



CPM :
An Imperialist Agent
in Pro-people Garb

New Vistas Publications

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**Globalization and 'Left' Front Government
— A Fact-sheet**

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Publisher's Note

This booklet contains a presentation of facts regarding the economic and other policies of the CPM-led government of West Bengal. Notwithstanding all their rhetoric against imperialism/globalisation, this booklet brings out how faithfully the CPM is implementing the policies of the IMF/WB/WTO combine in one of the States that they run.

At the ground level it is apparent that the economic policies of the West Bengal government differs little from that of other State governments or the Centre. This booklet will, no doubt, act as an eye-opener to all progressives and anti-imperialist forces that are unaware of the facts that lie below CPM propaganda. We hope that this booklet will help strengthen the anti-imperialist movement in the country by enabling us to distinguish real friends from fake ones.

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CPM — An Imperialist Agent in Pro-people Garb

Globalization and 'Left' Front Government — A Fact-sheet

Here in West Bengal the peasants are forced to undergo distress sale. They are crushed under money-lenders due to loans at an exorbitant rate of interest. This has forced some peasants to resort to suicidal deaths. But how can a responsible government, 'most committed' for the peasant cause bear this tragedy? The CPM in their state daily organ, propagate these incidents as all bogus, mere propaganda of the newspapers!

The management of the big business house, Birla automobile industry, has become scared of the rising competition from other foreign and domestic business houses. They found refuge in a US-based consultancy firm McKinsey. It gave its valuable consultation, ie., to retrench a thousand of the workforce. The management eagerly planned to implement the same, hand in glove with a 'left' trade union, that has the full backing of the government in power.

The white collar employees, once the blue-eyed boys of the government, (the teachers or the doctors) are now hired on a contract basis. The government employees have no security of job. They are compelled to peacefully accept 'VRS' for a "greater interest"!

The hospitals are becoming another name for hell. The people are requested to bear the brunt due to the anti-people policies of the central government. The state government, as in childish simplicity, increased the fees of the hospital services. Subsequently, health welfare is going

out of the reach of commoners.

The students are to face capitation fees, as fees are hiked in every aspect of their educational career. They are to buy education like any other commodity from the market of education. A sizeable section of students are forced to bid good bye to education due to 'proper' infrastructure! Numbers of illiterates are found in districts which were previously declared as 100% literate by the government.

Thus the peasants, the workers, the middle class, the students — all strata and sections of the people are in deep trouble. They are compelled to grope in the darkness, darker than the new moon! All this is happening in West Bengal, a State government of India, claimed as an 'oasis' by the ruling CPI(M) party and its partners.

In this CPI(M)-style 'oasis' the rhetoric of imperialism and anti-imperialism co-exist peacefully. The CPI(M) in their slogans, articles and discussions have been posing themselves as an ardent anti-imperialist force. But, in the same breath they implement IMF-World Bank dictated policies. They have attained unparalleled expertise in befooling the people with their logic of 'compulsions', 'interim relief', and supposedly wield power to build up democratic movements etc. It is for this reason that the Bretton Woods family, led by imperialist forces, appreciates the CPI(M). It is used as a safety valve against the peoples' struggles. Like the imperialist-launched NGOs, the CPI(M) has good credibility with the imperialists.

This small booklet deals with the role of the 'left' front government of West Bengal in implementing the programmes of globalisation utilising flimsy argument in the defence. In order to understand the dynamics of surrender to the programmes of imperialism, let us have a brief insight into the programmes pertaining to globalisation of this state government.

Globalisation and the CPI(M)

The world capitalist system has been facing a series of severe crises. Every time some temporary steps are taken to save the system. But, all those prescriptions ultimately lead to more and more severe crisis.

The crisis of the 1930's was managed by a set of prescriptions

better known as the Keynesian crisis management policies. The crux of the policies was to inject purchasing power in the economy through government autonomous spending. It was argued that it would further increase the purchasing power of the people. Hence effective demand would be increased. This increase in demand would be a further incentive to investment in the private sector. But these crisis management policies failed to solve the inherent problem of the world capitalist system. Consequently the very system was engulfed in more severe crisis in the late 60's. All myths were shattered. Now, Freedman came forward to rescue the system with a set of policies. The most reactionary, anti-people economist prescribed to do away with the 'bottlenecks of the economy' to facilitate a free play of market forces. These steps includes — curbing increase in wages, reducing taxes on corporate profits and direct taxes, downsizing government expenditure on public needs and undermining the right of trade unions etc. Instead, he advocated to ensure the rights of the business houses to exploit and dismiss workers unhampered. This is the argument to make room for more competitiveness.

