent farmer to the onslaught of market forces, and destroyed the natural serenity of the village life. The Indian farmer who had been traditionally fed on the principles of love and non-violence has been lured to kill. No wonder Punjab, the model of green revolution, is witnessing the worst form of terrorism.⁷ Fukuoka is right when he considers the healing of the land and the purification of the human spirit to be one process.⁸

Soon after Independence, a number of large dams were built in different parts of the country to provide irrigation for agriculture and electricity for industry. These dams were hailed as the temples of modern India by Pandit Nehru. The damming inundated large areas of hills and forests into the reservoirs. People of thousands of villages and vanavasis inhabiting these hills and forests have been rendered homeless. Various studies have

revealed that more than half of the people so displaced belong to the scheduled castes, tribes and other backward classes. These poorest of the poor and innocent people are supposed to receive special care and attention under the Indian constitution. In reality, they get just the opposite. "The displaced persons are mostly cultivators who have deep attachment to their lands and dwellings. In the belief of tribal and other people, their area is the abode of their gods, and the spirits of their ancestors, which are inseparable from their daily life. Uprooting them from their habitat not only disturbs their way of life but more or less, tends to erode and eventually destroy their social, cultural, religious and economic traditions. Further, the tribal life and culture is so uniquely interwoven and integrated with the forest that once uprooted, they are totally disoriented." Further studies by social scientists are needed to find out why the uprooted youth have not taken up arms against the society which has ditched them in its search of luxuries of modern life.⁹

The inhuman approach of our planners and administrators is evident from the fact that evacuees of Bhakra Nangal and Rihand Dams are yet

"India's traditional agriculture was among the best in the world." "India can afford to depend the least on outside world, as none else can"—said British experts

to be fully rehabilitated even though three decades have passed since the commissioning of these dams. The people displaced by the Pong Dam, from the cool and green Himalayan hills, have been thrown to the hot and hostile plains of Rajasthan. Inhuman exploitation and callousness are perhaps inherent in MST. The political economists conveniently ignore the cost of human misery while computing their developmental statistics.

The lakes created by these dams have not only displaced people from their hearth and home but also made life miserable by inducing seismicity near the inundated areas. Koyana earthquake of 1967 caused so much destruction that the MST community was drawn for the first time to a possible correlation between the man-made lake and the quake. A series of earth quakes rocked the Konkan region of Maharashtra near Bhatsa Dam in 1983. Though the Indian engineers and scientists are unwilling to admit the fact of reservoir-induced seismicity, the international community has accepted it.

Below are given a few instances of dam-induced earthquakes.

No.	Country of the Dam	Height (Mtres)	Year of impounding	Year of largest Quake	Magnitude (Richter)	Prior seismicity
1.	Koyana (India)	103	1964	1967	6.5	Low
2.	Hrimfenkiang (China)	105	1959	1961	6.1	Aseismic
3.	Kariba (Zimbabwe)	128	1959	1963	5.8	Low
4.	Monteynard (France)	155	1962	1963	4.9	Low
5.	Talbingo (Australia)	162	1971	1972	4.5	Aseismic
6.	Manicovgan (U.S.A.)	108	1975	1975	4.1	Low

Dams have helped in making the green revolution a success by providing irrigation to a very large area. However, large areas of fertile agricultural land have been lost to waterlogging and salinisation, due to the rising water table, surfacing of the groundsalts like fluorides, calcium etc, which in turn enter the food chain and give rise to diseases like fluorosis and knock knees.

Reservoirs and canals have also been instrumental in spreading flies, mosquitoes and other disease-carrying insects into the areas where they were not known before. These have spread malaria, filaria and Japanese encephalitis in Andhra, Karnataka and Tamilnadu soon after the completion of Thungbhadra, Nagarjun Sagar, Aliyur and Sathanur schemes.

It has been estimated that various developmental activities have resulted in a loss of one million hectares of forests between 1950 and 1987. Industries, roads, townships, railways and shibuilding have all taken their share of the forest. The forest cover has been reduced from 33% to 7% in four decades of free India. This has resulted in soil erosion, land-slides, drying up of the streams and wells. Number of

drought-prone districts and the frequency of droughts is on the increase. People of many villages where fresh water springs and wells were common a few years ago have now to travel miles to get drinking water. Whereas the period 1951-80 saw only two years of drought in Bihar plateau region, it suffered from drought for three years during 1981-86. Western Rajasthan has had drought-like conditions during five out of the six years. Kerala, where once drought was unheard of has faced several drought years since 1980. In 1983 in Marathwada region of Maharashtra there were 1947 problem villages where drinking water was not easily available. Though many of these villages are covered under drinking water supply programme of the government, 4778 villages faced water scarcity in 1985 which was a year of normal rainfall. Over-use of the underground water has disturbed the hydrological system by affecting the even flow of water in rivers and streams. In Meerut and Muzaffar Nagar, districts of western Uttar Pradesh, instead of the groundwater seeping into the river and adding to their flows, it is the river water which now seeps into the ground water because the water table has gone down. Ahmedabad receives its

Healing of the land and Purification of human spirit are intertwined

water supply from Sabarmati river. But with increasing use of ground water, the natural flow in the river has declined sharply. Drinking water shortage is now a regular feature in Ahmedabad, Madras, Madurai, Trichurapalli and Bangalore. In Hyderabad, water is rationed on alternate days, since 1983.

India is no longer dealing with disaster events but disaster processes. The natural disasters like floods and droughts are no more natural. Part of the blame for these calamities should be shared by modern science and technology and its adherents.

