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EXCHANGE OF VIEWS, DISCUSSION

Summary of a Theoretical Symposium

THE NATIONALITIES QUESTION IN ASIAN AND AFRICAN COUNTRIES

A symposium on the state of the nationalities question in Asia and Africa has been held under the auspices of the WMR Commission on Problems of the National Liberation Movement in Asian and African Countries. Attended by representatives of communist parties of many Asian and African countries and also by scientists from the USSR, the GDR, and Iran, the symposium considered mainly aspects of the question that acquired significance after independence was won by former colonies. In this context the participants examined new processes that have specific features of their own, paying close attention to the general methodological approach to and the Leninist formulation of the nationalities question, and considering the related spectrum of issues through the prism of the extensive experience of national construction in the USSR, which recently marked its 60th anniversary. The following is a summary of the minutes of the symposium.

Concrete Historical Approach

Emphasis was placed on the importance of the concrete historical approach in analysing the present state of the nationalities question in Asian and African countries. The

historical situation of the national movements and an account of the actual state of the question under consideration make it possible to understand this question's general and specific features and draw some parallels between the past and the present. Many of the speakers dwelt on the roots of present-day issues in the nationalities question in the former colonial world, the social base of national movements, and the development trends of the relations between nationalities.

Speaking of the specifics of the nationalities question in Africa, where only a few decades ago colonialism was in unchallenged control and socio-economic development was at an extremely low level, Ahmed Salem (Sudanese Communist Party) singled out elements distinguishing the African continent's present experience from its experience of past epochs.

At the time independence was won nations had not taken shape in many African countries on account of the primitive living conditions, the prevalence of a subsistence economy, and other pre-capitalist systems: tribal structures were predominant. Under these conditions no national movements of the type known to history could emerge. Also significant is the fact that unlike Europe, where national frontiers were demarcated naturally, in the course of history, Africa provides an example of how an entire continent was forcibly partitioned by imperialist vultures, with the result that frontiers were established entirely at the will of the colonialists. Subsequently inherited by the new states, these frontiers proved to be arti-

ficial in a certain sense, in many instances dividing kindred ethnic communities.

Moreover, West European experience, which belongs to a different epoch, bears no resemblance to the present experience (in the context of the problems we are considering) in that the bourgeoisie heading the national movements of the time advanced the aim of setting up nation states in contrast to feudal particularism and fragmentation. Under colonial rule this question had its own features: for the peoples enslaved by imperialism the decisive aspect of the struggle for self-determination was linked to political liberation from foreign bondage. In the context of Africa's experience, the national movements of the continent emerged not as movements for the creation of the independent statehood of nationalities, ethnic groups, and tribes inhabiting a definite territory. On the contrary, they were an expression of the anti-colonial protest of all or most of the national groups, even if the extent of their participation in the liberation struggle differed.

The situation changes with the settlement of the national-colonial question. A hallmark of the development of nationality-to-nationality relations in African countries, as in many other former colonies with a multinational population, said Apollon Davidson, Doctor of Historical Sciences (USSR), is that the anti-colonialist base of the unity of ethnic communities objectively weakens with the departure of the colonialists. In many cases we witness the surfacing of deep-seated resentments and disputes

that had receded into the background in the period of foreign oppression. That is when the effect is felt of the "stratification" of different epochs—the ethnic and tribal conflicts of the pre-colonial period, the consequences of the policy of playing off local peoples against each other pursued by the colonialists, and the division of these peoples by the frontiers of colonial empires. Contradictions are also sparked by the inept or frankly chauvinistic policy of the authorities in the nationalities question. In some cases this reinforces centrifugal, separatist tendencies. Local reaction and imperialism frequently do not hesitate to benefit by the unsettled state of the nationality-to-nationality relations inherited from the past.

However, despite the complexity of the processes of national consolidation the very fact of the existence of a politically sovereign state can objectively promote the tendency towards nationality-to-nationality contacts. Independence, noted Semou Pathe Gueye (Party of Independence and Labour of Senegal), begins to play the role of an objective condition for inter-ethnic integration and homogenisation with the formation of large national entities on the basis of tribes and ethnic groups. Independence strengthens the state, which becomes the instrument of centralisation and unification. This is manifested in the administrative-political sphere, in the efforts to organise economic life and economic relations between various parts of a country, and in the gravitation towards the use of a common language. Having recourse to the slogan of "national

unity" or using discord between nationalities to further their own ends, the local bourgeois classes seek to paralyse the militancy of the working classes of different nationalities, to prevent them from uniting. Nevertheless, even the bourgeoisie cannot ignore the operation of the latent tendency towards centralisation implicit in post-colonial development. Senegal is no exception.

At the symposium it was noted that Lenin's well-known thesis of the two tendencies of the national process was of special methodological significance to the subject under discussion. "Developing capitalism," Lenin wrote, "knows two historical tendencies in the national question. The first is the awakening of national life and national movements, the struggle against all national oppression, and the creation of national states. The second is the development and growing frequency of international intercourse in every form, the break-down of national barriers, the creation of the international unity of capital, of economic life in general, of politics, science, etc."¹ With this clear-cut demarcation Lenin accentuates the objective dialectics of capitalist development, which goes through a number of historical stages. In our epoch, noted Professor Christian Maehrdel, Doctor of Philosophy (GDR), the two tendencies are more interlocked than in any earlier historical epoch. This is the result, on the one hand, of the much strengthened internationalisation of all social

¹ V.I. Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. 20, p. 27.

processes against the background of world-wide transition from capitalism to socialism; and, on the other, of the backwardness in the process of formation of nations in the former colonial zone.

If we take Africa, Christian Maehrdel said, we shall find that the dominant tendency is towards the formation and consolidation of nations, and hence of national and multinational states. The other tendency--towards the centralisation of political power--places certain limits on the operation of the disintegrational factors rooted in the policy of artificially partitioning the continent that was pursued by the colonialists. The character of our epoch gives a new quality to the processes of national construction: as distinct from the past, on the agenda today are tasks not of promoting bourgeois, capitalist development but rather the creation of revolutionary-democratic states.

The fundamental interests of the peoples inhabiting this or that country are to guarantee the immutability of frontiers, and this means that national processes will proceed within the existing borders. Under these conditions the leading trend in the context of national-state construction must be seen not as the merging of the countries that have won liberation but the consolidation of their sovereign existence with the simultaneous unfolding of all-sided cooperation on a basis of equality.

Question by Rafic Samhoun (Lebanese Communist Party):

Would you specify what is implied by the tendency towards centralisation in the context of African reality?

Christian Maehrdel: I spoke of this tendency on the state level. The bourgeois and petty-bourgeois circles that came to power in African countries laid special stress on national unity, on the need to counter the forces of disintegration and division supported by the neocolonialists. Centralisation was reinforced by the political systems; unitary state forms, one-party administrations predominate on the continent.

I should like to note that the state can, without doubt, decisively promote the process of the formation of nations if, of course, the relevant steps taken by it do not run counter to the objective conditions of this process. This is when the steps linked to the establishment of the corresponding state forms (federal, unitary), the country's division into territorial-administrative units, and the granting of political and other rights to ethnic groups prove to be effective, and transformative, progressive changes in society's life proceed more successfully.

Ahmed Salem: It would evidently be proper to speak of unitary factors, of centripetal tendencies in a broader context. Today Africa speaks of African unity, and the Arab world speaks of Arab unity. The requirements of the liberation movement are compelling the advanced forces to urgently raise the question of building bridges between the different parts of our continent, and of reinforcing cooperation between African and Arab peoples on an anti-imperialist basis. In the light of these phenomena is there justification for drawing attention solely to divisive factors (frontiers, culture, language), to matters linked to the existence of individual states, and so

on? At any rate I should like to raise the problem as it relates to our continent.

Semou Pathe Gueye: I would say that it is equally dangerous either to overrate distinctions (as you all know there is great diversity of language, culture, and geography in Africa) or to ignore them. Both aspects are important.

In the case of individual countries the main tendency is, I would say, towards centralisation, towards the consolidation of state unity, and that is why the slogan of national unity prevails. A close, retrospective look is also required by the problems of African unity. Now, as in the past, it is steadfastly championed by the continent's progressive, revolutionary-democratic forces. For instance, everybody knows of the outstanding role that was played by Kwame Nkrumah in setting up the Organisation of African Unity. True, in that period the incipient African bourgeoisie was concerned chiefly with formalising the frontiers inherited from colonial days. In the new states it counted on achieving hegemony and on controlling the emergent domestic market.

The immutability of frontiers remains one of the underlying principles recorded in the OAU Charter. However, there have been cases of the bourgeoisie and neocolonialists trying to violate this principle, especially when their class interests were in jeopardy. A case in point is the confederation forced upon Gambia by Senegal. On the other hand, one can hardly ignore another prospect in the historical context, namely, the

voluntary unification in a single state of these or those African peoples now divided by frontiers. This can only be ensured by progressive, advanced forces, by their parties and organisations.

Rafic Samhoun: The tendencies towards unification manifest themselves differently from region to region. Besides, the possibility of reverse movements is not to be ruled out. Take the Middle East. The popular slogan of Arab unity is now coming into conflict with new realities: the ascension to power, after independence, of the local bourgeoisie, some of whose segments are inclined to pursue a narrow, egoistical policy of fencing off one Arab country from another, a policy which imperialism increasingly uses to its advantage. In the obtaining conditions special significance is acquired by the slogan of anti-imperialist Arab unity for the solution of the region's key problem--the Palestinian problem--and for strengthening the economic and political independence of the states in the region.

The participants in the discussion then went on to consider some aspects of existing national situations, characterise their common features on the scale of the Afro-Asian world, and make a closer study of the specific situation in some of its regions and countries.

Countries and Regions: Different Situations

Most of the peoples of the East (Asia and North Africa), said Doctor of Historical Sciences Mikhail Lazarev (USSR), are either consolidating or emergent nations with all the accompanying intrinsic main characteristics. In Africa south of the

Sahara and in Oceania the process of the formation of nations on the basis of ethnic groups is only now beginning. The intensity of this process depends on a country's development level in basic socio-economic indicators.

A characteristic of the developing world is that it has a vast mosaic of national situations. All the three principal stages of national development--the formation of tribes into ethnic groups, the formation of nations on the basis of ethnic groups, and the internal consolidation of emergent nations--are often to be observed in one geographical region or even one country. Hence the need for a differentiated (regional) approach to an examination of these processes. This need is accentuated by the fact that the operation of objective socio-economic and specific historical factors is invariably accompanied by the operation of definite political, international factors, that have to be taken into account when the nationalities question is raised. Any analysis of this question entails understanding present-day changes and the trends of social development. Such understanding allows going deeper into the roots of existing and emergent national movements and making a class assessment of the nature and direction of these movements. The multiformity of the problems under discussion was illustrated by concrete examples.

Hamid Majid Mussa (Iraqi Communist Party), Rafic Samhoun, and some other speakers pointed out that the unresolved state of the Palestinian problem is affecting the situation throughout the Arab world and exercising no little influence on the inter-

national situation. The fact that no just settlement has been reached on the national destiny of the Palestinians is due to the glaring violation, by Israel and its US patrons, of the cardinal right of peoples to self-determination recorded in the UN Charter. The manoeuvres of Washington and Tel Aviv over the Palestinian problem harbour an enormous threat to international security and are directed against the Arab liberation movement of the entire region.

On the other hand, individual countries of the region have their own nationalities or ethno-confessional problems. Hamid Majid Mussa spoke in some detail about his country's experience, noting the multinational structure of the Iraqi people. Along with Arabs there are Iraqi Kurds (who are the second largest nationality in the country, numbering nearly 25 per cent of the population) and also Assyrians, Turkmenians (Turkmenians), and some other ethnic minorities. A specific of the nationalities situation in the region around Iraq is that there are many millions of Kurds also in neighbouring countries.

The Communist Party has invariably approached the Kurdish question in Iraq from the standpoint of Marxism-Leninism and proletarian internationalism, taking into account the specific historical state of the struggle of the working class and all Iraqi working people--Arabs, Kurds, and others--and pointing out that this acute problem can be resolved in the Iraqi Republic itself through a national-democratic revolution. As the Iranian sociologist Mahmud Azad, Hamid Majid Mussa, and Mikhail Lazarev

pointed out, in the Kurdish issue the communist parties of the Middle East adhere to an internationalist stand and unequivocally recognise the right of the Kurds to self-determination. Further, attention was drawn to the socio-economic and geographical aspects of the situation: divided by the frontiers of several states and by difficult mountain terrain, the links of the Kurdish regions among themselves are much weaker than their traditional links with the countries in which they are situated. In their policy in the nationalities question, the Communists take this and, above all, the interests of uniting working people of different nationalities (this is discussed below) into account.

The specifics of a concrete national situation were considered also on the example of Lebanon. Rafic Samhoun showed how religious discord was negatively affecting the formation of a definite national entity and preventing its simultaneous integration with the family of Arab peoples, to whom the Lebanese Arabs are linked by ties of kinship. The deep-rooted question of nationality affiliation in Lebanon has become a key issue over which there has been unceasing bloodshed. The recent Israeli aggression has made this issue even more acute.

In Lebanon, said Rafic Samhoun, the question of nationality affiliation, which came into the focus of public life after independence (1943), is given various interpretations. There have always been two political trends in the country: one sought an organic link to Arab countries, and the other opposed this with arguments about a "Mediterranean civilisation", about

a special "Lebanese nationalism", plurality of culture, and so on. The latter trend, headed by the counter-revolutionary big bourgeoisie of the Christian (Maronite) community, endeavoured to isolate the republic from the Arab national liberation movement, pursuing a policy of alliance with imperialism and close cooperation with Israel. The isolationist movement was intensified every time the balance of military strength changed in favour of the Zionist invaders. On the other hand, the successes of the Arab liberation struggle, particularly in the 1950s, usually compelled it to retreat.

The isolationists have again become more active during the past decade. Imperialism and Israel's rulers conceived a plan to wipe out the Palestine resistance and the Lebanese national movement by means of armed force, by war. Religious feeling was used as a tested means of stirring racist, anti-Palestinian, and anti-Muslim sentiments among the Christian masses. The role of a strike force was undertaken by fascism, whose aim was to put an end to Lebanon's affiliation to the Arab world, and set up a clerical state following in the wake of Tel Aviv's policies. The orchestrators of these plans have not abandoned them to this day.

However, Lebanese reaction and its Washington and Israeli backers have failed to break the growing people's movement, which takes its strength from Lebanon's Arab character. Whereas formerly its leadership was claimed by the Muslim bourgeoisie, today the movement is unfolding under a new leadership—it is headed by a wide patriotic bloc representing the

working class, the petty and middle bourgeoisie, and some elements of big capital.

Representatives of the communist parties of Arab countries stressed that the basic contradiction in their region is with imperialism, which is using Israel as an instrument and an ally. Thus, in the region the nationalities question continues to be a question of the liberation of each Arab country and of the Arab world as a whole from the snare of dependence on imperialism, a question of achieving Arab unity on the basis of progressive democracy, a question of the Arab people of Palestine exercising their legitimate rights, including the right to self-determination and the creation of their own nation state.

The nationalities problem in South Africa was analysed by Vusizwe Seme (South African Communist Party). With the conquest of independence by Mozambique and Angola under the revolutionary leadership of the FRELIMO and the MPLA, the peoples of these countries were able to implement their right, won at the price of heroic battles, to self-determination and the creation of independent states. Due to the obstacles erected by imperialism, the national-liberation question remains unresolved in Namibia, which is illegally occupied by the Pretoria regime. South Africa itself is the most sinister citadel of racist-colonialist capitalist oppression.

The experience of South Africa shows that even in a highly industrialised capitalist society national factors may predominate for a historically limited period. In a society whose every pore is penetrated by racial and national oppression the struggle

of millions of oppressed Africans, Indians and Coloureds is directed against rule by a white minority that holds the monopoly over the means of production, over the levers of capitalist exploitation of the black majority. The apartheid regime has always pursued a policy of splitting the population by nationality and race, corrupting the white working class and turning it into part, albeit a subordinate one, of the Establishment. As regards the Indians and the Coloureds, they are oppressed by the white capitalists even if not to the same extent as the Africans, who form the majority of the population. The direct and long-term interests of these ethnic groups are linked closely to those of the African majority.