One of the main advantages of the big dams and gigantic river valley projects claimed was water management of flood control. India is one of the world's richest countries in terms of water resources. Its average annual precipitation is almost twice as that of all other parts of Asia put together. But nearly 80% of it arrives during the four monsoon months of June-September. There is a natural tendency within the country to witness floods during the four monsoon months and drought during the eight dry months. Multipurpose river valley projects were supposed to take in the excessive water during the monsoon months and pass the same in the lean seasons. It was expected that with the completion of

various dams and their related projects, the intensity and area of the floods would be reduced considerably. However, what the country has witnessed is just the opposite. The flood-prone area which was estimated at 25 million hectares, in 1960, has gone up to 40 mha by 1978. Till the 1960s, the flood prone states were Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Orissa and Assam, but now the list includes new states like Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Tamilnadu, Rajasthan and Gujarat. New areas in the traditionally flood-prone states of U. P., Bihar and Orissa have also been added. Whereas new projects are in the various stages of planning and execution, the Planning Commission has been silent over the reversal of Nature's mechanism in the river valleys.

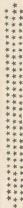
Development in education, research and industry has also been faithfully following the Western models, with devastating results. Today, India has more illiterates than it had forty years ago. More people are living below the poverty line today than they were before embarking upon the planned development. A few centres of affluence and western civilization and a miniscule percentage to happy-go-lucky middle class is all that has been grown with all the foreign debt, in which the country has been trapped for generations to come. A Delhi man paying one rupee can ride a bus for a distance which will cost not less than rupees three elsewhere. Birlas pay 36 paise for a ton of Bamboo from Bastar district of Madhya Pradesh for which a tribal will have to pay Rs. 270 in the market. No wonder this has helped higher standard of living for a few but egalitarian society is nowhere nearer than it was in 1947. High-grade village craftsmen who sustained the Indian economy for millennia have been rendered jobless and condemned to a degraded life of Jhopad patti in the suburbs of Delhi, Bombay and Calcutta, for generations to come.

Thus importing and imitating MST without adapting it to national needs and indigenous creativity has proved self-defeating. The ancient Indian attitude of mother-child relationship between Nature and man and the concept of cooperative and harmonious development will have to be revived, assessed and readmitted into planning and development processes. Mistakes in the wake of planned development in India have a lesson, that the dice of MST is loaded in favour of haves against the have-nots and, therefore, the planning strategies will have to be suitably modified, if an egalitarian society is aimed at. The Prime Minister has been talking of grassroot village participation in the process of planning and development for some time. Let us hope that the Government will tailor MST to people's needs, local resources and indigenous creativity.

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How Kerala Government Allows Ruin of Forests to Serve Industrial Interests

By : Pandurang Hegde

In our previous issue we had published an article "Narmada Project—The Conspiracy and the Shame", wherein the complaint was made that none of our major political parties has any understanding of the importance of ecological preservation for sustainable development and universally shared prosperity. The article below shows how the communist-led government in Kerala has been bending backwards to serve capitalists' interests and ruining the very basis of people's lives by acquiescing in the destruction of forests. Woodenheaded acceptance of the dogma "Industrialise or Perish" has been at the root of such anti-people policies.

Ecology is inseparable from improvement of common people's lives. This great truth must override all political ideologies.

—Editor

Kerala is one of those States that has been under the rule of communists for decades. It created a sort of history in 1957 when people elected a communist government. It is for the first time in the world history that a communist government came to power through ballot and not bullet. Ideologically the left was different and they aimed at building a socialist State, in ushering an era of people's prosperity. At present they are back in power ruling the State. It is interesting to analyse the achievements over the past 30 years and see how far they have succeeded in building a socialist state.

One of their main programmes is to establish large-scale industries to generate employment for people off the farms. Their slogan was 'Industrialise or Perish'. In addition to creating employment, the other hidden reason was to create a labour force that can be organised and used for political purposes. In accordance with this objective, a rayon factory at Mavoor was established in 1957. It promised to enhance its original capacity of manufacturing pulp and to provide employment to people. The farmers were so thrilled that some of them came forward and donated their homesteads to establish the factory.

The government agreed to supply land, water and resources for the factory at concessional rates. Bamboo was given at the cost of Re. 1/-per tonne. The forest officers allocated 1,60,000 tonnes at this cost to be extracted from Nulambur Valley. The foresters never bothered to assess the

bamboo stock. Instead, they assured that they can supply raw materials regularly. But the bamboo of Nulambur forests was exhausted by 1962 and by then the factory had also increased its production capacity. Though the increase in the capacity was unauthorised, the government of Kerala had to provide raw materials to the factory.

In order to meet the ever increasing need of the factory the Birlas were given monopoly rights to collect bamboo from Wynad, Calicut and Nemmare in Palghat districts. In fact major forest areas of the northern part of Kerala comprising Trichur and Palghat forest divisions were handed over to the Birlas. Thus the richest tropical forests were handed over at concessional price to run Mavoor factory. The rulers and forest bureaucrats decided to hand over these common natural resources to a capitalist for the sake of running an industry.

The Birlas realised that even if they extract bamboos from the vast areas assigned to them in future they would be facing the shortage of raw materials and that this would affect production. Anticipating this shortage of supply they asked the government to plant eucalyptus plantations to supply raw materials in future. The government obliged the Birlas and vast stretches of natural forests in Wynad and northern Kerala were clearfelled to make way for eucalyptus plantations. The government converted 700 sq. kms. of natural forests into eucalyptus plantations. In the process of clearfelling natural forests the timber merchants made enormous money. The Kerala forest department acted like servants of the Birlas. The department incurred the costs of clearfelling and raising eucalyptus plantations. The cost was borne by the government, adding to the concessions allowed to the factory.

On the one side Mavoor factory was destroying the forests and at the site it caused havoc polluting water and air. The air pollution affected the crop yields in the surrounding villages. The Chaliar river used to support agriculture and fisheries. But the effluents left by the factory polluted Chaliar water. Cattle deaths became common. People bathing in the river started suffering from skin disease. Greatest damage was done to aquatic life as fish death was so extensive that it disappeared. At this stage, Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP) helped the villagers to organise a movement against the Mavoor factory.

Their demand was to force the factory to adhere to strict regulations of pollution control and installation of devices to reduce effluent discharge in the river. They achieved success as the management installed pipeline to carry the effluents and also installed some pollution control measures.

The government increased the rates of bamboo and eucalyptus as there was pressure from the opposition that the factory got raw material at throw-away prices. The forest minister made a statement in the State Assembly in 1985 about the costs incurred by government on raising eucalyptus plantations. The State incurred Rs. 19,008/- to raise a hectare of eucalyptus plantation. But it received only Rs. 9,460/- after selling the eucalyptus from one hectare. Thus the government accepted that it was subsidising the factory heavily.

However, the Birlas never paid the increased cost of raw materials. They went to court and the court asked the factory to deposit certain amounts in the court pending the disposal of the suit. So, even after the price increase it never paid the increased costs. But they realised that in the near future they might have to pay increased price. In order to stall this they manipulated the trade union leaders. So on the pretext of labour trouble the factory was closed in 1985.

Bamboo was supplied at Re. 1/- per ton; richest tropical forests handed over to factory; natural forests clearfelled for eucalyptus plantation.

The impact of the factory is not restricted to some villages alone. The irreversible damage to natural resources on a macro-level became evident in recent years. In the early eighties the State suffered one of the worst droughts. The northern part of Kerala was affected most as this factory had destroyed the natural forests in the catchment areas of rivers. The extraction of bamboo opened up roads in remote forest areas making way for encroachment. The destruction of fragile tropical forests and replacing it with monoculture of eucalyptus affected the hydrological cycle leading to water shortage. The State government has to supply drinking water to people in tankers in many districts including Wynad and Palghat.

In 1988, as many as 75 people died in Chittoor taluka, Palghat district after drinking polluted water supplied through tankers. Prior to 1980, people never faced drinking water shortage but now people waiting for water tankers is a common scene. This year the situation has worsened affecting the whole state. But nobody is willing to recognise the link between drought and deforestation, i.e. between water shortage and the destruction caused by the factory.

The factory's greed for natural resources has destroyed the lives of tribals living in forests, especially in north Kerala. About 10,000 tribals

live on forests, making use of bamboo and reed. They are engaged in cottage industries. But now they have become destitutes as their resource is snatched by the communist government to help run a factory. A factory that employs 3000 labourers has destroyed the lives of 10,000 tribals. Besides, the drying up of streams and ponds due to eucalyptus plantation has also led to regular failure of paddy crop. The wild animals' attack on agricultural fields as well as the people has increased as their habitat has been destroyed.

In short, the establishment of Mavoor factory has led to destruction of resources, leading to scarcity of water and food. It has created poor soil and biological deserts increasing the poverty of people, leading to starvation deaths (as happened to some tribals in Wynad). The slogan of 'Industrialise or Perish' is not only an ideological blunder committed by 'progressive' Keralites but also an irreversible ecological blunder. The policy that was aimed at socialism has obviously brought misery and deprivation to thousands of people. Some 3000 people had got jobs for some time. The gainer was one single capitalist.

Recent developments show that the government does not want to learn from these experiences. In 1988 the left-front government entered into an agreement with Mavoor factory and the trade union and has reopened the factory after 3 years.

The agreement is a total sellout to the Birlas. The government has agreed to change the law governing forest produce.

The factory will not be paying taxes for the products removed from forests. The labour unions agreed to work without causing any labour troubles. The government also waived all cases pending in the court, helping the Birlas to make crores of rupees.

The government agreed to supply enormous raw material at lower costs. The most dangerous is the alleged secret agreement between the government and the factory that if the government fails to supply the required raw materials, the factory would have access to raw materials from natural forests.

The left front government has jettisoned all the principles of socialism and has gone beyond its means to help the Rayon factory. They have helped the factory to make profits at the cost of people's survival. All the political parties have hailed this decision to re-open the factory.

It is ironical that when Kerala is undergoing a severe drought its forests will be ravaged in this way. Many Keralites understand the link between deforestation and drought but they do not have the courage to speak up against this factory.

This throws up very basic questions not only for Kerala, but for whole country. Is it rational to destroy our natural resources for short-term gains while adversely affecting the lives of vast numbers of people? What will happen when the remaining forests are destroyed?

It will be interesting to note that the reopening of Mavoor Rayon factory in Kerala led to varied reactions from three sections of society. *The political parties and all trade unions welcomed the decision claiming that it is in the interest of 3000 workers.* Many village panchayats around the factory are not only unhappy but also want the factory to be closed for ever. The third reaction is from Wynad Prakriti Samrakshana Samiti (WPSS). They have already launched a movement to stop the extraction of raw materials from the forests.