The 1962 Programme of the South African Communist Party declares that the struggle for socialism in South Africa goes through two stages: the first, the consummation of the national-democratic revolution, provides a firm basis for a transition to the second phase, the building of a socialist society. The main content of the first stage is the national liberation of the African people. The African National Congress and the SACP are directing all their efforts to the attainment of this goal. The Communists lay special stress on the significance of proletarian internationalism as the cardinal ideological instrument for uniting Africans, Indians, Coloureds and progressive elements of the white population around the aim of putting an end to racist domination.

At the symposium the consensus was that the concrete historical approach provides the communist parties with a reliable foundation for drawing up their programmes on the nationalities

question and allows them to view, from class positions, the programmes for resolving this question advanced by the ruling circles of many African and Asian countries.

Contradictory Experience

Far from all African and Asian countries, it was noted at the symposium, have both the objective and the subjective prerequisites for a genuinely democratic solution of the nationalities question, although some steps, experiments and, in a number of countries, actual reforms have been undertaken time and again. The possibilities of and the restraints, placed by class reasons, on measures of this kind under a national-bourgeois government were considered by Sarada Mitra (Communist Party of India).

In the Constitution adopted in India after independence was proclaimed, he said, the state is identified with the Indian nation. In the context of what the government has achieved since independence in promoting national-linguistic and administrative-territorial reforms, the Communist Party does not dispute this concept, although according to scientific criteria India can be termed a multinational state. It will be recalled that Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, and other democratic, far-sighted leaders of the ruling class saw India as inhabited by many "linguistic communities"; in practice this signified virtual recognition of territorial-linguistic and cultural distinctions typical of a multinational country, whose population speaks scores of languages. It is also well known that

Jawaharlal Nehru spoke with admiration of the Soviet experience of resolving the nationalities question.

With the onset of the 1950s it became simply impossible to belittle the nationalities factor in India. A rapidly spreading grassroots movement, in which the Communists were also active, was calling for a restructuring of the states on a linguistic basis. Under pressure from the people the government of the national bourgeoisie moved towards reorganisation, and in 1956 the linguistic principle was formally recognised as underlying India's administrative-territorial division.

The linguistic state, Sarada Mitra went on to say, is more than the basic administrative unit in India. It may be regarded as a sort of national statehood functioning on territory inhabited by peoples speaking one of the Indian languages. Their culture and, to an extent, economy develops within this framework. Simultaneously, although the states enjoy a certain measure of autonomy,² the central government retains effective control, and the parliament has the right to redemarcate the frontier of any state and to form new states. On the recommendation of the central government, the President of the Republic can dissolve the local government. The Communist Party is advocating greater autonomy for the existing states.

² Each state has its own government, and the population elects the state's legislature. The states have power to make laws, for instance, covering public order, reorganisation of land relations, irrigation, education, and public health, and some powers with respect to mining, the manufacturing industry, and other areas.

In Sri Lanka, said Raja Collure (Communist Party of Sri Lanka) the national composition is 73 per cent Sinhalese, 20 per cent Tamils--of local and Indian origin³--and about 7 per cent Muslims.⁴ Speaking of the causes that have aggravated the nationalities question in the past few years, he noted the negative, divisive effects of colonial policy and also the inability of the Sri Lankan bourgeois governments to take any real steps towards a democratic solution of the question. The Communists urge granting regional autonomy to the Tamil minority inhabiting northern and eastern districts, while perserving the state's unitary character, and propose concrete ways and means of settling the status of Tamils of Indian origin.⁵

Essentially speaking, the problem is that the policy of the ruling class has been traditionally to foster the assimilation of the Tamil nationality by the Sinhalese majority, to deny to the Tamils any real possibility for using their own language in the management of local affairs and in their relations with the central authority, and to hinder the development

³ The former settled on the island many centuries ago; the latter came relatively recently, and are mainly plantation workers in the central part of the country. To a certain extent their status is regulated by agreements signed between the governments of Sri Lanka and India.

⁴ Descendants of mixed marriages between Arabs and local people.--Ed.

⁵ The granting of Sri Lankan citizenship to all who wish it; the choice of citizenship (Indian or Sri Lankan) for Tamils, who have neither. The stand taken by the CPSL is that this group of the population should enjoy equal rights with other citizens, and that the schools and medical facilities functioning in Indian Tamil communities should be integrated with the national system of education and public health.

of their national culture. The present explosion of ethnic discord is the consequence of this policy. There has even been an extremist demand for the creation of a separate Tamil state on the island.

Analogous tendencies are to be observed in many countries of Asia and also of Africa, where the effects of colonial and then of neocolonial capitalist development are having a destructive effect on relations between the different nationalities. Jose Lava (Communist Party of the Philippines) drew attention to the Muslim problem, which is acute in his country. An extreme expression of this problem is the demand for secession by the Moros, who are a religious-ethnic minority inhabiting the south of the Philippines. The objective roots of the grievances articulated by the Muslim Filipinos are that during and after the colonial period the Moro population has been subjected to many abuses. The Muslim minority has been reduced to the status of second-class citizens relative to the majority, which professes Christianity. The Communist Party believes that the problem can be solved by granting the Moros autonomy in areas where they are a clear majority. The Communists seek to unite Christians and Muslims on an anti-imperialist, anti-feudal platform in the struggle for national and popular democracy.

Autonomy, said Mikhail Lazarev, signifies the retention by the central authority of power in matters relating to defence, foreign affairs, and key areas of the economy and the infrastructure, and the granting of the broadest democratic rights to the

ethnic minority in the management of local affairs. These would be, of course, real not paper rights.

Some speakers analysed the extremely contradictory experience of a number of developing countries in the matter of autonomy. Ahmed Salem drew attention to the problem of Southern Sudan, which is inhabited by national groupings whose ethnic features and culture differ from that of the Arab-speaking North. The Communist Party has consistently pressed for the autonomy of the southern region, putting forward a concrete plan, which was accepted in 1969 by the Revolutionary Council headed by Nimeiri (the First Minister for the Affairs of the South was Joseph U Garang, Political Bureau member of the Sudanese Communist Party, who was subsequently executed by the authorities). This programme was partially put into effect before the regime started repressions against the Communists. The law granting autonomy to the South (1972) helped somewhat to reduce, for a time, the dimensions of the civil war that has been raging since the mid-1950s, although the nationalities question remained unresolved.

The main reason for this was that the Nimeiri regime distorted the class essence of the form of regional autonomy advocated by the Sudanese Communist Party. The Communists saw autonomy as a means of strengthening the posture of the circles seeking unity with the North, of the democratic, people's forces, a means of enforcing reforms with the purpose of eradicating exploitative oppression. Actually, however, autonomy was handed on a silver platter to the separatists, who did not

believe in the country's unity. True, the regime's pro-capitalist orientation suited them. But capitalist development and bourgeois egoism and chauvinism always carry seeds of national discord. The South's fragmentation into three more provinces has been formalised. This is due to the discovery there of oil deposits, which the central authority would like to put its hands on. Bloodshed and political chaos are continuing in the South.

Hamid Majid Mussa underlined the significance of the right to autonomy in the broader context of political democracy generally. If the latter is impinged, simply trampled, then the democratic-sounding laws passed in relation to other nationalities, to ethnic minorities, also prove to be ineffective.

The Iraqi Communists have always stood up for the right of the Kurdish people to self-determination in the form of autonomy, insisting on minorities being given administrative and cultural rights. However, when the law granting autonomy to Kurdistan was passed (1974), the government at first attempted to prune the Kurdish regions (large oil deposits were discovered in one of them), and then followed the bureaucratic enforcement of this law, with the result that the prerogatives of the local authority were arrogated by the central government. A similar fate overtook the 1975 law on the rights of Iraqi citizens of Assyrian origin.

Jointly with other national-democratic forces, the Iraqi Communist Party is now directing its efforts towards securing the formation of a national-democratic front government that

would be open to all national and progressive forces, resolving problems vital to the Iraqi people, and ensuring democratic rights to the working people and real autonomy to Iraqi Kurdistan. It is insisting on an internationalist approach to the nationalities question, an approach that would guarantee the national right of the Kurdish people to self-determination, and help to unite Arabs with the Kurds and other ethnic minorities in the common struggle against imperialism, for liberation and social progress.

The speakers stressed that it was important to chart ways of resolving the nationalities question that, as the experience of the Great October and other socialist revolutions has shown, would open the road to internationalist friendship among the working people of different nationalities, to unity for a joint struggle against national and social oppression. This explains why so much attention was focussed at the symposium on the present formulation of the question of the right of nations to self-determination up to and including secession and the formation of independent states.

Self-Determination and Secession

At the symposium the question of free secession was raised in the broad sense. What should be the overall approach to this right in the present nationalities situation, which in many African and Asian countries is highly dynamic and mobile and witnesses the growth of new nations and nationalities? What

are the long-term forms of self-determination? How does the democratic principle of self-determination relate to the aims of the class, anti-imperialist struggle in individual countries and on the international scene?

Mikhail Lazarev drew attention to some of Lenin's pronouncements on this subject. Championing the principled class approach to the right to free secession, above all in the context of the pre-revolutionary realities of Russia, Lenin wrote: "We are in favour of autonomy for all parts, we are in favour of the right to secession (and not in favour of everyone's seceding!). Autonomy is our plan for organising a democratic state. Secession is not what we plan at all. We do not advocate secession... But we stand for the right to secede owing to reactionary, Great-Russian nationalism, which has so besmirched the idea of national coexistence that sometimes closer ties will be established after free secession!"⁶ Thus, while accentuating the highly reactionary character of the relations between nationalities in tsarist Russia, when the necessity for free secession was generated by virtually extreme circumstances, Lenin nonetheless gave priority to "national coexistence". Elsewhere, he specially makes the point that the right to self-determination of nations "is not the equivalent of a demand for separation, fragmentation and the formation of small states", and implies only a consistent "expression of struggle against all

⁶ V.I. Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. 19, pp. 500-501.

national oppression".⁷ Here we have a negative attitude to national particularism, which divides working people of different nationalities. -With the abolition of national oppression, especially its most odious forms (colonialism and others), the prospect arises of establishing new relations among peoples, of uniting them in the joint struggle for social progress--such is the logic of Lenin's thinking.

Mahmud Azad and other speakers noted that the experience of the October Revolution in Russia bore out the strategic guideline of the Bolshevik Party towards the attainment of the epoch-making aim of the voluntary union of nations liberated from the yoke of capitalism. "Life itself," said Yuri Andropov, General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, in the report "The USSR Is Sixty", "and formidable economic, social, foreign-policy, and defence problems compelled the need to rally the peoples, to unite the republics that sprang up on the ruins of the Russian Empire."⁸

In the developing countries, too, after they win political freedom, the scientific interpretation of the right of nations to self-determining, including the right of free secession, stems from the need for steadfastly democratising the relations between the peoples inhabiting this or that multinational country. Further, at the symposium attention was also drawn to the fact that continued capitalist and pre-capitalist exploitation

⁷ Ibid., Vol. 22, p. 146.

⁸ Pravda, December 22, 1982.

in many bourgeois-oriented countries affects the entire structure of the links between nationalities.

We shall evidently see recurrences of the aspiration for secession, of attempts to achieve it by one way or another, said Apollon Davidson. However, the class, dialectical assessment of tendencies of this sort takes all the pros and cons into account. For example, in the context of independent anti-imperialist development a further fragmentation of existing African states according to ethnic attributes would not be a progressive development. Much less so when the predominant trend is towards consolidating the achieved sovereignty and the main threat continues to come from the intrigues of the imperialists and their allies, who are doing their utmost to encourage precisely centrifugal forces. A legitimate question is: Will not secession lead to the return of foreign oppression in its worst neocolonialist form? The experience of Biafra and the separatist impulses elsewhere give much food for thought.

Lenin distinguished objective national tasks facing the oppressed peoples of colonies.⁹ One of these tasks today, said Sarada Mitra, is that of economic liberation. This is in the direct interest of all the peoples inhabiting this or that multinational country. The struggle for this anti-imperialist aim can be most effective if there is unity among the working people, among the democratic forces, regardless of nationality, religion, or caste. It is characteristic that the separatist

⁹ See V.I. Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. 23, p. 59.

tendencies encouraged from without in northwest and northeast India are nourished by particularist nationalist egoism, one of whose hallmarks is that it ignores the destiny of the liberation movement as a whole.

However, take a fundamentally different example: the secession of Bangladesh from Pakistan. Although this was demanded by the Bengali national movement only at a certain stage, we have here a case where harsh national oppression and direct economic exploitation of one part of a country by another made, to use Lenin's words, "national coexistence" impossible. The liberation struggle of the Bangladesh people was followed with deep understanding by all progressive and democratic forces and received unequivocal support from India and the Soviet Union.

Who benefited by this secession? Of course, the people liberated from oppressors. Secession contributed to the deepening of the anti-imperialist process, although afterwards quite a few difficulties arose. The experience of Bangladesh shows that even after the colonial system has crumbled the national movement against oppression may objectively lead to state self-determination, i.e., secession, provided, of course, that this is real liberation and not the replacement of one oppressor by another, to say nothing of instances when secession signified the birth of virtually non-independent and non-viable state formations.

However, it was noted in many papers, recognition of the possibility of secession (the experience of Bangladesh is by no means a rule in the regions under discussion) excludes one-sidedness, the consignment to oblivion of the great ideal of the Communists and all other progressives, namely, the unity of the people, notably of the working people of different nationalities, in other words, the internationalist aspect of the anti-imperialist struggle.

Christian Maehrdel called attention to how the Ethiopian revolutionaries have formulated their programme on the nationalities question. The Political Manifesto adopted in Asmara in January 1982 states: "... the right of a nationality to determine its own destiny includes the right to secede" (italics by the Editor). Moreover, this document says that recognition of this right does not mean that "any nationality can secede at any time". Further, it says that this right has to be considered in accordance with the interests of the people, chiefly of the working class, which has "the historical mission of abolishing all forms of exploitation and oppression and with the developmental stage of the revolution".¹⁰

The participants in the symposium noted the unfading significance of Lenin's formulation of the question of the right of nations to free self-determination up to and including secession, and of his proposition that this should not be confused with the question of the "advisability of secession by a given nation at a given moment",¹¹ Where social develop-

¹⁰ See The Ethiopian Herald, February 2, 1982.

¹¹ V.I. Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. 24, p. 302.

ment proceeds along a progressive, democratic channel prominence may be acquired by forms of cohabitation of nations ensured by federation and autonomy. The future belongs to these forms as is borne out by the successful experience of national construction in the socialist countries. The path of socialist federalism and the granting of the widest autonomy to formerly oppressed peoples have opened for these peoples a broad possibility for implementing their right to self-determination, joining their destiny to that of other fraternal peoples in a close-knit family.

The symposium considered the enormous value of the Soviet experience of resolving the nationalities question--from the viewpoint of its applicability to the specific conditions of many developing countries and, especially, from the viewpoint of its methodological significance.

For the first time in world history, thanks to the consistent democratism of the proletarian power, "oppressed peoples of a huge multinational country, which was justifiably called a "prison of peoples", were able to implement fully their right to self-determination both juridically and in fact. This right became the ideological and political foundation for the voluntary unity of all nations in the struggle to overthrow tsarism and build a new society.

The socialist revolution gave all the peoples of the former Russian empire the real possibility of themselves choosing the form of sovereign life: from full state independence (secession) to a union of nations and nationalities that had

shaken off the yoke of exploitation, a union in which they have the right to national statehood, in which equality and voluntary unification of the union republics implies the preservation to each of the right to free secession from the USSR,¹² a union in which the broadest autonomy is simultaneously ensured to all the nationalities desiring to implement their right to self-determination in this way, a union in which the immutable guideline of the Communist Party towards the drawing together of all nations and nationalities has made internationalist consciousness a norm and rule of life. "Our experience," Lenin wrote, "has left us with the firm conviction that only exclusive attention to the interests of various nations can remove grounds for conflicts, can remove mutual mistrust, can remove the fear of any intrigues and create that confidence, especially on the part of workers and peasants speaking different languages, without which there absolutely cannot be peaceful relations between peoples or anything like a successful development of everything that is of value in present-day civilisation."¹³

By radically restructuring the economic basis and the entire social structure, the world's first socialist country led by the Party of Lenin, it was said at the symposium, built a new class foundation for relations between nationalities. Freed of their oppressive, exploitative character, these asserted

¹² See Constitution (Fundamental Law) of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Moscow, 1977, p. 56.