Ruin of forests; pollution of air and water; deaths of cattle and fish; diseases of people, and water scarcity—these are the “gifts” from the rayon factory

Let us now see the bases of these different reactions. The decision to reopen the factory was very crucial to the ruling left front because during the election campaigns it assured trade union leaders that it would resolve the issue. The trade unions' hold was eroding as the closure lasted for 3 years and 3 months. Some of the workers committed suicide, unable to bear the financial pressure. This compelled them to surrender not only their militancy but also their interests: they agreed to the freezing of wage and bound themselves to promises of not resorting to strikes. But the most important aspect of the agreement to reopen the factory is that though it helped the workers marginally by giving them work, the major beneficiaries are the factory owners and the ruling political party. They succumbed to the pressure tactics of the Birlas and agreed to waive the forest tax, to withdraw court cases on price hikes, and also agreed that no amount is due by the factory. At one stroke the government helped the factory to save crores of rupees. There is a rumour that the Birlas have given huge donations to the ruling party

and its politicians. Obviously, the centralised decision making process leads to corrupt practices. In terms of economic as well as social justice this decision is undoubtedly biased in favour of groups that include politicians, bureaucracy and a section of working people which is much too small in relation to the unemployed people. It is cornering of natural resources for the benefit of this group.

In contrast to this, the village panchayats of Walakkad, Chattumangalam Mavoor and Paruvayal around the factory are demanding the closure of the factory permanently. Their stand is that the factory will never be able to solve the problem of pollution. They say that due to closure of factory for 3 years the fishes started swimming again in Chaliar river; if the factory reopens the fishes will again disappear. They do not want their drinking water wells, their estuaries and backwaters to get polluted.

The reopening will affect the agricultural crops in the areas under these panchayats, making it difficult for thousands of people to cultivate coconut and paddy. Moreover there are reports of permanent health problems and disabilities caused by pollution. People are suffering from unknown diseases as the effluents have some lead content. The impact is gradual, making it difficult to link it to the factory's effluents. The villagers are demanding that they do not want a factory that makes their living impossible by polluting the air, the water and the fields.

These reactions of villagers had stemmed from their experiences for three decades. This reaction is not only rational and justified. *It also exposes the limitations of the industrial model of development that ignores the social and environmental costs affecting the lives of large number of people.* It is almost impossible to calculate such costs in quantitative terms and even if it is done, there is always confusion created by "experts" who would absolve the factory. They will say that it is difficult to correlate the havoc and the effluents.

The third group questions the basis of continuing the factory on economic and ecological grounds. The WPSS has direct understanding and link with those tribals who are driven to a state of destitution by the state's policy. The factory has destroyed the natural resources like bamboo and reed that used to provide employment to a very large number of people. They ask "What is this economics that favours 3000 factory workers and takes away employment from a much larger number of people who depend on forests? How is it that the Birlas do not have to pay taxes on bamboo but the tribal is taxed even for the quota

of 20 bamboos given on permit?" It is pathetic that no political party has attempted to organise these unorganised tribals.

The forests in Kerala can provide raw materials only for the next five years. Then the non-availability of resources will force the factory to close down. So, if it has to close down in future, why not close it now so that at least some forest is protected for ecological functions?

The macro-level ecological impact is already visible as people in Kerala are sufferings from drinking water shortage and drought. This can be directly linked to clearfelling of natural tropical forest ecosystem and replacing it with that of eucalyptus monoculture. The Birla factory has made huge profits but the loss of water, of agricultural crops is to be suffered by common people. One of the slogans of WPSS reads as follows:—"Wynad is not the colony of Birlas; and 6 lakh people are not the raw material for Birlas; we demand a total ban on bamboo exploitation by the factory."

Even when the price of raw material was raised, the state was to get Rs. 9,000/- where the cost price was Rs. 19,000/-

While suggesting the closure of the factory, the WPSS has given an alternative solution.

It suggests the establishment of a series of cottage industries to make use of bamboo which will provide employment to far more than 3000 persons. The market price of bamboo is Rs. 1000/- per ton and the price of eucalyptus Rs. 600/- per ton. If the total raw material of 2 lakh tons (the quantity consumed by the factory annually) is sold in open market, it will fetch Rs. 15 crores. This should be used to compensate the displaced factory workers. Besides, money has to be taken compulsorily from the Birlas. Already 30 per cent of factory labourers have expressed their willingness to retire if proper compensation is given to them. Obviously, the workers will be satisfied and villagers will be happy because this will stop the pollution of air, water and the soil.

If 70,000 hectares of eucalyptus is replaced by natural forests through regeneration, healing will help in future to restore the hydrological cycle. This will help retain water and regenerate streams. Besides, this will help tribals to find resources near their hamlets.

Out of the three reactions discussed here, the last two—from WPSS and from the villagers—present a holistic picture of the effects of the factory. Instead of looking only at 3000 workers and the factory, it looks into the total impact of factory on nature and society.

However, the reaction of the first group (of politicians and trade unions) represents a narrow perspective. For them the suicide committed by one worker is shocking whereas the tribals' deaths due to starvation and the death of 75 tribals after drinking polluted water, which is a direct consequence of the factory, is not a shocking news. This indifference stems from the common base of politicians and the organised trade unions. In the present situation, the gains of 'development' are cornered by this group that represents the top 10 per cent of population. In order to maintain the status quo, and to maintain their life style, they do not come out of their narrow perspective.

The alternative suggested by WPSS is the only way to resolve the crisis of Mavoor factory. It is a programme for decentralisation: its benefits will accrue to large number of people. It is sustainable and will build natural resources. *But strangely, this alternative approach has no backing even from voluntary organisations in Kerala.*

This shows the limitations of voluntary organisations in solving environmental issues. They do not have the capacity to tackle wider issues. But WPSS is a people's movement that represents the bottom 40 per cent of common people and the tribals who are victims of distorted development policies.