¹³ V.I. Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. 33, p. 386.

themselves as equal and essentially internationalist relations among fraternal peoples. This strikingly accentuated the indivisible link between the solution of the nationalities question and the basic tasks of the social revolution. Thus was fully borne out the theory of Marx and Lenin that the nationalities question can only be resolved on a class basis. National discord and all forms of racial and national inequality and oppression recede into the past together with social antagonisms.

The theory and practice of national construction under the leadership of the state of the dictatorship of the proletariat has been enriched in the past few decades by the experience of many socialist countries. The correct solution of the nationalities question, said Ho Chi Bang (Communist Party of Vietnam), is a strategic aim of the Vietnamese revolution. Thanks to the correct policy pursued by it at all stages of the revolution, the Communist Party of Vietnam was able to fuse the revolutionary potentials of the nationalities inhabiting the country. All--and there are nearly 60 of them--were active in the struggle for independence, freedom, and socialism. The ethnic minorities played a large part in the liberation battles against the French colonialists, US imperialists, and Chinese expansionists. The party's policy today has no other purpose than to ensure the equality of nationalities in all areas, to create the conditions for the total abolition of economic and cultural disparities between the largest nationality (called Viets or Kinhs) and the ethnic minorities of the

plains and the mountain regions. The way to achieve this is to promote their own economic and cultural development, and to extend the transport and trade networks. Another major task is to train skilled, including managerial, workers among the minorities.

The experience of socialist countries, notably of the Soviet Union, in fundamentally restructuring the relations between nationalities, it was said in many of the papers read at the symposium, gives all revolutionaries and democrats a knowledge of what are now timetested underlying principles of such activity, a wide spectrum of concrete forms of organising the life of the different peoples of a multinational state.

Linguistic Problems

Question by Satiajaya Sudiman (Communist Party of Indonesia) to Sarada Mitra: What are the prospects for making Hindi a language of intercourse between nationalities? What are the difficulties? What is the stand of the Communist Party on this matter?

Sarada Mitra: At present Hindi is an official language along with English. The population of Northern and Central India speaks Hindi or related dialects, while in the south, northeast, and west there are highly developed local languages with a rich literature. The attempts to force the use of Hindi as a state language failed because of resistance from non-Hindi-speaking states. English continues to serve as the

language of intercourse between the central government and the states that do not recognise Hindi as their official language, and also in the intercourse between these states.

It has always been the stand of the Communists that none of the Indian languages should have priority, and that Hindi, along with English, would continue to be used throughout India and that in the future it would be voluntarily accepted by all the states as the language of intercourse between nationalities, as the "link language". The Communist Party demanded the raising of the language question in view of its cementing role, giving the population of the different regions the possibility of maintaining broad contacts, helping them to break out of ethnic-communal isolation, and promoting the unity of the working class, of the working people of the country as a whole. To this day the Communist Party urges the use of Hindi as a link language. We urge the voluntary introduction of Hindi as a second school language in all states where it is not spoken. Many states have already done so.

Satiajaya Sudiman: In the language issue the policy of the Communist Party of Indonesia was determined by the actual position that was held by Bahasa Indonesia in colonial times. Already then (the close of the 1920s) the patriotic forces proclaimed a slogan that became extremely popular, namely: "One motherland--Indonesia. One nation--Indonesian. One language--Indonesian." This slogan reflected, in particular, the fact that Bahasa Indonesia was spoken throughout the archipelago, where it was long used as the link language of the many ethnic groups, big and small, inhabiting Indonesia.

After independence was won Bahasa Indonesia was firmly established as the national language predominant in state and public life, and this was recorded in the Constitution. The Communist Party and other patriotic forces have done much to reinforce its position, heading the struggle for the decolonisation of culture. Writers with a close affinity to the Communists in the context of humanism and democratic views have produced many literary works in Bahasa Indonesia that have won recognition in Indonesia and abroad. The CPI regards Bahasa Indonesia as a major factor consolidating the emergent Indonesian nation.

Semou Pathe Gueye: The Communists lay stress on the significance of a common language. Its role will be seen as all the more significant if it is taken into account that as it becomes more widespread one of the local languages has the potential to become an instrument of the decolonisation of culture, help strengthen the people's, democratic element in culture, and release cultural life from imperialist influence.

The patriotic forces of Senegal are now acting against French hegemony in this sphere, working towards the nation's cultural, democratic, and revolutionary rejuvenation. Our people are emphatically opposed to the predomination of French as the official language; it is spoken by less than a quarter of the population. However, one can hardly agree with those patriotic circles, who, while seeking to change the linguistic situation in Senegal, suggest switching from French to the language of the Wolof ethnic group. It is not native to the

other ethnic groups. It is questionable that a simple replacement of one language by another will be effective. The important thing is to ensure equality of the national languages, and in Senegal this would mean creating favourable conditions for the development of all of them. To use Lenin's words, the "requirements of economic exchange"¹⁴ will show which of them is destined to become the link language.

Further, I should like to make the point, said Semou Pathe Gueye, that Lenin's approach to culture generally is very topical indeed. When we Communists speak of the development of the language and of the national cultures of peoples who had formerly been in colonial bondage we have in mind the restoration of the democratic, people's element, in other words, of everything that makes their cultural heritage part of the treasure-store of world culture.

The establishment of the people's power brings with it the possibility of taking a fundamentally new approach to questions of national and cultural development, Vusizwe Seme noted. A case in point is the attitude of the Mozambican revolutionaries to the Portuguese language. It is used as the official language (there are six principal languages but none is spoken by anybody except the ethnic group using it). Bilingualism is practiced: Portuguese is the language of public and state life, and efforts are being made to develop the local national languages.

¹⁴ V.I. Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. 19, p. 354.

Equality and all-sided development of languages, it was said at the symposium, are important factors helping to remove imperialist influence in culture and ideology, accelerate the process of association between the different nationalities, and direct the development of this process into the channel of progress.

Terminology

Some of the speakers raised the question of the need for a more precise use of concepts and categories relating to the specific state of nationalities problems with account of concrete nationalities situations.

Raja Collure pointed out that in Asian and African countries the birth of statehood often preceded the formation of nations. What will be the further path of the process by which this or that people acquires the basic indications of a given socio-historical entity? Are we dealing with a situation in which one or several ethnic groups are actually acquiring the features of a nation? If that is the case, can we use the accepted terminology? These questions were raised by other speakers as well.

In the view of Vusizwe Seme, the different ways in which the concept of nations is understood in African and Asian countries sooner lead to confusion than explain complex nationalities situations. Some of the existing ethnic groups have many if not all the attributes of a nation. If we use the term tribe, our definition might take into account not so

much the quantitative characteristics (of a relatively small group of people) as the development trends of these communities. Are we not faced with the necessity of specifying more precisely the accepted terminology in the nationalities question?

The question of terminology is extremely important, but it would hardly be correct to dramatise the situation in this sphere, said Mikhail Lazarev. A concentration of attention solely on the purely terminological aspect of the matter will hardly help to understand new phenomena. Besides, the questions themselves have on the whole been resolved. For many decades Marxist social science has been using categories and concepts that serve as reliable instruments for analysing the nationalities question. Despite the kaleidoscopic nationalities situation in Asia and Africa, we see that in the East there are nations that began to take shape during colonial times and have now reached the median development level (Turks, Persians, Burmese, and some Indian peoples) and that there are ethnic groups (this is the most widespread category, on whose basis the formation of nations is proceeding intensively). In many instances an ethnic group has a tribal structure. In other words, the stadial formula used in our science, namely, tribe-ethnic group-nation, retains its significance.

We should unquestionably take the new conditions of the formation of various ethnic communities into consideration, said Apollon Davidson. Precisely Eurocentrism, which appeals to the European experience and is widespread among bourgeois politologists, questions the prospect of the formation of new Asian and

African nations within existing states. It is imperative to take into account the dynamics of the national processes themselves, said Sarada Mitra. Viewed in the context of the European experience, very many national communities, as we know them, are still in the process of formation.

At the symposium it was agreed that in the light of what was said it would hardly be correct to speak of "pure forms"--whether it is of tribes, ethnic groups, or nations. National processes are taking place before our eyes. Reality in African and Asian countries provides many examples of how the various attributes of nations in the process of formation or consolidation are acquiring a content of their own. Their very emergence cannot be a single act; it is determined by the dialectics of social processes. In some cases the economic factor is predominant at certain stages (intensive development of the domestic market, and so on), in others a huge role is played by a common language, by a common culture, which compensates for the underdevelopment of economic links. In this case, too, the concrete historical approach retains its significance.

* * *

All the participants in the symposium stressed the importance of continuing the elaboration of various aspects of the nationalities question, taking into account its present state in Asian and African countries. This question, which is one of the most complex in the history of humankind, is truly resolv-

ed only under socialism. But even where exploiting relations are predominant (as is the case in most of the countries of the continents that were discussed), the Communists and other patriots can do much by suggesting concrete ways of resolving the nationalities question within the framework of the struggle for the aims of the national-democratic revolution, uniting the working people of different nationalities around them, upholding democratic practices, denouncing bourgeois nationalism and chauvinism, and urging internationalist friendship among working people. A strict account of the nationalities factor is also indispensable to radical reforms where the first steps have been taken towards building the new society.

The vast experience of the world revolutionary movement shows that the cause of liberation, the cause of socialism is successful if the programmes, demands, and concrete actions of revolutionaries take into account the national aspirations and interests of the peoples inhabiting the given country. This opens up the real prospect for uniting working people of different nations around the ideals of social liberation and progress, ideals that are cherished by all of them.

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VIEWPOINTS

COURSE AGAINST CHAUVINISM

In recent years there repeatedly have been bitter ethnic and religious conflicts in some Asian and African countries. Regardless of whether they date from the colonial past or are a product of socio-economic developments of recent date, ethnic conflicts and separatist trends of any kind endanger the territorial integrity and sovereignty of newly free countries and are wherever possible exploited by the imperialists to promote their subversive policy of destabilisation. The Communists and other progressive and democratic forces steadfastly expose communal* intrigues and plots. They do all in their power to curb reaction and put an end to national discord and division along religious community lines. They all see their ideal in the brotherhood of working people irrespective of nationality.

A year ago WMR carried records of a symposium exemplifying a principled scientific approach to the national question in the context of present-day Afro-Asian realities. The following articles deal with some concrete situations in which ethnic conflicts and religious community discord have taken extreme, destructive forms. What is the background of the events in Sri Lanka and the Indian states of the Punjab and Assam reported by the world press over the recent period? What have the Communists been doing to stem communal reaction? What solutions do they propose? These questions are answered below by Sri Lankan and Indian leading Communists.

* The terms communal and communalism are generally applied to a policy reflecting the position of a specific religious or ethnic community. This policy is marked by intolerance and chauvinism towards people belonging to a different nationality or professing a different religion.

The Background of the Conflict

Pieter Keuneman

Deputy Chairman and CC Political Bureau member,
Communist Party of Sri Lanka

Q. Communal discord between Sri Lanka's two main nationalities, the Sinhalese and the Tamils, has repeatedly erupted into violence since 1948, when your country won independence. That was also the case last summer, when the disturbances assumed major proportions in Colombo and elsewhere. What causes these recurrent outbreaks of national strife?

A. To begin with, I wish to stress that, despite their distinct national identities and cultures, the Sinhalese and the Sri Lanka Tamils¹ have lived and worked together in the same country for over 2,000 years. Members of both communities took part in the independence struggle. They continue to work and fight together in the trade unions, left political parties and democratic movements.

This is paramount. Conflicts and violence between them are extraneous and secondary. Some of these conflicts date from the feudal past, when, in the course of dynastic disputes over succession, rival Sinhalese princes fought one another with the help of mercenary armies recruited from India. Inter-community friction has become permanent under foreign rule and was fomented and exploited by the colonialists, especially the British, whose policy was "divide and rule".

¹ The Sinhalese make up 73 per cent of Sri Lanka's population and the Tamils of local or Indian origin, about 20 per cent.--Ed.

Nevertheless, these are political and economic reasons why Sri Lanka has not yet been able to shake off the negative legacy of its past. Take, for example, the fact that Sri Lanka's population has more than doubled since independence, while its economy has remained stagnant, due above all to increased dependence on the crisis-ridden capitalist world economy. Our economic woes stem chiefly from the fact that throughout the past decades all governments have tried, with diminishing success, to develop the country on capitalist lines.

Economic stagnation, coupled with the marked population growth, has made competition harsher in areas like employment in the public sector, the distribution of state land among the landless peasantry, and access to higher, scientific, technical, and professional education. It has also aggravated rivalries in trade and industry for a bigger share in financial assistance from state banks. In step with this, competition for state power prerogatives opening opportunities for state patronage has intensified.

The bourgeoisie, the "elite" of both the Sinhalese and the Tamil communities, have used this situation to further their class economic and political interests, and sometimes their own, personal ends. By appealing to nationalistic sentiment and inciting communal prejudices, they have sought to win support from the petty bourgeoisie and the broad masses in their respective ethnic communities. This line of action has divided the workers of different nationalities and to some degree diverted the attention of the masses from the real causes of their problems.

The present government of the United National Party (UNP) has made things much worse by its wholesale acceptance of the neocolonialist economic programme that imperialist-controlled financial agencies like the International Monetary Fund and the International Bank of Reconstruction and Development, as well as Western commercial banks, insist upon as a precondition for loans and credits. In the six years of President Junius Jayawardene's term in office there have been four major outbreaks of communal violence. Each outbreak brought ever greater loss of life and vandalism. Last summer's violence was the worst in the history of independent Sri Lanka.

Q. How spontaneous, if at all, are these communal outbreaks?

A. There may be some degree of spontaneity. But what was striking in the dramatic events of July and August 1983 was that they were well-organised and politically motivated. This has been the case more than once. As far back as 1981, President Jayawardene himself admitted that leading members of his party had a big hand in communal violence.

Anti-Tamil violence virtually enjoyed the patronage and support of an influential group of cabinet ministers and MPs representing the most reactionary and chauvinist circles of the Sinhalese capitalist class. This group is both anti-Left and anti-Tamil and has strong connections with the press, armed forces and police. Moreover, it controls special storm-trooper goon squads for the suppression of strikes and other democratic actions. These goons have killed workers on picket lines and beaten up distinguished academic and cultural personalities who disagreed with government policies. Intimidation is also

practised against members of the Supreme Court committed to the defence of democratic rights. Goon squads played a leading part in the violence of the recent period, often moving from place to place in government vehicles.

State terrorism and violence against Tamils under the Jayawardene government are part and parcel of a general onslaught on the democratic rights and freedoms of the people of Sri Lanka as a whole. The present UNP regime has brought the country to the verge of bankruptcy, a fact admitted by the President himself and confirmed by the government's inability to pay the annual interest on its foreign borrowings or meet the ever increasing deficits in its budgets. Appeals by the government to the Reagan Administration and its allies for more loans and grants have been met with counter-demands for even more humiliating concessions in the spheres of finance, trade, investment, and last but not least, foreign policy and involvement in Washington's aggressive strategic plans. The regime's increasing shift from authoritarianism to more and more openly dictatorial and terroristic forms of rule, which strike down even the forms of bourgeois parliamentary democracy that Sri Lanka has had for nearly half a century, is prompted by its efforts to fulfil the preconditions insisted on from without and to prove its "stability" to hesitant foreign investors.

It is safe to say that under the present government inter-community relations have deteriorated to a point where the Tamils' basic national rights are flouted and there is a threat to their fundamental right to live and work in peace and security in any part of the country.

Q. What are the effects of the recent cases of communal violence? In what way do they differ from previous cases?

A. There is, above all, a difference in dimension. Even official statistics set the number of killed at 300, and there are indications of a much larger figure, ranging between 600 and 1,000. As many as 100,000 became homeless refugees. Numerous Tamil-owned small factories and shops were destroyed. Tens of thousands of workers lost their jobs.

In the 1950s, the violence was mainly against the Tamils, who have lived in Sri Lanka for centuries and are its citizens. Under the present government the violence has been extended to the descendants of nearly one million Tamils of Indian origin who arrived on the island much later and work on plantations in hilly, predominantly Sinhalese areas. Deprived of citizenship and franchise rights, they have lived as "stateless" persons for nearly four decades. Even so, they have never supported the demand for a separate Tamil state but have, instead, concentrated on regaining the rights which they lost under the first UNP government in 1948. Discrimination against this population group and attacks on Tamil plantation workers have been a major cause of tensions in the good-neighbourly relations between Sri Lanka and India, which imperialism exploits to the utmost.

Attacks on the Tamils are now made in areas where they are a majority and have lived for centuries. This was made possible by the government's military occupation and virtual military control of these areas. The armed forces and police have been involved in anti-Tamil violence.