This alternative to Mavoor factory is a step towards post-industrial society; it emphasises a total change of lifestyle to help large number of people, incorporating social justice and ecological harmony.

(Courtesy : N.F.S. India)

Attack on the Use of Christianity for Domination

—Ma Elena Ang

A group of Catholics and Protestants from seven countries has attacked the use of Christianity to 'oppress, exploit and kill people'. It warns that right-wing Christian groups are aiding in the domination of the Third World. The emergence of such protest movements and the strengthening of 'liberation theology' has the potential to build bridges between different religions and make these purer internally. —Ed.

CATHOLICS and Protestants from seven different nations have recently presented a sharp attack on 'Christian fundamentalism' for contributing to world conflict.

In a document called *The Road To Damascus*, signatories from South Korea, Namibia, South Africa, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala and the Philippines lamented the use of Christianity to 'oppress, exploit, persecute and kill people.'

While deploring the situation of Christian division, the signatories called for unity and an affirmation of Christianity as the faith of the poor and the oppressed in their countries.

The Road To Damascus: Kairos (Crisis) and Conversion was the product of a two-year effort involving hundreds of Christians and thousands of signatories. It was presented on 19 July at the Sto. Nino Cathedral of the Philippine Independent Church.

Tracing the political and historical roots of present-day conflicts, the document said 'conquest and evangelisation, colonisation and the building of churches advance together'. This eventually meant millions of people being killed, the elimination of indigenous peoples, and the destruction of entire civilisations and cultures.

Today, while most Third World countries are no longer colonies, the document continued, 'we are still dominated by one or more imperial power—the United States, Japan and Western Europe'.

Their web of economic control, according to the document, includes an unfair international trade system, multinational companies that monopolise strategic sections of the economy, economic policies dictated

by lending banks and governments together with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, and the use of technology as a tool for domination. It added that the 'staggering size of Third World debt' is but one 'dramatic sign of (Third World) subordination to imperialism'.

Imperialism's tactic of divide and rule, the document added, has led to its seeking to unite ruling elites against the people and the establishment of what is today called the national security state.

Colonial and imperial powers have reacted to a new historical subject—an organised and conscious people—by devising different counter-insurgency programmes variously called low-intensity conflict (LIC), low-intensity war, total war, total strategy or total security, said the document.

The document referred to another document, the Santa Fe document, as highlighting the tactic of 'cultural war' as part of this total war strategy and which tries to discredit all 'those who work for change by calling them communists, while trying to present the government as democratic, or promoting reformist alternatives or a third force'.

Christianity today, declared the document, is being used as a tool against the people and has seen the division of Christians caught on each side of the political conflict over supporting the *status quo* or fighting for change.

The group said it cannot remain neutral because 'neutrality is an indirect way of supporting the *status quo*' or fighting for change.

It condemned as heretical all forms of right-wing Christianity. Regarding heresy as a form of belief that selects some parts of the Christian message and rejects other parts in such a way that those doctrines which are selected for beliefs themselves become distorted, the document characterised right-wing Christianity as supportive of the 'ideology of the national security state', which insists upon blind obedience to authority, submits to the yoke of slavery, and tends to divide the body and soul, the material and spiritual, contrary to the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.

Such fanaticism, the document noted, is being vigorously advocated in all countries through almost all Christian traditions such as Catholic, Reformed, Lutheran, Anglican, Evangelical and Pentecostal.

While condemning the idolatry, heresy, apostasy, hypocrisy and blasphemy of right-wing Christianity, the document ended on a note of

hope. It said that while the world is faced with crises, the moment of truth and decision is also a time for grace, conversion and hope.

Like Saul—who persecuted the Jews and Christians who had been with the poor and was converted on his way to Damascus—the document called for a serious conversion. This conversion should recognise false prophets, abandon the practice of making individuals or groups 'scapegoats for the sins which we ourselves commit', and abandon hypocrisy in the guise of professing neutrality while people are being persecuted, exploited or killed.

(Courtesy : Third World Network
Features/Philippine News and Feature).

Gandhiji, Cow Protection and the Muslims

The Indian Muslims, at one time, thought that restoration of the Khalifa, was in the interest of justice. So did Gandhiji. Later, the Muslims found out that the Turks themselves had rejected the Khalifa and therefore, Khalifat movement was a folly. But the subject which interests us today is what Gandhiji had said when some Muslims had offered cow protection as the price for non-Muslims' support to Khalifat and what the Muslim leaders themselves had said spontaneously and full throatedly. Gandhiji writes :

"I contended that if the Khalifat question had a just and legitimate basis, as I believe it had, ... the Hindus were bound to stand by the Mussalmans in their demand for the redress of Khalifat wrong. It would ill become them to bring in the cow question in this connection, or to use the occasion to make terms with the Mussalmans, just as it would ill become the Mussalmans to offer to stop cow-slaughter as a price for matter and quite graceful, and reflect great credit on them, if the Mussalmans of their own free will stopped cow-slaughter out of regard for the religious sentiments of the Hindus and from a sense of duty towards them as neighbours and children of the same soil. To take up such an independent attitude was, I contended, their duty, and would enhance the dignity of their conduct. But if the Mussalmans considered it as their neighbourly duty to stop cow-slaughter, they should do so regardless of whether the Hindus helped them in the Khalifat or not. That being so," I argued, "the two questions should be discussed independently of each other, and the deliberations of the conference should be confined to the question of the Khalifat only."