The main responsibility for the present situation rests undoubtedly with the government. The regime aimed not at redressing the Tamils' just grievances but at winning the support of the leaders of the Tamil community with the view to forming a united reactionary front against the Left and democratic movement.

Q. What was the Tamil response to the violence?

A. The government's policy has only helped to fuel divisive tendencies and to boost the demand for a separate Tamil state which enjoys only limited support among the Tamils. State terrorism also provoked some sporadic, isolated retaliatory armed attacks by small groups of Tamil youth on government supporters and military patrols. Our party has pointed out that such methods are counter-productive and damaging to the unity of the masses irrespective of nationality and to their joint struggles against all forms of exploitation and oppression. True, these acts of individual terrorism, however negative, paled compared with the policy of state terrorism practised against the Tamils. The domestic situation was further compounded by the opportunism and vacillation of the bourgeois Tamil leaders.

Q. What was behind the regime's attempt to put the blame for the events on the Left? How were these events reported in the bourgeois press?

A. It said at first that a "powerful foreign nation", acting through three Left parties of Sri Lanka,² had "master-minded" these events with the view to overthrowing the government.

² Meaning the Communist Party of Sri Lanka and the likewise banned People's Liberation Front and New Socialist Party of Sri Lanka.--Ed.

Although the Soviet Union was not specifically named, the implication was unmistakable. In case anyone failed to get the message, the government followed this up by banning the Communist Party and detaining its General Secretary and several other members of our Political Bureau. The CPSL printing plant was closed. Pro-government newspapers went as far as to demand that diplomatic and other government-to-government relations with the Soviet Union and the socialist countries should be severed.

This propaganda pursued a two-fold purpose. First, to create a suitable political climate for further financial assistance from the USA. Secondly, to divert domestic and world attention from those really responsible for what happened and to find a scapegoat.

However, the anti-Soviet insinuations were so absurd that they were received with derision. This attempt to please the Reagan Administration and give credibility to its propaganda about a "Soviet threat" was seen in Sri Lanka as dangerous and likely to have negative effects on the good relations between our country and the USSR, which has always been a staunch friend of our country and people. Significantly, it was not long before the government tried to back away from this clumsy propaganda. In the autumn of 1983, strong public pressure forced the government to lift its ban on the CPSL and release the party's leaders, including K.P. Silva, General Secretary of its CC.

Our people are deeply concerned about what is not an imaginary but a most real threat to the countries of the Indian Ocean by the policy of the Reagan Administration, which is making every effort to militarise and nuclearise this vast region.

The USA openly defies the appeal of the United Nations and the littoral states, which want the Indian Ocean to be a zone of peace. It is actively fomenting tensions and strife between neighbouring nations, and seeking to encircle India with hostile countries in order to pressurise it to abandon its independent policy of peace and denounce the Indian-Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation, which is a powerful factor for detente and peace and a barrier to US imperialism's strategic plans.

Sri Lanka, which is situated in the centre of the Indian Ocean, at the southern tip of India and a short distance from Diego Garcia, is given an important place in this strategy. The Reagan Administration has been trying to impose its military presence on our country in return for financial assistance. What it seeks primarily is logistic facilities for its Seventh Fleet at Trincomalee and a communications centre at Puttalam. It is true, however, that although the ruling quarters are more than favourable to these designs, public opposition has prevented them from accommodating Washington.

The imperialists tried to use the strained domestic situation last summer, the tensions which it generated in Indo-Sri Lankan relations and the protests it elicited in India. They painted a false picture of the state of affairs, alleging that military intervention by India was imminent and expecting that this would make Sri Lanka appeal to the USA, Britain, Pakistan, and Bangladesh for military aid. This ploy was exposed in time. However, there is growing evidence of more and more subtle attempts to exploit any internal tension to promote aggressive geopolitical plans.

Q. What is the Communist programme for countering the activities of chauvinist communal forces?

A. Our record in the fight against communalism, for friendship, equality, and unity among the different ethnic communities of Sri Lanka, is well known in our country. The slander put out against our party during the recent events was entirely baseless. We have fought consistently against attempts to deal with the problem through military repression. Our principled approach to it was reaffirmed almost two months before last summer's events, in a letter which our General Secretary, K.P. Silva, sent to the President of the Republic. The Central Committee of the CPSL, the letter said in part, "wishes to stress the need for fresh attempts to find satisfactory and permanent solutions to the many problems of the Tamil nationality in Sri Lanka. Failure to do so has been a major cause of internal tensions, repeated communal riots and states of emergency, and consequent disruptions of social peace, racial harmony, and the economy of the country. The country's image abroad has also been spoilt by such occurrences". And further the Central Committee pointed out that "our Party has always condemned and opposed resort to individual terrorism as a means of solving political or social questions. But we are equally convinced that state terrorism is no answer to this state of affairs".

The same letter urged the early convocation of the conference of all Sri Lankan political parties, as well as the Sri Lanka Tamils' organisations, promised by the government to seek a political settlement through a democratic dialogue. Had the

conference been convened as promised, much of what has happened could have been avoided. It is noteworthy that although the Left parties banned along with the CPSL have many differences on home and foreign policy, they all demand a settlement based on recognising the Sri Lanka Tamils' right to self-determination.

Our approach to inter-community relations is based on the twin principles of (a) recognising the territorial unity of Sri Lanka and (b) the Tamils' right to self-determination. It is our opinion that the solution lies in preserving a united Sri Lanka with regional autonomy for the Tamil areas."

As far as the "stateless" Tamil plantation workers of Indian origin are concerned, our party considers that all who wish to become citizens of Sri Lanka should be allowed to do so on a basis of equality with other citizens ruling out all discrimination. Suitable arrangements should be made with the government of India in regard to those who may wish to become Indian citizens and return to India.

However, official policy has so far blocked a just approach to the existing problems. A political settlement was prevented by a constitutional amendment outlawing the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), the main party of Sri Lanka's Tamils. Not surprisingly, the TULF was denied an invitation to the All-Parties Conference called last autumn, all negotiations with the Tamil leadership being made conditional on their renunciation of the idea of a separate Tamil state.

The Communists maintain that the Tamil problem cannot be discussed without the TULF and other recognised parties, including those that have been banned ever since last summer. It

is highly important to resume the dialogue between the government and the opposition on a truly democratic basis. Only by meeting the just aspirations of the Tamil minority, restoring its national and political rights, and firmly discarding the chauvinist communal policy can the way be paved for inter-communal peace in Sri Lanka.

In the Name of the Brotherhood of Ordinary People

Avtar Singh Malhotra

Central Executive Committee member,
Communist Party of India, Secretary,
CPI State Council of the Punjab

For more than eighteen months there have been increasingly alarming reports from the Punjab: they tell of the religious discord being fermented in the state, of the assassinations and wrecking connived by extremist elements of Akali Dal, the local Sikh¹ party, and of terrorist actions also in Delhi. Presidential rule² was proclaimed in the state in the autumn of 1982 following one of the many massacres--the killing of the Hindu passengers of a bus by extremist communalists. Within a few weeks there was

¹ Sikhism, one of the religions professed in India, is based chiefly in the Punjab. Historically it is linked to Hinduism. It is characterised by worship of one deity and the equality of all Sikhs before that deity.--Ed.

² The state is administered by a governor as the representative of the central government. The local legislative assembly has been temporarily suspended.--Ed.

yet another terrorist act with a toll of human life.

What lies behind this eruption of religious communal conflicts? What is our party's policy in the face of this highly complex situation in the Punjab? What is it doing to prevent the threat of a split along communal lines? To answer these questions one needs to take a closer look at some specific landmarks of the state's history following British India's partition by the colonialists into India and Pakistan.

In its present shape this northwestern frontier state was constituted 17 years ago to include territories with a Punjabi-speaking population (however, some of these territories found themselves outside the state's boundaries). The Punjab is an agrarian state. Over 70 per cent of its population of nearly 17 millions live in rural areas.

Farming (including stock-breeding) accounts for about 45 per cent of the gross domestic product. Of the state's arable land 80 per cent is tilled, and the proportion of the irrigated land under cultivation is just as large. In and outside India the state is famous for its "green revolution", for the agrotechnical changes that proceeded vigorously throughout the 1960s and in the early 1970s. It was then that high-grade seeds, fertilisers, irrigation, farm machinery and, last but not least, the unique natural conditions enabled the Punjab to accomplish its definitive transition to highly intensive capitalist agriculture. Today two crops are harvested annually from 65 per cent of the cultivated area. During the "green revolution" the per hectare output of rice and wheat doubled and in some cases trebled. A state

which imported grain at the time the British partitioned India, the Punjab has become the nation's breadbasket. Scientific innovations are more widely applied there than in other regions. In the period from 1975 to 1980 the number of tractors used by farmers increased from roughly 50,000 to 100,000.

Socio-economically, the Punjab differs from other states chiefly because here the development of bourgeois relations in agriculture has gone farthest. Capitalist development has been accompanied by what for India is a particularly high rate of differentiation among the bulk of the rural population. The following figures speak for themselves: in 1961 the proportion of owner-cultivators was 82.7 per cent and that of agricultural workers, 17.3 per cent; ten years later, the respective percentages were 68 and 32, and by the early 1980s, 61.74 and 38.26.

The bourgeois agrarian reforms of the 1950s and then the changes that were put into effect during the "green revolution" drastically aggravated inequality on the land. Some surveys show that while 10 per cent of the peasants own 20 or more acres,³ over 38 per cent own less than two acres. The average plot of land has diminished considerably, while the big private capitalist farms employing wage labour have grown markedly.

The past few decades may be said to have seen far-reaching changes in the class composition of Punjabi society. It is the big rural bourgeoisie that has begun to call the tune. However, in parallel, the agricultural proletariat and other working people have become more active socially. An organisation of Punjabi

³ One acre = 0.4047 hectare.---Ed.

agricultural workers associated with the Communist Party has over 100,000 members, and the Communist Party (Marxist) has a similar if smaller organisation. Punjabi rural workers have secured the highest earnings in the country and made some other important social gains. Nowadays the rich farmers occasionally prefer to recruit labour outside the state. They ruthlessly exploit this labour and counterpose it to Punjabi workers in order to blunt the actions of the agricultural proletariat.

The Communist-led movement of the masses has achieved a good deal since Independence. The workers are better organised, and considerable influence is enjoyed in the state by the branch of the All-India Trade Union Congress (linked with the CPI). The trade union federation of the CPI(M) and other working-class organisations are also active. Blue and white-collar workers and democratic intellectuals in the Punjab have time and again taken the initiative in major actions to demand higher pay and defend democratic rights. All these years the rural working people have been fighting against oppression by the rural rich and demanding fair prices for their produce.

At the same time, the social struggle going on throughout India (the processes in the Punjab are only part of it) bears the stamp of problems typical of the state; they are products of the contemporary and earlier history of the Punjab and involve a religious element. The strongest evidence of this is that the leadership of the Sikh community, namely, the Akali Dal, has stepped up its activities dramatically over the past two years.

The three main political forces in the Punjab are, now as in the past, the Indian National Congress (I),⁴ the Communists, and Akali Dal. The first group normally wins about 45 per cent of the votes and the second (the CPI and the CPI(M) put together), about 10 per cent; some 25 per cent of the votes go to Akali Dal, a circumstance which makes it the biggest opposition party. While Congress (I) enjoys widespread support among the oppressed castes, businessmen, and other members of the Hindu community, Akali Dal is the party of Sikh well-to-do peasants, big capitalist farmers, and landowners, whose influence as we have noted, has increased greatly during the past two decades. The political ambitions of the Sikh party have grown accordingly; it now accentuates local religious communal and socio-economic demands.

The Akali Dal leadership would like to exploit even an objective factor like the numerical preponderance of the population professing Sikhism (nearly 56 per cent).

A campaign of mass disobedience, incited by extremists from Akali Dal has been going on for some years, alternately surging high and then subsiding for a time. It is generally accompanied by bloody clashes with the authorities. Akali Dal leaders are trying to win their religious and purely secular demands--both political and economic--linked to the state's problems.

There are several dozen religious and secular demands and they closely intertwine. What was claimed with particular vehemence until recently was the right to broadcast sermons (through the

⁴ India's ruling party headed by Indira Gandhi.--Ed.

Sikhs' own transmitters) from Amritsar's Golden Temple, the chief Sikh shrine, and wear the kirpan (sacred Sikh dagger) on air flights. The same quarters insist on proclaiming Amritsar a holy city and the enactment of an All-India law on the functioning of Sikh gurdwaras (shrines). Demands aimed at winning a special status for the Sikh community and religion are coupled with demands such as an expansion of the Punjab territorially and the allotment to it of a bigger share of the water resources of rivers flowing through neighbouring states. The Akali Dal leaders want Chandigarh, a city now serving as the capital of two states--the Punjab and Haryana--to belong to the former.

What makes the discontent fomented by some Akali Dal leaders particularly dangerous is that slogans undermining India's unity are being advanced. For instance, the communalists are advocating ideas formulated in the Anandapur Resolution of 1973. This resolution calls for granting the Sikh community the status of a separate nation and for revising the Constitution to institutionalise a special status for the Sikhs and ensure their "supremacy" in the Punjab. It urges restricting the prerogatives of the central government to foreign affairs, finance, defence, and communications. Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranawala, an extremist religious leader, makes statements amounting to a thinly veiled plea for a separatist state, Khalistan,⁵ in the Punjab.

⁵ This demand was made some years ago by J. Singh Chaukhan, a former minister of the Punjab, who advocated the secession of the state. A handful of separatists receives material and other aid from the imperialists, chiefly the USA, which wants India's destabilisation and fragmentation.--Ed.

Reactionary propaganda presenting the "Sikhs-a-nation" slogan is making the situation worse and this is exploited by communalists in the Hindu community, notably by parties of the extreme right adhering to this position, such as the Bharatiya Janata Party. The Hindu communalists insist on, among other things, the compulsory study of Sanskrit in the Punjab and on bilingualism putting two languages, Hindi and Punjabi, on an equal footing although the latter is the Punjabis' mother tongue. They are trying to revive the idea of Maha-Punjab (Great Punjab), incorporating the Punjabi-speaking Hindu population of some areas of neighbouring states.

The talks between the central government and Akali Dal that began a year ago produced only partial results. A conciliatory commission examined the relations between the state and the centre, the dispute over water resources, and territorial issues. The Gandhi government met some religious demands. The All-India Radio station in the Punjab now allows time for broadcasting Sikh sermons; the Sikhs' religious ban on the sale of meat and tobacco in the vicinity of the Golden Temple is enforced and Sikhs are allowed to wear kirpans of a stated length on air flights. However, the campaign of Sikh disobedience engineered by "hawks" is going on unabated. The extremists are generally followed by moderate Akali Dal leaders even though the latter reject the Khalistan idea promoted by the former. Regrettably, this propaganda continues to poison the minds of the peasants and people of the middle strata, who see the assertion of Sikh supremacy as a way to improve their material and social condition.

The top leaders of the Sikh community--the big rural bourgeoisie and some fanatic religious leaders--are unquestionably playing on the Sikh peasants' mood of social protest, on the discontent of the oppressed section of the population. They usually put the blame for the people's hardships chiefly on the other community, while at the same time stressing the "exclusiveness" of their own community. They contrive to recruit supporters by fomenting chauvinism. Indeed, this is the purpose of appealing to religious sentiments. However, the Punjab does have real problems of its own. Akali Dal, primarily its extremist wing, is taking advantage of this as well.

The past year witnessed numerous acts of terrorism committed by extremists against members of the administration, police officers, and people belonging to the Hindu community seen as undesirable. Scores of people have been injured or killed in these clashes. Repression by the authorities leading to deaths has given the "hawks" further pretexts for communalist protests (picketing roads, terrorist assassinations, subversion, and so on). In turn, their subversive activities gave rise to more repression, arbitrary action by the police and other brutalities, which we condemn and which are very often directed against innocent people. The result is a vicious circle of violence on both sides.

Progressive mass organisations and all CPI members are countering the preachings of the communalists and their separatist and chauvinistic ideas and aims with actions and slogans prompted by concern for the unity of India, the preservation of the nation's secular character, the brotherhood of people professing different

religions, and national integration. In our work among the Sikhs and Hindus, the Communist organisation in the Punjab calls their attention to the fact that they speak one language, Punjabi, and have a common, Punjabi cultural heritage and common historical and economic links with the rest of India, of which the Punjab is an integral part. Those who use religious chauvinist propaganda as a cover and preach the "Sikhs-a-nation" slogan, to say nothing of the separatist slogan of Khalistan, are undermining not only the unity of the Punjabis but also the unity of the republic, spurring subversion by its enemies, primarily US imperialism, with the aim of dismembering the country. Addressing believers, we underline that the Punjab has long been famed for its traditions of goodneighbourly coexistence of diverse religious communities, a tradition that, incidentally, has never been really shaken although the danger of this coming about is far greater now. It will be remembered that recognised religious authorities of the Sikhs, such as Guru Nanak,⁶ have accentuated the importance of inter-communal peace, thereby expressing the innermost aspirations of the millions of followers of Sikhism. The Sikh movement has always been linked to the All-India liberation movement by the strong traditions of the anti-colonial struggle.

Such is our attitude to the destiny and future of the Punjabi nationality.

⁶ Founder of Sikhism (1469-1539). He opposed the caste system and urged religious unity between Hindus and Mohammedans.--Ed.

In implementing our party's general line directed courageously against the upsurge of communalism and revivalism,⁷ against actions of the extremists and the advocacy of religious intolerance, the Communists of the Punjab are fulfilling their patriotic duty of defending the unity of India. They are making every effort to cut short reaction's sinister schemes for dividing the Punjabis, setting them upon one another, and fostering hostility for other Indian nationalities.

In collaboration with the CPI(M) and democratic intellectuals, the CPI has carried out several major mass actions exposing and condemning dangerous communalist plots. Last spring the CPI sponsored an impressive demonstration in Chandigarh. More than half of the participants were Sikhs. The demonstrators marched through the city, chanting "No Hindu Raj! No Khalistan! Long live India!" and "He who wants Hindus and Sikhs to fight each other is an enemy of the nation". Thousands of people came out to hail the marchers and identify themselves with them.

On May Day, there was a demonstration by 10,000 members of the state's biggest trade union federations. The people of Chandigarh saw for themselves that the advanced section of our society is determined to repulse the communalists, separatists, and imperialists, defend the working people's ideals and unity, and prevent division on religious communalist lines. "Workers, unite. Those who expect workers to come out against workers will be defeated". These and other calls came from the demonstrators.

⁷ Over the past few years there has been a reactivation of religious communal elements advocating the revival of the influence of religion and conservative traditions.--Ed.

The committees for communal amity now functioning in the state originally consisted of representatives of all the main parties (Akali Dal and the BJP were represented in the beginning). These committees have accumulated some experience of curbing resurgences of inter-communal strife. To provoke a clash, for example, a cow (sacred to Hindus) would be killed and the carcass left in front of a Hindu temple or a cigarette would be thrown into a Sikh gurdwara. The committees, wherever they exist, help to defuse the tensions. Ordinary people, even those who profess different religions, prefer to live in peace, to avoid quarrels.

Our party's Punjabi organisation is urging the authorities to activate the inter-party committees for communal amity at the level of the state, districts, and towns. The wide-range seven-point action plan that we recently put forward speaks of the need for such committees to be set up in localities where they are still non-existent, and formulates the basic directions of the work to be accomplished by the Punjabi Communists.⁸

The Communists are well aware, however, that the Punjabi problem is political and so requires solutions that are just in regard to the Punjab itself, do not prejudice the legitimate interests of neighbouring states, and at the same time serve the interests of national integration. Chandigarh, a city which has sprung up on Punjabi territory, must belong to the Punjab. This

⁸ This plan provides for various actions with the participation of the CPI(M) and other left and democratic parties and mass organisations with the objective of isolating and curbing the communalist extremists, normalising the situation in the state and repulsing the intrigues of the imperialists.--Ed.

dispute could be settled if agreement were reached on helping Haryana financially and otherwise to build a capital. It is only by dialogue that territorial and some other outstanding issues can be settled.

The democratic forces undoubtedly made a breakthrough with the formation of a Sarkaria commission to examine the whole range of problems bearing on the relations between the central government and the states. It is important that the commission should be widely representative of the sides involved and that it should work in contact with all the parties represented in parliament and in state assemblies. The Communists denounce confrontation, for it would have very dangerous consequences in a border state, especially as on the other side of the border quarters hostile to India are trying to benefit by what is happening. The Punjab problem requires a political solution, and the way to such a solution lies through resumed negotiations between the central government and the Akali Dal leadership with the participation of opposition parties. The CPI Central Executive Committee urges the earliest possible convocation of such a tripartite meeting.

We emphatically condemn the terrorism by Sikh extremists and consider as impermissible a situation in which persons guilty of crimes and openly preaching the Khalistan slogan use Sikh gurdwaras as an asylum. The CPI Council is urging the religious leadership of the Sikhs and Akali Dal to call a halt to this. What is particularly alarming is that the Sikh and Hindu communalist extremists are recruiting "volunteers" for the senas, or armed gangs. This activity is fraught with the threat of more bloodshed and further victims.

In working together with other left democratic forces for the preservation of communal peace and brotherhood, the CPI feels confident that the working class, the agricultural proletariat, and public opinion of India can stop the communalist and separatist intrigues. This is now one of the cardinal tasks in the democratic and patriotic struggle unfolding in the Punjab and throughout India.

Background of the Problem of "Foreign Nationals" in Assam

Promode Gogoi

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Situated in the extreme northeast of India, the border state of Assam has lately been attracting the attention of the press not only in India but also in the world at large. The reason for this is the wave of violence and ethnic and religious-communalist clashes that has swept across the state. The nationalistic agitation is directed by local bourgeois elements from the indigenous Assamese population, and the spokesmen and organisers of this agitation became the leaders of the All-Assam Students Union (AASU). These are the people who are calling the tune in a broader association of Assamese regionalist forces, the Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AGSP). During the local state

elections a year ago there was an ethnic, religious-communalist motivated orgy of murders. The AASU and AGSP boycotted the elections, resorting to terror and paralysing the state apparatus.

The boycott was willingly supported by extreme right-wing elements, notably the Bharatiya Janata Party and also some other bourgeois parties, like the Janata Party. For a number of years these have been assisting extremist chauvinistic elements, who are doing their utmost to compound the situation. All these forces are whipping up communalist hysteria and sowing the poisonous seeds of ethnic discord between the Assamese and the ethnic minorities inhabiting the state (Bengalis of Indian and Bangladesh origin, the Manipures, Nepalese, the many local tribes, and others).

The new aggravation of the situation has clearly played into the hands of hostile external forces. In their efforts to destabilise India, the imperialist intelligence services and Beijing agents are conducting systematic subversive activities among a number of northeastern tribes and going to all lengths to provoke separatist tendencies. The same line, and not without success, is being pursued by external reaction relative to the movement of Assamese regionalist forces headed by the AASU and AGSP.

The elections of February 1983 led to the formation of a state assembly. The Indian National Congress (I) holds the lion's share of the seats (91 of the 109), with the rest distributed among some other parties and independents. However, the situation obtaining at the time can be gauged accurately only by understanding the events that unfolded over the elections. The outcome of these events eclipsed everything seen hitherto. Even

according to grossly understated official statistics, 150 people perished in the clashes between the police and the crowds boycotting the elections, and over 1,500 people died in the brutal inter-ethnic and religious-communal massacres. Hundreds of thousands of people, deprived of homes, property, and kin, poured into the refugee camps. Enormous material damage was inflicted on the state. Only the number of burned bridges reached the figure of 1,500. That is how the opposition elements tried, by disorganising traffic on the roads, to hinder the election campaign. The authorities were unable to curb the terror, to stop the sabotage and wrecking.

The most diverse groups suffered during the turmoil in early 1983. According to official figures more than half of the people in the immigrant camps are Mohammedans. These camps afforded temporary asylum to 74,000 Assamese, 51,000 Bengali Hindus, and more than 20,000 victimised people belonging to local tribes.

The campaign of violence and assassinations was directed against those who were staunchly and consciously opposed to it, those who urged amity between the ethnic groups, among the working people. Many of our party comrades and supporters fell victim to the brutality of the Assamese extremists both before and during the elections.

The total number of registered voters was unprecedentedly small for a state with a population of 19 millions (33 per cent as compared with 66 per cent during the 1979 elections). Less than 2 per cent of the Assamese went to the polls. Tea plantation workers and some tribes took no part at all in the elections.

The stand was different on the part of people of linguistic and religious minorities (Bengalis, Mohammedans and Christians), who voted chiefly for the INC (I) that is traditionally predominant on the political scene in the state.

The dramatic developments revealed the roots of problems linked to the past and present of this border territory of India.

If one considers the extremely volatile problem of the rights of the state's indigenous Assamese population and its relations with the ethnic groups that settled there later, one will quite easily see that many present-day problems have a historical background. The Assamese have been fighting national discrimination ever since this land of green valleys, blue hills, and red rivers came under the rule of foreign oppressors in the first half of the 19th century.

There, as in all other colonies, the traditional policy of "divide and rule" was the order of the day. Personnel brought by the British from neighbouring Bengal was used to staff the administration, the judiciary, and the educational institutions. The local, Assamese language was forcibly replaced by Bengalese. Migration from Bengal was encouraged, and this gave the colonial authorities the services of educated personnel. On the other hand, local inhabitants were denied all opportunities for getting such training. In short, the Bengalese were deliberately set against the Assamese.

According to the 1931 census 31.4 per cent of the state's inhabitants spoke Assamese and only 5 per cent fewer spoke Bengalese. By playing migrants off against the indigeneous

population, including the local tribes, which supplied the work-force for the British-run tea plantations, the colonialists planted the seeds of future ethnic discord.

However, after Independence an opposite process commenced-- a drawing together and assimilation of the various ethnic communities, as was strikingly demonstrated by the 1971 census. Assamese was stated to be the mother tongue of 61 per cent of the state's population (with only 19.5 per cent declaring themselves Bengali-speakers).

True, because the Bengali minority continues to grow numerically (chiefly as a result of migration from East Pakistan),¹ the demographic situation has growing increasingly more complex, especially in view of the fact that in the past few decades Assam has shrunk territorially almost by half, while the population growth rate remains one of the highest in India. The population density is inordinately high: it is, in fact, half again as high as the nation-wide median. The problem of ensuring people with land, jobs, and housing has become correspondingly acute.

Generally speaking, socio-economic problems have never been so pressing as in the context of the dramatic events of recent years. Capitalist development is accompanied by a sharpening

¹ There have been three waves of migration to the state. Prior to 1951 the migrants were Hindu Bengalis fleeing from religious persecution in East Pakistan. During the next ten years the migrants were Hindus and Mohammedans. Since 1971 (with the creation of Bangladesh) the migrants to Assam looking for a livelihood have been Mohammedans from Bangladesh. The Mohammedan Bengalis now constitute nearly a quarter of the state's population.--Ed.

of the contradictions and conflicts shaking the social organism. The imbalances implicit in this development are surfacing in economic construction (for instance, the swift progress of some regions with others remaining relatively backward). Such is the socio-economic background of some national processes, and Assam is by no means an exception. The northeast remains an under-developed, backward territory. More than 73 per cent of Assam's population lives below the poverty line. The "green revolution" by-passed our state and to the Assamese peasant it suggests a fairy tale. The growing of a single crop--tea--has survived from colonial times; Assam accounts for 54 per cent of India's tea output. However, it must be noted that the responsible agency is based outside Assam, in Calcutta, West Bengal. Besides, the owners of the tea plantations also have their head offices in Calcutta. This reduces Assam's potential for receiving revenue from the sale of tea (income tax, trade dues, and so forth).

The slow industrial and agricultural growth is a hindrance to the Assamese taking a worthy place in labour and economic activity. Unemployment is growing steadily among the educated sections of the population and the rural masses. The state's natural resources are inadequately developed, and there is no follow up to the steps that have been taken in that direction. India's first oilfields were built in Assam and these could be producing much more crude oil than today. Less than half of this crude oil is refined in Assam itself. The authorities have done nothing to reply to the demand that we and other people in the state have been making for the building of a large oil refinery

near the oilfields. Oil refining could be a catalyst for the growth of other industries (say, synthetic fibre). Let us note that economic ventures of this size can only be undertaken by the public sector, for private capital is oriented on its own mercenary interests and is not at all inclined to invest in a distant border state. For the state, this is a different matter. By mobilising resources for economic progress in our state it could play the decisive role in taking it out of backwardness and underdevelopment.

In view of the aforesaid, we would like to stress that the upheavals of recent years and the dimensions of anti-government nationalistic agitation are due to a number of reasons that have been identified time and again by the left and democratic parties, including the CPI. The principal reason is the ardent striving to defend the linguistic and cultural identity of the Assamese people, the apprehension felt by the Assamese that they may be pushed into the background in their own state. Another cause lies in the acute socio-economic problems (unemployment, the growing impoverishment of the masses), and backwardness that persists despite the existence of huge natural and other resources needed for vigorous economic development. Yet another cause is that the central government ignores these enormous potentials.

On the other hand, inter-communal peace, the processes of ethnic integration and, ultimately, all-India unity are seriously threatened by the approach to Assam's problems that disregards all the others while accentuating one--the so-called problem of "foreign nationals". We are speaking of migrants, especially migrants of Bengali nationality. Openly extremist forces headed

by the Assamese leaders of the opposition movement are seeking to deprive them of electoral rights and expel them from the state. At a conference back in July 1978 the All-Assam Students Union adopted a charter of demands, insisting on expelling all "foreign infiltrators" and giving 80 per cent of the jobs to the sons of the soil. Later this movement became anti-migrant generally, and the label "foreign national" was tagged to people who settled in our state not only in recent years but also much earlier.

But let us recall history, particularly relatively recent history. A very large proportion of the migrants have been assimilated, having adopted the Assamese language and culture. Our state has benefited greatly from their labour. And this is to say nothing of the fact that migrants from East Bengal and their descendants number millions. In other words, we are faced with an enormous problem that involves human destinies. To resolve it by extremist methods means to doom to suffering our own people as well, for as recent developments have demonstrated nationalistic-chauvinistic agitation and the actions accompanying it receive an analogous response from people belonging to other communities. As a result, national discord is still further exacerbated.

The attempts to resolve this problem by negotiations between the central government and leaders of the Assamese opposition movement continued for three years. The sides even reached agreement on a number of issues, for example, recognising that persons who had migrated to the state two or more decades ago, i.e., prior to 1961, should have the right to continue living there; this held out the promise of settling the destiny of about 700,000 migrants from Bangladesh who settled in Assam after the state of Bangladesh was formed.

The stumbling block was the issue of the future of yet another category of local inhabitants, also of Bangladesh origin, who arrived between 1961 and 1971 (roughly a million persons). The Indian government opposed their deportation, on which the AASU leaders insisted, demanding that 1961 should be taken as the cut-off year for settling the problem of "foreign nationals", deporting those who arrived after that year.

The vast majority of the state's population was shocked by the turmoil. The people were outraged by the massacres and want the restoration of tranquility. It is indicative that under pressure from these widespread feelings the architects of the campaign of nationalistic agitation were subsequently compelled to adopt a more realistic stand on some issues. For instance, they had to agree to the opposition political parties being drawn in for consultation on how to resolve the problem of "foreign nationals". Earlier, the leaders of the Assamese regionalists held the view that the national political parties were irrelevant and should be barred from speaking on Assam's problems.

The view of the Communist Party is that the problem should be settled on the basis of the Constitution, in accordance with its provisions and laws. There also are international acts that can be of real help: it would be right to accept 1971 as the cut-off year, for that was the year of the proclamation of the independent republic of Bangladesh, which under President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman signed an agreement with India setting up a barrier to illegal migration. To prevent such migration the

frontier between Assam and Bangladesh must be reinforced.²

The continuing tension in the state unquestionably plays into the hands of the forces spreading chauvinism, division, and communalist sentiments, and is fraught with danger for the left and democratic forces. The party denounces national-chauvinist and communalist violence, incitement, and agitation, and calls for dialogue as the sole means for settling the existing difficulties. The initiative for resuming negotiations should come from the central authorities and everything should be done to avoid a stalemate. The Communists have adopted a constructive stand also on the very acute problem of the future of people who settled in Assam in 1961-1971. Those who are in residence with the knowledge of the authorities and have their assistance in settling down--these should not be expelled. Nor should expulsion be applied to migrants who hold Indian citizenship. The others could, with assistance from the central government, be resettled outside the state.