But in spite of my warning Maulana Abdul Bari Saheb said : 'No matter whether the Hindus help us or not, the Mussalmans ought, as the countrymen of the Hindus, out of regard for the latter's susceptibilities, to give up cow-slaughter.' And at one time it almost looked as if they would really put an end to it.)

(Gandhiji's Autobiography,
Part V, Chapter XXXVI)

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Deforested Hillsides Cause Water Depletion in Panama Canal

By : Paul Simons

The Panama Canal is drying up as the hillsides that flank it are being stripped of forests. The article below would show the folly of clearing forests to settle farmers, the devastating effects of building roads which open up previously inaccessible forests, and the fallacy of industrialism which does not spare even watersheds from increasing population pressures. This should be an object lesson for India's planners, the pursuers of western model of development. —Ed.

THE PANAMA Canal is one of the most important shipping lanes in the world. Each year, about 12000 vessels pass through on their way to and from North America, the Far East, Europe and South America. For Panama, the waterway is its premier industry : canal tolls bring in about \$350 million, which represents some 8 per cent of the country's gross national product. Yet the future of the canal is in jeopardy because, during prolonged dry seasons, there is not enough water to keep it filled. Already, lack of water has closed the canal to large ships on occasions. The water shortage is one of the problems caused by deforestation of the surrounding hills. The Panamanian government and conservationists are taking action to keep the waterway in business, but the volatile politics and depressed economy of the country are hindering some of these measures.

When it was completed in 1914, the Panama Canal was the technological equivalent of putting a man on the Moon. The hills in the centre of the isthmus that Panama lies on are steep and prone to mudslides. An attempt to build a sea-level canal by cutting through the hills in the 1880s defeated the French entrepreneur, Ferdinand de Lesseps, who had previously masterminded the building of the Suez Canal.

In 1903 the Americans stepped in. The chief engineer, John Stephens, decided to raise the waterway through the hills, ascending and descending via a series of vast locks, leaving only a 15-kilometre stretch through the Culebra Cut to be excavated. Stephens harnessed the geography and climate of Panama to the canal's advantage.

As each ship passes through the locks, almost 200 million litres of water flow out to sea. The upper reaches of the canal need a constant supply of water to replenish this loss. It was, and probably still is, a folly to raise such quantities of water from the surrounding oceans. Instead, the entire canal runs on fresh water, supplied by the heavy rains

that fall in the mountain ranges surrounding the canal. Water flows constantly from the steep hills, and most of it collects in Gatun Lake which Stephenes created by damming the River Chagres. Water drains from the lake into the locks by gravity. In 1935, a second lake was created. The Madden Lake provides an additional reserve of water for the canal and also supplies water and hydroelectricity to Panama City and Colon.

Even the fact that the rain does not fall all year round did not affect the canal. The forests that make up its watershed act like a sponge, soaking up the heavy rain, and releasing it into the lake during periods of drought. During the dry season, from December to April, the water supply to Gatun Lake falls but there is still enough to replenish the canal.

All was well until the late 1970s when, for the first time, there was a serious drop in the water level in the canal. The Panamanians faced a dilemma. They could refill the canal by diverting water needed for the populations of Panama City and Colon: or they could close the canal to large ships. Both water and hydroelectric power were already rationed because of the lack of water in Madden Lake. The government was forced to turn away ships with a deep drought and so lose income from tolls. For the shipowners, it meant an extra three weeks of sailing around Cape Horn. The same thing happened in the dry season of 1981 to 1982.

Dry seasons are often erratic, however, and the patterns of rainfall in the 1970s and 1980s are little different from those when the canal was first built. So what has changed? The answer lies in the destruction of the forest in the watershed during the past 30 years.

Tropical rainforests protect the soil: once the sponge affect of the trees is removed, rain drains more rapidly down the steep slopes of the watershed into the Gatun and Madden lakes. During a drought, there is simply less water in the ground to flow into the lakes and the canal. The problem is magnified because, with no tree roots to hold the friable soil in place, heavy rains wash it down and silt up the lakes and canal. Silting in Madden Lake is particularly bad.

Sediment at the bottom has decreased the amount of water the lake can hold by 5 per cent since 1935, and the rate of silting is increasing. Silting is not a new problem: the canal has always had to be dredged, particularly along the Culebra Cut, which suffers from landslides because of its steep sides. But soil washed down by erosion had added to an already expensive operation and the capacities of the lakes and canal are slowly shrinking.

Frank Robinson, an American engineer with the Panama Canal Commission, was the first person to realise, in the 1970s, the implications

of the loss of forests for the canal. But it took a committee of environmentalists and engineers, headed by Stanley Heckadon from the Panamanian Ministry of Planning, to draw wider attention, particularly from politicians, to the problem. The committee's report, published in 1986 after two years of research, examined the condition of the canal and its watershed. It made alarming reading.

The peasant farmers, campesinos, are cutting down between 3000 and 5000 hectares of forest within the watershed each year. The report estimated that the watershed of Madden Lake alone lost 800 hectares of forest in 1983. At that rate, it would shrink from 77 200 hectares in 1983 to 55 600 hectares by 2010.

The disappearing forests reflect a deep-seated problem over the ownership of land in Panama, which has lost 70 per cent of its forests in the past 30 years. A small number of wealthy farmers have increasingly held the best farmland in the lowlands of Panama, which has left the campesinos with shortage of land on which they can support themselves. Faced with migrating to the appalling squalor of Panama City's slums, many peasants have turned to hacking down and burning trees in the forests to clear land for subsistence farming or raising cattle. The soil is also easily eroded (especially when it is pounded by cattle hooves) and crops, after a few seasons, impoverish the soil. The campesinos abandon the land and move on to fresh forest, and so the slash-and-burn continues.