We should like to emphasise that this is a major national problem whose settlement requires the participation of other states, of the entire country. In the opinion of the CPI, a way out of the situation can be found if sober account is taken of the actual substance of the problems that have arisen. A settlement is needed which would promote the country's territorial unity, national consolidation and integration, and inter-communal peace and brotherhood.

² To put an end to illegal migration India decided to build a reinforced fence along a sector of the border with Bangladesh.

PPKK Genel Sekreteri Serhad DİCLE'nin 256 Türkiyeli aydının 15 Mayıs 1984 günü Kenan Evren ve Meclis Başkanı Necmettin Karaduman'a sundukları ortak dilekçeye ilişkin açıklaması.

Öğretim üyelerinden, bilim adamlarından, hukukçulardan, sanatçılardan, gazeteci ve yazarlardan oluşan 1256 Türkiyeli aydının 15 Mayıs 1984 günü, Kenan Evren'e ve Parlamento Başkanı Necmettin Karaduman'a sundukları ortak dilekçeye ilişkin her türlü haberin basına yansımaları, faşist diktatörlüğün sıkıyönetim komutanlıkları yasakladılar.

Dış basına da yansıdığı gibi, 1256 imzalı ortak dilekçede; işkencelere ve ağır hapisane koşullarına son verilmesi, idam kararlarının durdurulması, ölüm cezalarının kaldırılması, demokratik ve adil bir yargı mekanizmasının kurulması, demokratik hak ve özgürlükler önündeki tüm engellerin kaldırılması; politik, sendikal ve diğer mesleki temellere dayalı örgütlenmeler üzerindeki yasağa son verilmesi, basın-yayın ve sanat üzerindeki sansürün kaldırılması; en geniş düşünce, söz ve yazı özgürlüğünün sağlanması, YÖK'nin kaldırılması, üniversite ile TRT'nin özerk bir işleyişe kavuşturulması isteniyor.

Özellikle Avrupa Konseyi'nin kararından sonra demokrasiye geçildiğini bas bas bağırarak, bunu dışarıya da ispatladık diyen demagojilere sarılan faşist diktatörlüğün gerçek yüzü, bu 1256 imzalı dilekçe ile bir kez daha açığa çıktı. Türkiye'de demokrasiye geçilmediğini; demokratik hak ve özgürlüklerin kırıntılarından bile bahsedilemeyeceğini söyleyenlerin yalnızca Türkiyeli ve Kürdistanlı devrimci demokratik güçler olmadığı; bunun, faşist diktatörlük yanlısı güçler dışındaki tüm toplum kesimlerinin ortak düşünceleri; dolayısıyla Türkiye ve Kürdistan'da yaşanan gerçeğin ta kendisi olduğu kanıtlandı.

Zaten, ortak dilekçeye ilişkin her türlü haberin basına ve kamuoyuna yansımaları engellemek için önlemlere başvurulması, diktatörlüğün dilekçe karşısında öfke ve telaşa kapılması da aynı gerçeklerden kaynaklanıyor.

- Her şeyden önce; partimiz, Türkiyeli aydınların 1256 imza ile başvurdukları bu girişimi aslında, çok öncelerinden başvurulması gereken gecikmiş bir adım olarak değerlendiriyor. Aynı zamanda, 10 milyonu aşan nüfusuyla, Türkiye Kürdistanı'ndaki Kürt halkı üzerindeki baskılara yer verilmemiş olmasına ve dilekçede halkımızın ulusal özlem ve taleplerini dile getiren hiçbir düşünceye rastlanmamasına büyük bir eksiklik, bilim adamı, aydın ve sanatçı kişiliğiyle çelişen bir tutum olarak bakıyoruz.

Buna rağmen partimiz, dilekçede dile getirilen bütün düşünce ve kaygıları paylaşıyor 1256 aydının istemlerini açıkça destekliyor. Partimiz, dilekçede dile getirilen istemlerin gerçekleşmesi yolunda atacakları her türlü adımlarda onların arkasında olacak. Dilekçedeki düşünce ve istemler, Türkiye ve Kürdistan halklarının; toplumun en geniş kesimlerinin düşünce özlem ve istemlerinin önemli bir bölümünü içeren acil demokratik taleplerdir. Partimiz başından beri söz konusu acil demokratik taleplerin kazanılması için var gücüyle savaşıyor. 25 Mart'taki yerel seçimlerden önce TİP, TKP, TKEP, TKSP ve partimizin ortak imzalarıyla çıkan bildiri, 7 Mayıs 1984 günü partimiz, TİP, TKP, TKEP, TKSP ve TSİP tarafından yapılan ortak çağrıda aynı istemler yer aldı. Faşist diktatörlüğe karşı olan tüm güçler, kişi ve kuruluşlar, bu yönde savaşılmaya çağrıldı.

1256 aydının ortak dilekçesi aynı zamanda partimizin de içinde bulunduğu altı partinin ortak açıklama, çağrı ve çabalarının, geniş kesimleri etkilediğini, onları harekete geçirdiğini gösteriyor.

Bu nedenlerle PPKK, Türkiye ve Kürdistan'daki tüm devrimci-demokratik güçleri, anti-faşist kişi ve kuruluşları, bütün emekçileri aydın ve gençleri; yurtdışındaki demokrasi, insan hakları ve barış yanlısı kişi ve kuruluşları 1256 Türkiyeli aydınla dayanışmaya, dilekçelerinde dile getirdikleri istemlerin, kamuoyunda yaygınlaşması ve gerçekleşmesi için çaba göstermeye çağırıyor.

Yurtiçi ve dışındaki bütün bilim adamları, öğretim üyesi, gazeteci, yazar ve sanatçılara, sendikalara, öğrencilere, demokratik meslek örgütü yöneticilerine sesleniyoruz. Tek tek ya da ortaklaşa olarak, 1256 imzalı dilekçede dile getirilen düşünce ve istemleri desteklediğimizi, bunların gerçekleşmesini istediğimizi belirten yazılarla yönetime, basına başvurarak, destek mesajları yayınlayın ve söz konusu istemlerin hayata geçmesi için çabalarınızı daha da aktifleştirin.

AN APPEAL FOR THE LIBERATION OF SOCIOLOGIST BEŞİKÇİ

ISTANBUL (ITA) - A prominent Turkish sociologist-writer İsmail Beşikçi is still in prison for his scientific research on the nationalities question (See: BULLETIN, september 1979). He was sentenced to 3-year imprisonment by the decision of Istanbul Public Press Court on the appearance of his book, Turkish Thesis on History (The Theory of Sun and Language) and the Cassation Court approved this decision which reflects the oppression of the Kurdish nation in Turkey.

Beşikçi's book focuses mainly on the nature of the theory of Sun and Language that had been put forward in 1930s by the Turkish scientists with the guidance and contribution of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, President of the Republic of the time. The theory could be exemplified as such: "The Hitites, Sumerians, Egyptians, Ageans, Romans, Indians, Chinese all came into existence from the Turkish race. Their culture and language was created by Turks. Also the Arabs and Jewish people are from Turkish race. Prophet Mohammed is a Turk, also... And all the languages of the world had mainly originated from Turkish language; Turkish is the mother of all languages. There is no language such as Kurdish; Kurdish is only a degenerated dialect of Turkish language. The Kurdish nation actually consists of Turks living in the mountains."

İsmail Beşikçi who studies the formation and development of official ideology (Kemalism) discusses in his book the unscientific, racist-chauvinist nature of this ideology and exposes the political document denying the national existence and the basic democratic rights of the Kurds as well as the process of their being oppressed.

During his trial, Beşikçi rejected Istanbul Public Press Court as follows:

"This court is functioning just like the gendarme, the police, the national security organizations. To reject the reality of Kurdish nation which is an objective fact beyond the will of persons and institutions, the court is trying to establish the hegemony of the official ideology based on fraud. Turkish universities enslaved by the official ideology concede from the scientific truth by denying the reality of Kurdish nation. Your court tries to prevent criticism of professors who obtain material and moral advantages through political charlatany on threat of punishment.

"Your court is preventing us from telling the truth. It puts barriers to free thinking and requests that we close our eyes to the social reality and become political charlatans. It defends racism and colonialist policy and tries to prevent and suppress the struggle waged against these policies. We cannot call it a Court when it accepts a lie without further ado and encourages us to lie as well."

Despite the fact of defending democratic rights of the Kurdish Nation in Turkey, Beşikçi himself is not Kurdish. He was born in Çorum in 1939. As serving his military duty in Kurdish area, he was interested in the Kurdish nation and later he wrote his first book, "Structure of the Eastern Anatolia/Socio-economic and ethnic bases" based on his doctoral dissertation thesis in Erzurum Atatürk University. On the appearance, he was quitted from the assistantship.

Short after he began academic work in Faculty of Political Sciences of Ankara University in 1971, Beşikçi was imprisoned by the martial law authorities and condemned to 13 years and 2 days prison term by a military court for his articles and lectures he wrote on the nationality question. As a result of the general amnesty in 1974, he was freed and he demanded to continue his academic work. In spite of the fact that other faculty members of the same statue were forgiven, Beşikçi's demand was refuted mainly because of political reasons.

On this condemnation, his friends have issued the following appeal:

"A scientist whose sole crime consists of searching for reality, of explaining reality is lying in a Turkish prison. Turkish press is silent. Turkish universities are silent. Turkish workers, defenders of freedom and democracy, socialists raise your voice! People for freedom... raise your voice! Join hands for the freedom of Beşikçi, an intellectual labourer thrown into jail. To remain silent is to become an accomplice."

(R-DG-22/10)

AÇIKLAMA

15 Ağustos'tan bu yana Kürt halkına karşı "terörizmle mücadele" yalanlarının ardına gizlenerek sürdürülen iha operasyonları şimdi sınır ötesine taşındı. Evren-Özal diktatörlüğü kendi anayasalarını bile çiğneyerek, orduyu Irak'a soktu. Bu durum, Irak ile savaş halinde olan İran ile ilişkileri gerginleştirdi. Ülkemizin, bölgede, Amerikan planları doğrultusunda savaş serüvenlerine sürüklenmesi tehlikesini artırdı.

Yurttaşlar,

Türkiye Kürdistan'ında süregiden kırıma, vahşete "dur!" demek, herşeyden önce insanlık ve yurtseverlik görevidir. Aylardan beri köyler basılıyor, kadınlar en aşağılayıcı muamelelerden, genç-yaşlı tüm Kürtler işkencelerden geçiriliyor. Kış gününde yurttaşların yiyeceklerine, giyeceklerine tehditler konuyor. Aç ve çıplak bırakılıyor. Köyler boşaltılıyor, insanlar evlerinden, topraklarından sürülüyor.

Özal, Kürt halkına yönelik kırımını ve Irak Kürdistanı'ndaki saldırıyı haklı gösterebilmek için "Türkiye'nin güçlenmesini engellemek isteyenler, bunun için terörizmi destekleyenler var" demagojisine sarılmış, komşu ülkeleri ve TKP'ni suçlamaya kalkışmıştır. Ülkeyi güçten düşüren, terörizmi destekleyenler gerçekte kimdir ? Türk-Kürt, ülkemiz halkına karşı birleşmiş olanlar kimlerdir?

Türk ve Kürt halkının üzerinde yaşadığı bu toprakların, ülkemizin, Türkiye'nin geleceğini tehlikeye atanlardır. Ülkenin ulusal bağımsızlığını emperyalizme peşkeş çekenlerdir. Ülkeyi ABD'nin savaş kışkırtıcısı politikası doğrultusunda serüvenlere sürüklemek isteyenlerdir. Ülkenin ekonomisini emperyalizmin yağma ve talanına açanlardır. Ulus ve halk düşmanlarıdır. Bunlar

halkımızın ulusal çıkarlarının gerçek savunucusu, halkların gerçek dostu TKP'ye dil uzatamazlar.

Terörizmi destekleyenler, bizzat Washington ile "kontr-terörizm" programı" adı altında halkımıza ve bölgedeki ulusal kurtuluş hareketine karşı işbirliği yapanlardır. Türkiye'nin ABD elçisi Elekdag'ın ~~ABD'deki Varlığı~~ ^{hiç} ~~Varlığı~~ ^{hiç} ~~Varlığı~~ ^{hiç} çekinmeden dile getirdiği gibi, Türkiye'yi saldırgan "İsrail'e en iyi kalkan" yapanlardır. MHP'lilerin salıveren, onları en üst devlet organlarına getiren, Kürt köylüsüne karşı silahlı çeteler oluşturmaya çalışanlardır. Terörizmi, bizzat devlet politikası yapanlardır. Ekonomik terör politikasıyla halkı yıkıma sürükleyenlerdir. Bunların hiç biri demokrasinin en kararlı savunucusu TKP'ye dil uzatamaz !

Evren-Özal ikilisinin amacı, Ortadoğu'da tümüyle Pentagon'un istediği oyunu oynamak, Kürt halkından başlamak üzere, barış, özgürlük, bağımsızlık isteyen bölge halklarına karşı Amerikan jandarması, İsrail siyonizmine kalkan olmaktır. Bu serüvenci gidiş Amerikan emperyalizminin çıkarlarıyla doğrudan bağlıdır. Aylardır "Türkiye'nin doğusunda savunma boşluğu var. Türkiye'nin güvenliği tehlikeye düştüğünde ona karşı yükümlülüklerimizi yerine getireceğiz" deyip duran Pentagon, ülkemizi şimdi Suriye'ye ve İran'a karşı kışkırtmaya çalışıyor. Lübnan'daki yenilgisinin acısını, halkımızı savaşa sürerek çıkartmak istiyor. Bölgedeki gerginlik ve çatışmaları bahane ederek, askersel varlığını artırmak, büyük komşumuz, karagün dostumuz SSCB'ye karşı yürütmeyi planladığı savaşlar için bölgede üslenmek istiyor. Evren diktatörlüğünün ABD ile imzaladığı gizli SIA antlaşmaları Pentagon'a bu yolda her türlü olanağı sağlıyor.

Evren-Özal ikilisinin Türkiye ve Irak Kürdistanı'nda

yürüttükleri kırım operasyonları, yalnızca Kürt halkının değil, tüm bölge halklarının varlığına ve çıkarlarına yöneliktir. Bölge ve dünya barışına yönelik büyük bir tehlikedir. Onların halka verdikleri tüm sözler yalan çıktı. Halk, Evren-Özal diktatörlüğünden kurtulmak istiyor. O nedenle bu vatan satıcıları şimdi sıkıştıkları köşeden sıyrılabilmek için, halkı şoven propagandalarla, terör havası ile bir kere daha aldatabilmek umuduyla savaş serüvenlerine koşuyorlar. Sözümona vatanın çıkarları için Kürt halkına karşı ilan edilmemiş barbar bir savaş yürütüyorlar. Militarist generaller nasıl 12 Eylül darbesini çok önceden planlamışlar ve terörizmden yararlanmışlarsa, Kürdistan'daki saldırı da çok önceden planlanmıştır.

Yurttaşlar,

Kürt halkına yönelik bu vahşi saldırılara insanlık adına, demokrasi için, ülkenin serüvenlere sürüklenmesini önlemek için karşı çıkın ! Ordu Irak'dan derhal geri çekilmelidir ! Türkiye Kürdistanı'ndaki operasyonlar derhal durdurulmalı, köylerin boşaltılmasına son verilmeli, Kürt köylüsüne konan yasak ve tehditler kaldırılmalıdır ! Ulusal baskıya son ! TKP herkese bir kez daha anımsatıyor: Başka bir ulusu ezen bir ulus, asla özgür olamaz ! Özgür kalmaz !

23 Ekim 1984

Türkiye Komünist Partisi

Merkez Komitesi

Politik Bürosu

24 Şubat 1984

DIYARBAKIR'DAKİ CAN KIRIMI

"mesele, insanların, halkların mutluluğudur. Bunun yolunu, yön-temini bilimsel sosyalizmin ustaları göstermişlerdir. Bu uğurda çalışanlara onların söyledikleri ışık tutar. Birbirimizle omuz omuza verip, hızlı bir tempo ile çalışmalıyız. Görevinin ciddiyetle üzerinde duran, ısrarla çalışanlar dostlarımızdır. Elbette on saygıdeğer kişiler bulardır. Ve eğer başarmak istiyorsak, böyle olmalıyız".

Bu sözler bundan 14 yıl önce, 10 Mart 1970 günü Necmettin Büyükkaya söylüyordu. O gün Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocağının lokali açılıyordu İstanbul'da. İstanbul Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocağı Başkanı Necmettin Büyükkaya, konuşmasını şöyle sürdürüyordu:

"Örgütümüz içinde görevin büyüğü, küçüğü yoktur. Görev görevdir. Taş taşıyan da, duvarören de, harç karan da, hepsi aynı binayı yapıyor. Mesele, herhangi bir yerde görev alan kişinin o yerde kendine düğeni yapması, yeteneğine göre, kendinden bekleneni vermesidir. Mesele insanların, halkların mutluluğudur".

14 yıl önce bu sözleri söyleyen yürek garpıyor artık... Faşist rejimin cellatları, kendini insanlarımızın mutluluğu için savaşıma adanmış bu genç Kürt yurtseveri geçen ay, Diyarbakır Askeri Cezaevinde barbarca öldürdüler. Necmettin Büyükkaya'yı, Halil Çatak'ı, Remzi Aytürk'ü, Ahmet Bayık'ı, Hikmet Yıldırım'ı, Salih Kavağı, Yılmaz Demir'i, Türk-Kürt tüm halkımızın mutluluğu için savaşım veren bu yedig Kürt yurtseveri diri diri yakarak, boğarak kurşunlayarak öldürdüler.

Ne istiyordu Diyarbakır Askeri Cezaevindeki tutuklu yurtseverler? "Koğuşlarda soğuktan donuyoruz, koğuşlar ısıtılsın" diyorlardı. Yemek yerine verilen taş ve kum dolu bir avuç bulamaktan, yetersiz beslenme ve soğuktan, başta verem her türlü hastalık yayılıyordu cezaevinde

Zindana atılan tutuklu, mahpus birkaç yıl içinde götürülmek, ölümün pençesine terk edilmek isteniyordu. Cezaevinde yeterli su verilmiyor, dayak, küfür, falaka, her çeşit işkence kol geziyordu cezaevinde... Mahkemeye götürülürken, tutuklular zincire bağlanıyor, avukatlarıyla, yakınlarıyla görüştürülüyorlardı. Kağıtlarına, kalemlerine, notlarına elkonuyordu.

Diyarbakır Askeri Cezaevindeki politik tutukluların bütün bu insanlık dışı uygulamalara son verilmesi istemine, Evren-Üzal diktatörlüğü kanla-kurgunla, tutuklu yurtseverleri diri diri yakarak karşılık verdi. Bu barbarlığın duyulmaması için yayın yasası koydu. Ama, Diyarbakırlı yurtseverler bu barbarlıkları, bize, çevrelerine, dünya kamuoyuna iletmeyi başardılar.

Bugün Diyarbakır Askeri Cezaevinde politik tutukluların yiğit direnişi sürüyor. Bu cesur direnişin sürmesi, olayların dünya kamuoyuna yansması karşısında Genel Kurmay Başkanı Necdet Üruğ bizzat Diyarbakıra gitmek zorunda kaldı. Ama hâlâ Diyarbakır Askeri Cezaevinde olup bitenler konusunda hiçbir resmi açıklama yapılmıyor. "D" blokundaki Diyarbakır Belediye Başkanı Mehdi Zana'nın, İGD Lise Şubesi başkanlarından Ali İnsan Çelik'in, öteki tutukluların durumu konusunda henüz hiçbir açıklama yapılmış değil...

Bugün ülkemizde cezaevlerinde politik tutukluların hiçbir can güvenliğinin kalmadığı apaçık ortadadır. Diyarbakır Askeri Cezaevinde 7 Kürt yurtseverin barbarca öldürülmesi, zindanlardaki tutukluların yaşama hakkının yokedildiğini, can güvenliğinin hiçe sayıldığını apaçık gösteriyor. Necmettin Büyükkaya'nın, 12 Eylül darbesinden bu yana yalnızca Diyarbakırda cuntanın cellatlarıca öldürülen 35-40 yurtseverin yürekleri çarpıyor bugün.. Ama insan canını, yaşama hakkını her şeyin üstünde tutan yurtseverlerin yüreği, Diyarbakırdaki tutuklularla birlikte çarpıyor.

Biz bütün yurttaşlarımıza sesleniyoruz:

, Yurttaş, Evladının faşist generaller çetesinin elinde yokolmasına

izin verme! Meclise sunulan tasarı, MHP'li, faşist teröristleri salıvermeyi, politik tutukluları genel af kapsamı için dışında bırakmaya amaçlıyor. Buna izin verme! Politik tutuklulara sahip çık! Onlar senin çıkarlarını, ülkemizin çıkarlarını savundukları için zindandadır. Onlar omurlarına faşist sürülerine çığnatmamak için direniyorlar. Senin ekmeğini, namusunu korumak için direniyorlar. Onlara yalnız barakma! Kaatillere, Evren'e, Özal'a dur de!

TÜRKİYE SOSYAL TARİH ARAŞTIRMA VE YAYIN KURUMU
TÜSTAV

~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ KÜRTLERİN KADERİ

KÜRTLERİN KADERİ

Suriyeden Ömer Vahid, Cemil Halil, Türkiyeden Ahmet Muhammet ve
Iraktan Ahmet Kerim Ermenistanda yaşayan Kürtler üzerine bilgi istiyorlar.
Ermenistanın başkenti Erivanda çıkan lar. Yanıtı /"Riza Taza" adlı Kürt gazetesinin başyazarı verdi.

Tarih Ülkemizdeki bugünkü şanslı Kürtlerin, ~~xx~~ geçen yüzyılın
başlarında ~~Kürtler~~ anayurtları Kürdistanı daha fazla baskı ve zulümden
kurtulmak için bırakıp "us yurttaşlığına geçen 20000 Kürd'ün ahvadi
olduğunu yazıyor.

Bu Kürtlerin büyük bir bölümü o zamanlar, doğu Ermenistana yerleş-
tiler. Tümüyle okuma yazmadan nasiplerini almamış, politikadan , edebi-
yat ve sanattan ~~xxxx~~ çok uzak durumdaydılar. Dağlarda göçebe yaşamı
sürdürüyor ve koyun besiciliği ile geçiniyorlardı.. Büyük çoğunluğu
okul, hastahane veya kitaplık diye birşey tanımıyordu. ~~xxxx~~ 1920 de
Ermenistanda Sovyet erkinin kurulması köklü sosyal reformların yapıl-
masını sağladı ve bu yerel Kürtlerin tarihinde yeni bir dönem baş-
lattı.

Ermeni öğretmenleri Kürt halkına okullarda eğitim verdiler ve
kendi ulusal öğretmenlerini yetiştirdiler.

Ria Taza (yeni yol) adlı Kürt çe gazete Ermenistanda 1930 dan bu-
yana yayınlanıyor. Daha sonra bir ulusal tiyatro kuruldu, bunu önce
çeviri ~~xxxx~~ daha sonra ise orijinal edebiyat yapıtlarının Kürtçe
yayınlanması izledi. Ermenistan radyoso hergün Kürtler için yayın
yapar ve elinde 1400 Kürt halk türküsü bir ~~müzik~~ koleksiyonu vardır.

Halkımızın yaşamının çeşitli yönlerini etkileyen değişimler
her bir Kürt köyünde gözlenebilir.

Örneğin Alagyaz köyü Aragi dağı eteklerindedir ve burada köylüler
konforlu
artık ~~xxxxxxx~~ taş konutlarda yaşıyorlar. Bu köyde
bir ortaokul, bir kültür merkezi, bir kitaplık ve bir hastahane vardır.
Bir peynir fabrikası ~~xxxxxxx~~ ve ayrıca çeşitli sanayi işletmele-
rinin şubeleri vardır. Yerel Amatör tiyatrodan çeviri klasik oyunlar

ile yerel yazarların yazdığı oyunlar sahnelenir.

Benim Alagyaz'da pek çok dostum var,ama şimdi yitirdiğimiz Khudoe Mgoi'ile dostluğumun ~~xxx~~ özel bir yeri vardı. Bu insanın yaşamı bir tarihsel romana konu olabilir. Çünkü Khudoe ve ailesi Ermenistandaki Kürtlerin yaşamının tipik bir aynasıdır.

Khudoe, 1920 devrimci eylemlerinde yer aldığı ve kızıl orduya katıldığı zaman 15 yaşında bir kır yoksulu idi. Terhis olup eve döndüğünde kendi köyündeki bir kollektif çiftliğin örgütleyicilerinden birisi oldu. Yıllarca bu kolektif çiftliğin yöneticiliğini yaptı. ^{Köylüleri} ~~Köylüleri~~ onu pek ço kez yerel sovyetin başkanlığına seçtiler.

Khudoe Mgoi,dört oğlu ve üç kızıyla her zaman çok onurlanırdı. Her biri bir yüksek öğrenim kurumunu bitirdi ve ilginç meslekler seçtiler. Enbüyük oğlu Agit Ria Taza gazetesinin sanat ve edebiyat bölümünün başıdır.Shakro tarih doktorudur ve Ermenistan Bilimler Akademisi,Doğu Bilimleri Enstitüsü ~~Kürtçe~~ Kürtçe Bölümünün başkanı olan bir tarih doktorudur.Shaliko,halk eğitim sisteminde yöntem bilimcidir. Georgi, Doktorasını yapmış bir tıp doktorudur. Ermenistan ortopedi ve travmatoloji Enstitüsünde çalışıyor. Khudoe'nın kızları Kibar,Lyusya ve Zina ,üçü de öğretmenlerdir.

Bugün Ermenistanda yaşayan 50000 Kürt yurttaşların tümü için ^{fırsatla} çok yönlü gelişmelerini olanaklı kılan sayısız ~~xxxxxx~~ dolu bir yaşam sağlanmıştır.

Onlar,yerel yönetim organlarında temsil ediliyorlar,Ermenistan Cumhuriyetinin ^{Kürt} Yüksek Sovyetinde bugün ~~xx~~ iki Kürt milletvekili vardır. Ayrıca parti yöneticileri,ünlü sanatçılar,avukatlar,doktorlar ve çeşitli bilimsel araştırma ve eğitim kurumlarında çalışan 22 bilim doktoru ve akademisyen adayı vardır.

Her yıl Cumhuriyetin yayınevleri Kürtçe çeşitli kitaplar yayınlarlar. Bunlar içinde 9 Kürt yazarın kitapları Ermenice ve Ruscaya çevrilmiş olup ~~xxxxxxx~~ da popüler olmuşlardır.

Ermenistandaki Kürtler hala kendi geleneklerini ,adetlerini canlı tutarlar ve her yıl Nevruz'u kutlarlar.

Bugün Sovyetler Birliğinde toplam 116000 Kürt yaşamaktadır. Bir
Azerbeycanda , Gürcistanda ve Orta Asya Cumhuriyetlerinde de yaşayan Kürt
Buralarda yaşayanlarında önlerindeki fırsatlar Ermenistanda yaşayanlar
gibidir.

Amerike SARDAR
Erivan

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TÜRKİYE SOSYAL TARİH ARAŞTIRMA
TÜSTAV

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SURVEYS, INFORMATION AND MAIL
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OUTCASTS OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Status of Ethnic Minorities in Industrial
Capitalist Countries

The past few years have witnessed a dramatic exacerbation of inter-racial and inter-ethnic relations in industrial capitalist countries that in many cases erupted into violent, angry clashes. The street fighting in the coloured ghettos of London, Washington, Birmingham, New York, Liverpool, and Chicago have drawn public attention to the tragic condition of ethnic minorities. Whereas in the West not very long ago they spoke of an accidental outbreak of an "epidemic of nationalism", today even bourgeois leaders concede that the roots of the unrest lie in racial discrimination that flourishes in all areas of life.

Slave Status

In developed capitalist countries there are no signboards with the words "For Whites Only". But society's division into two sections isolated from each other and not enjoying equal rights--coloured and white--is glaringly in evidence. Most of the coloured are on the lowest rung of the social ladder, and they are the ones who, as a rule, perform the most unattractive and low-paid work. In the USA half again as many Afro-Americans as whites, 80 per cent. of the Chicanos (persons of Mexican origin), and over 70 per cent of the Puerto Ricans are employed

on unskilled, mostly manual work. The corresponding indicator among immigrants, principally from Central African countries, is 81.6 per cent in France and between 84 and 94 per cent in Britain among immigrants from Caribbean and Asian countries. They are employed chiefly in poorly equipped sectors of the mining, textile, and food industries, construction, public utilities, transport, agriculture, and sanitation services. Most of the "clean" professions are closed to them. Mainly whites are employed in the nuclear, electronics, and petrochemical industries, banking, and other prestigious sectors of the US economy.

Discrimination against so-called guest workers is particularly harsh. Recruited in their homeland, they are for all practical purposes denied freedom of choosing jobs. This category of working people is subjected to eminently brutal exploitation as a result of the steady intensification of labour and the introduction of uncontrolled overtime. In Italy, for example, according to statistics of the Italian Confederation of Trade Unions, they work from 55 to 70 hours a week. The absence of labour protection is the cause of countless cases of injury and occupational diseases. In Switherland the number of accidents among guest workers is, depending on the industry, from three to ten times larger than among Swiss. In France immigrant workers, who account for only eight per cent of the employed population, suffer 22 per cent of the

production injuries. Denied social rights, they get no compensation for such injuries.

There is also wage discrimination against persons belonging to ethnic minorities. In the USA the wages received by Afro-American and other ethnic citizens is almost half of the remuneration paid to whites. In Canada Eskimos get half and Indian miners get one-third of what is paid to whites. Ship-building companies in Britain pay ethnic workers one-fifth of the wages of whites despite the fact that their work-day is four hours longer.

Non-white workers are usually at the top of the dismissal lists. In the USA, even according to official statistics, the unemployment rate among ethnic minorities has reached almost 50 per cent. The condition of the indigenous inhabitants of North America, Australia, and New Zealand is appallingly tragic. The jobless rate is 80 per cent among the inhabitants of the Indian reservations of the USA, 80-90 per cent among the Eskimos of Alaska, and 75 per cent among able-bodied Canadian Indians. In Australia unemployment among aborigine industrial workers is six times above the average, reaching 100 per cent in some communities.

Foreign workers live under the constant threat of dismissal. Over the past 10-15 years the governments of capitalist countries, in alliance with the monopolies, have been pursuing a policy of regularly renewing the body of immigrants in order to obtain the largest possible returns from alien pro-

letarians. Superexploitation leads to their rapid physical exhaustion, and the need arises for replenishing manpower. New immigrants come to take the place of dismissed and deported immigrants, often on poorer terms. For example, 477,000 foreign workers were discharged and deported in the FRG in 1966-1967. They were replaced with newly arrived immigrants. This sort of "rotation" persists to this day.

The scientific and technological revolution and the structural readjustments in the economies of capitalist countries have hit the ^{employment} rate of ethnic minorities particularly hard. Automation, new methods of management, and modernisation in the services industry have cut back the demand for unskilled labour, the bulk of which consists on non-whites. Their opportunities for learning skills are extremely slim on account of the discrimination in access to occupational training.

From Segregation in Education to Social Genocide

In order to operate high-tech machinery people must have a higher level of general education. However, in capitalist countries the majority of the coloured people do not get a proper education. In the USA, despite the legislative ban on segregation, more than 60 per cent of Afro-American children to this day attend schools where they predominate numerically and the quality of the teaching is far below the standard at schools in white neighbourhoods. The low knowledge level reduces the chances of these children finding jobs after they leave school. The situation is compounded by the fact that many of

them quit studying early. In the USA, according to official statistics, the proportion of drop-outs among Afro-American schoolchildren exceeds 16 per cent, and among Spanish-speaking children it is over 30 per cent. Almost half of all the Indians in the USA have not finished five classes, although a system of twelve-year secondary education operates in the country.

Nor is the situation better in some other countries. In the FRG only half of the children of foreign workers study, and of these 60 per cent are compelled to drop out before finishing school. A matriculation certificate is won by only four per cent of the aborigine children of Australia, 20 per cent of the Canadian Indian children, and only six per cent of West Indian and 14 per cent of Asian children in Britain. This results in mass illiteracy among ethnic minorities. About half of the Indians in the USA and more than 90 per cent of the aborigenes in Australia are totally illiterate.

Of those who get a secondary education far from all can expect to learn a profession. In Britain approximately 35 per cent of West Indian and Asian school-leavers and in the FRG over two-thirds of the children of immigrant workers remain without occupational training.

Their chances of getting a higher education are even smaller. In the USA only 6-7 per cent of the senior year students¹ are from ethnic minorities. In Britain a diploma certifying higher education is received by only 0.5 per cent of ethnic West Indians and five per cent of young British citizens of

Asian origin. Only one per cent of Canadian Indians and roughly 0.03 per cent of Australian aborigenes study at universities, which most of them do not finish.