By 1947, there was such a shortage of land available to the peasant farmers that the government built a road alongside the canal to open up previously uninhabited forests. The road also opened up the country for industrial development, especially in plastics, pharmaceuticals and pesticides. As a result, the population in the watershed grew by 6 per cent a year, six times as fast as the rest of the country. In 1950, there were 20 000 people living in the watershed; by 1985 the population had climbed to 110 000, and it is expected to reach 200 000 in the 1990s. This will put the forests under even greater pressure, which is why Heckadon advocates change. "The worst scenario is if we keep doing things the way we have with no regard to the freshwater system, forest and canal," he explains. "If we can't control the watershed of the Chagres, and deforestation continues unchecked, the soil erosion and silting will dramatically reduce the capacity of Madden Lake." Without change, he foresees increasingly prolonged shortages of water during the dry seasons, cutting the revenue from the canal and leaving the city populations with water and electricity rationing.

(Courtesy: New Scientist)

Grain-bound Pesticides Cause Liver Damage

THE FIRST results from animal experiments suggest that the residues of pesticides in stored grain can cause mild liver damage. The results mean that there is need to reassess the safety limits for pesticide residues in stored grain.

Aladin Hassan, who is coordinating the study in 10 countries, is a researcher in Vienna at a centre investigating nuclear techniques in food and agriculture. The United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the International Atomic Energy Agency jointly run the centre. Hassan said: "The residue bound to grain has been found to be substantially absorbed by [laboratory] animals. The levels which are currently accepted as safe would have to be readjusted should we confirm these toxic effects by further study."

Agricultural workers spray grain that is destined for storage with pesticides to protect it from attack by insects. Most countries have decided on a "safe" level of pesticide residues. Developing countries rely on guidelines drawn up by the FAO and the World Health Organization.

Scientists monitor the grain at the end of the storage period to ensure that it satisfies the "safe limits". In conventional tests, the grain is washed with organic solvents that dissolve the pesticides and the chemicals they form when they break down. But they could never extract all the pesticide that was originally sprayed on the grain. They have always believed that the missing portion either evaporated or became bound in some way to the grain.

The research in Vienna has tried to trace the "missing" pesticide. The researchers label the pesticide with carbon-14, a radio-active isotope. After storing the grain under normal conditions, they extract as much of the residue as they can using conventional solvents. However, they can still detect radioactivity in the grain. Their findings suggest that the pesticide is, in some way, bound to the grain.

Next, the researchers wanted to know whether animals could absorb these residues. They fed rats and mice on grain that had previously been labelled with carbon-14, stored for several months, and subjected to conventional techniques for removing the unbound pesticide. Then they measured the amount of radioactivity in the animals' urine, faeces and expired air. *Radioactivity in the urine is proof that the animal has absorbed the pesticide.*

The team has now begun to investigate whether the bound residues have any biological effect. The first results show that the levels of certain liver enzymes fall in animals that eat grain containing bound residues.

Source: New Scientist, 5 August, 1989.

Innovation of Far-reaching Consequence

Concentrating Sunlight Hundred Times its Normal Level

—Jonathan Beard,
New York

RESEARCHERS at Sandia National Laboratories in the US have produced a solar-power generator called a photovoltaic concentrator which is more efficient than all others of its type. The scientists believe that similar modules could soon be ready for commercial use.

The device has 12 plastic lenses that concentrate sunlight to 100 times its normal level onto 12 silicon solar cells. Its peak efficiency is 20.3 per cent. "Industry should be able to duplicate most of the design features very quickly", says Eldon Boes, supervisor of Sandia's Photovoltaic Technology Division. He expects to see concentrator modules with efficiencies of between 19 and 20 per cent on the market in about three years.

Boes says the team's use of silicon cells is especially significant. "We could have probably reached 20 per cent earlier using gallium-arsenide cells, but the expense of that technology means it's not as likely to be cost-effective in the near future."

The key economic innovation is the relatively inexpensive lenses that multiply the intensity of light from the Sun by several hundred times, focusing it on a cell. Without these lenses, many more expensive cells would have been necessary to obtain the same.

The low-resistivity silicon cell, which measures 1" millimetres square was developed by Martin Green at the University of New South Wales in Australia.

Another important feature of the generator is the prismatic cell cover that bends sunlight away from the thin metal gridlines carrying the current. This increases the amount of light that strikes the silicon surface and allows wider, more efficient gridlines to be used.

The researchers also found a way to solder the silicon cells directly to the underlying copper contacts, which help to remove heat. This eliminates the need for the usual ceramic insulator which other photovoltaic concentrators have between the two layers, because copper expands thermally five times as much as silicon.

An anti-reflective layer of magnesium fluoride solution was applied to both surfaces of the Fresnel lenses to increase the amount of light they transmit. The researchers measured an increase in transmission of about 2 per cent. "It's a small contribution, but at this stage it is an experimental process. We will be exploring more effective and more durable coatings in the future," said Elisabeth Richards, one of the developers.

Athawale Memorial Drawing Contest

Baburao Athawale Memorial Drawing Contest was organised by the Deendayal Research Institute, Nagpur under its 'BAL JAGAT' project, on Aug 27 this year. The competitors were in the age-group of 5 to 14 years.

Last year the contest had drawn about 10,500 competitors. The contest was held at 68 centres. This year the idea was to draw 20, 000 contestants at 125 centres. A circular to all schools was accordingly sent in July and also posters were used for wide publication. The entry fee was very nominal i.e. Re. 1/- which included the cost of the drawing sheet to be provided.