The massive assault undertaken in the mid-1970s by monopoly capital and the ruling circles on the social gains and living standard of working people has most seriously affected the condition of ethnic minorities, spelling out social genocide for them.

Social benefits programmes for the poor, most of whom are people belonging to ethnic minorities, have been slashed. In the USA 62 per cent of the chronically impoverished are non-whites. As many as 80 per cent of the Indians and Eskimos of Canada and nearly two-thirds of Australia's aborigenes and of New Zealand's Maoris eke out an existence below the poverty line. These groups of the population were the hardest hit also by the cutback of allocations for social security, housing, public health, and education. In the USA, for instance, cities in which ethnic minorities comprise a particularly large part of the population are becoming the targets of the largest reductions in social allowances funds. The already small federal subsidies to the Indian reservations have been reduced by another 500 million dollars annually since 1980.

Abject poverty, shanty towns, and substandard medical care symbolise racial discrimination. In most of the capitalist countries coloured people are officially not barred from living in white neighbourhoods. But those who can afford this are

helpless before the racist prejudices of the landlords. However, the majority of coloured citizens do not have the money to live outside the ghettos that have become part and parcel of the big cities. The most notorious Afro-American ghetto--New York's Harlem--is a neighbourhood of tumbledown houses that have not been repaired for a long time and many of which are in a hazardous condition. Even according to official statistics, more than ten per cent of them are uninhabitable. Harlem is short of schools and hospitals. The cinemas have given way to numerous bars and video-game halls, where narcotics are peddled. It is dangerous to walk in the streets of Harlem even in daylight: violence reigns there, and a larger number of serious crimes is committed than in any other New York neighbourhood.

Harlem is no exception. The names of countries and cities differ, but the life of the ghetto inhabitants is everywhere the same. In capitalist countries most of the immigrant workers cannot afford even a ghetto dwelling. They live in barracks more often than not on the territory of factories, or in houses that should have been pulled down long ago. Several persons are assigned ^a tiny room devoid of elementary conveniences, but each is charged a rent as for a whole apartment.

That disease is widespread among ethnic minorities is due to the shocking living and working conditions. For example, the tuberculosis rate among Pakistani immigrants in Britain is 30 times higher than among the white population. In the Indian reservations in the USA the tuberculosis rate in

proportion to the population is seven times higher than in white neighbourhoods. In ethnic communities many people are chronically ill, and the child death rate is very high. The average life expectancy is much shorter than among whites. For instance, in the USA Afro-Americans live six, Indians live 26, and Eskimos and Aleuts live almost 36 years less than whites.

Terror and Denial of Rights

As the twentieth century comes to a close millions of people belonging to ethnic minorities in the capitalist world are denied civil and political rights. The legislation that they have won from the ruling circles by a long and persevering struggle has not brought any fundamental change in this area. Take, for example, the situation in the USA. Laws on civil and suffrage rights were passed in that country in 1964-1965, and today Afro-Americans have representatives in the US Congress and in the legislatures of the various states, and also in the mayor's offices of 250 cities. However, while they make up 12 per cent of the population, Afro-Americans hold only one per cent of the elective offices. The picture is the same relative to other minorities. Americans of Mexican origin comprise between 12 and 15 per cent of California's population but have only two per cent of the delegates in the state's legislature and none in the California senate. By means of various manipulations a significant proportion of coloured people is prevented from taking part in elections. That explains why the Communist

Party USA assesses the 1964-1965 laws as exclusively formal guarantees of equality that are either not implemented or have no real importance in day-to-day practice.

Similarly, the aborigenes of Australia formally enjoy suffrage rights. But while numbering 150,000 they do not have a single representative in the nation's parliament. In Canada the Indians have since 1960 had the right to vote in the elections to the Federal Parliament. But if an Indian invokes that right he, his wife, children, and grandchildren are deprived of their share of land in a reservation and have to leave the reservation for good.

A natural outcome of the absence of political representation is that the life of ethnic minorities is more often than not regulated by essentially racist laws. For example, Canadian legislation denies to Indians, persons of mixed blood, and Eskimos cultural and inheritance rights, the right to own land, and the right to social services, which are enjoyed exclusively by "lily-white" Canadians. A new citizenship law passed in Britain divided all British subjects into three categories with unequal rights. Racism has thereby become state policy.

Immigrant workers are denied basic political rights. The immigration laws in capitalist countries are selective and are applied to persons of Asian, African, and Latin American origin. The main purpose of these laws is to provide labour for jobs spurned by the local population, and give immigrants no possibility for protesting arbitrary decisions of employers

and moves to reduce the already small remuneration for their work.

Ethnic minorities encounter discrimination in courts of law as well. The harsh and, in many cases, unlawful attitude of the judiciary to the American Indians is noted even by the advisory council for ethnic minorities affairs of the US Department of Justice. One of its reports quotes statistics showing that American Indians are harassed more often by other citizens of the USA and that they are sentenced to longer prison terms than other citizens indicted on similar charges.

The judicial system of capitalist countries deals brutally with persons who speak up in defence of their people. Custodians of the law do not shun trumping up charges. This was how fighters for the rights of Afro-Americans Jonny Harris and Assata Shakour, the American-Indian leader Leonard Peltier, and many others were imprisoned.

Police terror against members of ethnic minorities has been stepped up in recent years. It has been estimated that one person a day dies at the hands of the police in the USA-- more than half of the victims, up to 70 per cent in Philadelphia and Chicago, are Afro-Americans. Memories are still fresh of the tragic events of May 1985 in Philadelphia when a bomb was dropped from a police helicopter on a house inhabited by Afro-Americans. The explosion caused fires that gutted 60 nearby houses. There were 11 fatalities, including children, and hundreds of the ghetto inhabitants were left without a roof over their heads. Not a single person responsible for this bru-

tality has been brought to justice or even punished administratively.

Police excesses provoked unrest in the coloured ghettos of Britain: in Bristol in 1980, in London, Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, Sheffield, Nottingham, Hull, Newcastle upon Tyne, and other cities in 1981, again in Liverpool in 1982, and in Birmingham in 1985. The unrest was suppressed with the most callous ruthlessness. Not a single policeman was brought to account.


The situation is compounded by the riot of racial hatred encouraged and fanned by the ruling circles of capitalist countries. Acts of violence and even murder are on the rise against coloured people. Back in 1981 the British Home Office found that the risk of attack on people of West Indian origin was 36 times higher, and on people of Asian origin 50 times higher than on whites. Last year ten persons died and many were injured at the hands of racists in Britain. The French press reports that one Algerian dies in this way every month in France. In Australia shooting aborigenes has become a "sport" for racist thugs.

As a rule, the police do nothing to stop violence, and criminals go unpunished. An example of this is that last year the court of appeal in the state of Alabama repealed the death sentence of a Ku Klux Klan member who, with an accomplice, wantonly killed a 19-year-old Afro-American youth. More, according to numerous reports in the press, it has become almost habitual that after an act of violence by white hooligans, the

victims and not the criminals are put behind bars.

Extremist violence suits the monopolies. By whipping up racial hatred they not only get the opportunity to intensify their uncontrolled exploitation of ethnic minorities, which brings them additional profits, but also to attain a similarly important objective: these actions divide working people, debilitate their resistance to the common enemy, and thereby reinforce monopoly domination in society. Understanding this danger, the communist parties of industrial capitalist countries have for many years been fighting consistently for the rights of ethnic minorities and enlisting large sections of the democratic public into this struggle.

Working Group, WMR Commission for
Scientific Information and Documenta-
tion



¹ This does not include young people of Asian origin.

TÜRKİYE SOSYAL TARİH ARAŞTIRMA VAKFI
TÜSTAV

SURVEYS, LETTERS AND DIARY

The Reader Wants to Know

THE SITUATION IN KURDISTAN

We are receiving letters from readers with questions about the Kurdish problem and recent developments in Kurdish-populated areas. For example, Mahmoud Karam-Ogly ABDULLAYEV from Goriachy Kliuch, Krasnodar Region, USSR says that "different sources report on the complicated situation in Iraqi and Iranian Kurdistan and on the hostilities there. There is also unrest in the areas of Turkey where Kurds live. Could you tell us about the Kurdish question and the causes of the dramatic events in Kurdistan?"

We present contributions by Siamend KHALIL, member of the Iraqi Communist Party, and by Salah AMIN, representative of the Kurdish patriotic national forces.

The People's Commitment to Freedom

The Iraqi Kurds (who total more than 3.5 million) have always been in the front ranks of the battle for freedom and national independence, and we know that the path of a leader is particularly arduous. The Kurds' militant struggle has been brutally suppressed, but it has received unswerving support from the country's democratic forces, above all from the Communists who were the first to recognise the right of the Kurds to self-determination. The ICP announced this recognition as soon as it was established as a party in 1934.

The Communists have given total backing to the Kurds' struggle. We hold that the effort to ensure the Kurds' national rights is linked organically with the attainment of democracy for the whole Iraqi people. The decades of stubborn fighting have borne out the Communist Party slogan "The Union of Arabs and Kurds Is an Insurmountable Obstacle in the Path of Reaction and Colonialism". It has been taken up by all progressive and democratic forces in our society.

The present rulers of Iraq were forced by the Kurdish Revolution, the pressure of the democratic forces and tactical considerations to recognise the right of Iraq's Kurdish people to autonomy. In actual fact, however, the authorities purged its legislative and executive institutions of any and all democratic elements. Resorting to demagogic slogans, they unleashed new reprisals against the Kurds and moved to change the population structure of Iraqi Kurdistan. Great numbers of Kurds have been exiled to the nation's arid southern areas, particularly from oil-rich districts. Simultaneously, the population of the northern regions is being Arabised, and Kurds are being ousted by Arab settlers.

The regime is resorting to force and bribery to make the Kurds loyal to the ruling Ba'ath Party--but to no avail. The new wave of repression which rose after the 1975 agreement between Iraq and Iran¹ forced the vanguard of the

¹ Under the agreement concluded by the President of Iraq and the Shah of Iran in Algiers in March 1975, each side pledged to settle territorial disputes and cease assisting the opposition in the other country.--Ed.

Kurdish people to declare an armed uprising which was supported by the masses. It was led by the patriotic national forces, including Communists.

The aggravation of the oppressive policy produced widespread opposition to the authorities. Kurdish revolutionaries, Communists and other champions of democracy and progress form the backbone of the inexorably growing movement "For a Democratic Iraq and Genuine Autonomy of Kurdistan". The mountains of Iraqi Kurdistan are the arena of armed patriotic resistance to the regime. The gravity of the confrontation is also clear from the large-scale uprisings that have swept Kurdish cities. The ruling quarters are trying to drown them in blood, and the reign of terror is intensifying.

Baghdad fears that the struggle of the Kurdish population may escalate into action against the government in other parts of the country. This prospect is quite probable because, in spite of brutal reprisals, the democratic forces are becoming increasingly active. Enmity towards the insurgents has prompted the authorities to use chemical weapons, evict thousands of people from their homes, raze villages and conduct wholesale executions. As soon as the hostilities along the Iranian front ceased, Iraqi troops launched a new offensive in Kurdistan using different types of weapons.

The people of goodwill who support Arabs and Kurds in their drive for democracy can be sure that the new campaign

of terror and repression is doomed to failure. The people's commitment to freedom is stronger than weapons.

Siamend KHALIL

We Want To Live in Peace and Harmony

Right-wing nationalist regimes refuse to recognise the national liberation struggle of the Kurdish people or even consider their right to self-determination. The Baghdad authorities are particularly zealous in their chauvinistic policy aimed against the Kurdish people. In March 1988, the Iraqi government mounted a series of offensive operations against the Kurds near the city of Halabja; chemical agents were among the weapons used. The result was 5,000 casualties, including lethal ones. On August 25, the authorities again used chemical weapons against the civilian population of Iraqi Kurdistan. Thousands of women, old people and children were injured or killed, and tens of thousands fled to Turkey and Iran.

The neighbouring across-the-border areas to which people fled are a natural extension of the Kurds' lands. They are peopled with the sons of the same nation. If the Turkish government had failed to assist the refugees from Iraqi Kurdistan, the Turkish Kurds would have done it themselves. But the authorities are working to prevent such contacts. Turkish security forces have sealed the refugee camps off from the neighbouring communities.

That is why the reports of Turkish and Western news agencies about the humane treatment of the refugees, the erection of tent camps, etc. do not reflect the actual state of affairs.

The security treaty concluded between Turkey and Iraq a few years ago provides for collaboration and concerted action in combating the Kurdish national liberation movement in both countries. The Turkish authorities have indeed set up tent camps for the refugees, and they do supply them with food. However, the true attitude of Ankara to the Kurdish people is obviously hostile. This is clear from reports about Kurds being deported to Iraq by the Turkish government and from the services the latter did the Iraqi regime by groundlessly denying the fact of Iraqi chemical warfare while world public opinion expressed its indignation over these moves.

The record shows that local reactionaries, imperialism, and the Zionists are working to implement a certain plan with regard to the Kurdish national liberation movement. This plan is aimed at securing control over the Kurdish movement, emasculating its democratic thrust, isolating it from the region's progressive and patriotic forces, transforming it into something resembling the Afghan counterrevolution, directed by NATO circles and pro-American regimes, thoroughly undermining the historically friendly relations between Arabs and Kurds, and fomenting hostility between them.

Also contributing to this plan is the Iraqi government statement about a "general amnesty", a statement that insults the Kurds, denigrates their history and the principles and objectives of their struggle, and pictures the patriots as "mercenary gangs". In this connection one cannot ignore the harm done to the cause of liberation by the policies of some right-wing Kurdish factions.

The progressive quarters have set the Kurdish liberation movement the tasks of pursuing an independent and patriotic national policy, severing all ties with the reactionaries, refusing to be a pawn in the political game of the ruling regimes or to be drawn into conflicts or territorial disputes between them because that does not serve the genuine interests of the Kurds, and concentrating on the prime objective of mobilising all forces in the struggle for self-determination.

We are addressing our friends in all countries and particularly in the Arab national liberation movement, as well as all those who hold democracy and justice dear with an urgent appeal to draw public attention to the developments in Kurdistan and display stronger solidarity with the Kurdish and Arab peoples.

Salah AMIN



A NOTE FROM WMR

The name "Kurdistan" does not appear on the political map of the world. It is an ethnogeographic term usually denoting a predominantly Kurdish-populated mountainous area in West Asia, mostly within the Armenian highland and the Iranian plateau. In 1514 Kurdistan was divided between the Ottoman Empire and Persia (Iran). After World War I and the collapse of the empire, Kurdish-populated areas were incorporated into the states that sprang up on its former territory--Turkey, Iraq and Syria.

The Kurds, one of the oldest peoples of the Near East, live in Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Syria and several other countries (the Soviet union, Lebanon and Afghanistan). Their population now totals 20 to 25 million. The Kurdish language belongs to the western division of Iranian languages and includes several dialects--Kirmanji, Sorani, Bahdinani and others.

The Kurds' history has not been easy. They rose many times against the shahs of Persia, the sultans of the Ottoman Empire and other oppressors.

Today, the Kurds' movement for self-determination is not homogeneous. Dozens of political parties and organisations exist, holding different positions on the Kurdish national question.

At the juncture of the 1950s and 1960s the Iraqi regime opened hostilities against the Kurdish people. As the Ba'ath

Party came to power in 1968, efforts to settle the conflict were undertaken. After agreement was reached in 1970 on a peaceful settlement of the Kurdish problem, the government adopted the Declaration of March 11 and thus ended the war which had been fought for almost a decade. In March 1974, a law on the autonomy of Iraqi Kurdistan was enacted on the basis of the declaration; under this law, legislative and executive bodies of the Kurdish Autonomous Region were established. However, tensions again intensified in the late 1970s, and hostilities between government troops and Kurdish insurgents resumed. The Iran-Iraq war further aggravated the situation.

The still outstanding national question in Iran and the refusal of the Islamic Republic government to meet the demands of the Kurds and other national minorities for administrative and cultural autonomy led to armed clashes between Kurds and the forces of the Teheran regime in Iranian Kurdistan. The press has reported that the Turkish army has repeatedly conducted punitive operations against the Kurdish population of the southeastern areas in recent years.

The world's progressive public opinion is demanding a just solution to the Kurdish problem and calling for the granting of the right to self-determination to the long-suffering people.

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