The Response

The response surpassed the expectations. More than 26,000 school children appeared at 152 centres of Nagpur, Kamathi, Kanhan, Koradi, Khaparkhedao, Vaadi and Contonment. More than 500 prominent workers volunteered for invigilation and other administrative arrangements.

Subjects of Drawings

The subjects of drawing or painting were also inspiring — 'Bharat Mahan', 'Nehruji's Dream', 'Circus', 'Procession'. The 'Shravan (Rainy month)', 'The Battle', 'Hockey', 'The Missile Agni'.

Evaluation and Selection

Judges were renowned art teachers like Sarva Shri Savarkar, Dhananjay Verma, Shripat Chorghade, Gaekwad helped by Sarvashri Prabhakar Dharpure, Shrilkar, Jagdish Suklikar, Shekhar Vatak, Avinash Laghate, Kashikar, Meenakshi Damleni, Padma Poojari and others. This resulted in the selection of 485 entries for various rewards in four groups. A, B, C, D. The prizes ranged from Rs. 251/- to Rs. 12/-

Among these who were selected for prizes included :

Group A (Late Nirmalbai Puranik Memorial Prize) First — Vishal-akhi Daine; Second — Sandip Paral; Third — Shilpi Sinha; Consolation Prizes — Seema Murkute and Vaishali Mudhare.

Group B (Late Achchyut Hirde Memorial Award) First—Ashutosh Rula; Second—Samir Nistane; Third—Firden Bhasi; Consolation Prizes—Pravina Vishnu Khetkar and Ashish Junankar.

Group C (Late Alasaheb Bansod Memorial Award) First—Shwetangi Bele; Second—Dinesh Nagdeve, Third—V. Ravi Kumar; Consolation Prizes Archana Pasri and Suresh Thandare; Special Prize—Samir Rahim Sheikh, Samir Shende, and Abhishek Verma.

Group D (Late Shri Krishna Rajeshwar Deshmukh Memorial Award) First—Pratibha Shri Chandorkar; Second—Sudershan Bodhankar; Third—Pravin Giradkar, Consolation Prize Shailesh Pawar and Sunil Varhekar.

Special Prizes were also awarded to deaf and dumb and other handicapped competitors. C.P. and Berar High School, Ravi Nagar and Vidya Mandir Koradi were awarded trophies for sending highest number of competitors in the urban and the rural areas respectively. Manavata Vidyalaya was awarded the running Promoters' trophy.

Prize Distribution

The Prize Distribution Ceremony was held on October 5 at Dhanwate Rang Mandir. The Chief Guest was the noted cine-artist and Matinee Idol, Amol Palekar. Nanaji Deshmukh was to be present during the function. But he was advised complete rest after his eye-operation at Bombay (Jaslok Hospital) and was not permitted to undertake the journey. Mr Jairaj Patak, the District collector presided over the function. Also present in the assembly were Mr. P.R. Mundle, Mrs. Sumatibai Suklikar, Mr. Ram Shewalkar, Mrs. Usha Shirolkar and others.

Amol Palekar's Speech

"An artist is as vital a person in society as a doctor or an engineer and, as such, deserves to be treated with respect. It is high time that we changed our way of looking at artists" said the renowned stage and film actor Palekar in his speech.

"Every parent wants his son or daughter to become a doctor or an engineer but no one would want his child to take up art as a career. Even society looks upon an artist with indifference and hint of contempt."—Mr. Palekar lamented.

"Speaking about the arts, at least in India, we are enchanted by the cinema.

"It is time we change our point of view, regarding the arts. Even parents must alter their fixed attitudes regarding the careers of their children.

"Our way of looking at life will definitely undergo a radical change if we get over our indifference towards the arts."

Mr. Jairaj Pathak, in his speech, lauded the efforts of the Institute in promoting artistic inclinations in children.

Nanaji's letter addressing the president, the chief guest, the organisers and the audience and felicitating them all for conducting this contest to a glorious success was read. The letter traced the history of the Institute's efforts for inculcating noble faculties amongst children through 'BAL-JAGAT' project and hoped that with the active participation of all this aspect of national regeneration will develop to magnificent heights.

The function was conducted by Mrunal Puranik, Smt. Sumatibai Suklikar welcomed the guests, Shri Prabhakar Mundle garlanded them and Mr. Chandrakant Channe proposed the vote of thanks at the end.

The intimation of the contest, the contest itself and the prize-award-ceremony were very well covered and reported by all important English, Marathi and Hindi Papers. Thousands of enlightened citizens, including guardians of the participants of the the contest attended the function and appreciated the efforts of the Deendayal Research Institute. A great centre of applause was the Hadas High School Student Prasanna Chaforkar, who was the first Prize-winner last year and subsequently was the proud recipient of the Central Government "Guru Shishya scholarship" of Rs. 20,000. He was a living embodiment of the greatness of Art as a career as sponsored by the Bal Jagat project of Deendayal Research Institute, Nagpur and so emphatically advocated by the great promoter of Art, Amol Palekar.

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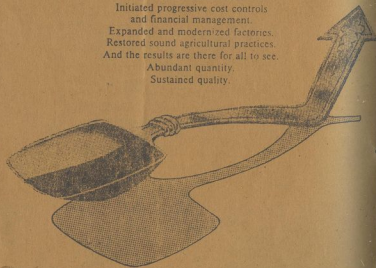
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Vol. X No. 12

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for the World
&
What the Whites
Did to Them !

Journal of Deendayal Research Institute