Imperialism, through its agencies like the Bretton Woods family (IMF, World Bank and its associates), implement the Freedman crisis management prescriptions. The IMF-World Bank put forward stringent measures to carry on its agenda of globalisation. Let us trace some of the conditionalities of the World Bank that strangulate the economies of underdeveloped countries:

(a) In Article 1 of its Article of Agreements it was stated that the Bank would 'co-ordinate' the loans received by a particular country through other channels. It means the Bank would control the entire amount of loans received by a country from various channels. Moreover, instead of the country itself, the Bank would decide whether the loan was necessary or not, to the country.

(b) Before granting a loan to a developing country, the Bank investigates the various aspects of that particular country. After having detailed information, including even intelligence data, under pretence of advice for betterment, the Bank pressurizes the loan-taking country to follow its recommendations, such as the demand to give up pursuing an independent economic policy, to abandon implementation of

progressive economic reforms, to stimulate private capitalist order, to encourage investment of foreign capital with privileges etc.

The Bank, through its conditionalities, is pushing through its liberalisation policies, and structural adjustment programmes. While the ruling class of a country is implementing the above said policies, then how far is it possible to oppose or regulate imperialist capital by a State government? The CPI(M), only in order to retain power in the state appeases and implements the imperialist designs. Still it wants us to be in a make-believe world and have faith in Mr. Buddhadeb's (chief minister of West Bengal) statement. Buddha stated, he would oppose the 'There is no Alternative' (TINA) syndrome put forward by the reactionary British ex-Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. He further said that, *"We have to find out our own path and it is a reality that it is an untraveled path. Nobody has walked through this path. We are to identify the path while travelling... But, would it be prudent if we look down upon the gravity of the situation? Is it to be termed be a surrender if we take the situation into consideration? No! We are not surrendering."*¹

In the coming chapters it will be clear how far the tall claims of the 'left' front government led by Buddha are true —

A book entitled *Ajkar Bishwayan-Bharatbarsha Paschimbanga* (Present Globalisation — India and West Bengal) has been published by the National Book Agency. There are three articles regarding globalisation which were in fact, speeches delivered during the 20th state conference of the Democratic Youth Federation of India (DYFI), youth wing of the CPI(M). Mr. Anil Biswas, state secretary of the CPI(M) in the prelude of the book stated that, *"There are some advantages in our state (West Bengal) due to globalisation. In the pre-liberalisation period the central government used the license system to halt industrialisation in West Bengal. In the liberalisation period the state government is surging ahead in the path of industrialisation due to the scraping of the license system. No sooner the system is abolished than the left front government in 1994 declared a new industrial policy. In the last seven or eight years West Bengal is able to advance much by following the said policy with regard to industrialisation."* West

Bengal industry and commerce minister, Mr. Nirupam Sen on one occasion² pointed out that the government should be aware of the demands of the industrialists and act accordingly — a pro-poor government indeed! Mr Sen continued otherwise they will not be able to attract invest to West Bengal. He further pleaded for various incentives for the business houses.

The Indian Chamber of Commerce (ICC), the business house of the Indian big bourgeoisie has conducted a survey that may act as an eye-opener to all concerned. As part of the ICC 2003 business perception survey for Bengal, a questionnaire was sent to 60 corporate chieftains with business interest in the state.³ They gave their verdict on a host of issues. *"Direct feedback from business and industry is critical and would help the West Bengal government to consider appropriate policy choices,"* said ICC president Vikram Thapar. The Chamber has decided to share the result with the government as a 'positive policy supplement'. Though there was no direct question regarding labour relations, a handful of businessmen expressed satisfaction with the approach on the said issue of the CPI(M) top brass. They were concerned over frequent labour unrest at the grass-root level. The ICC findings further pointed that 88% of the respondents seek priority attention to roads and 69% demand suburban development. The survey indicated scope for improvement in the social sector.

53% demanded action in the health sector. 71% respondents said that the business barons prefer Bengal because of its low salaries and wages. They expressed concern over the quality of professional education. Over 48% advocated measures to raise the standard to reap the benefits of competitive human resource costs. A whopping 72 percent voted for knowledge-based industries followed by healthcare, tourism and biotechnology.

The preferences of business houses in real terms reflect the options of the imperialist powers' dictum in various forms. The Government is reciprocating by enhancing its friendly gestures to them. It has rendered a red carpet welcome to them.

Incentives for business

The Central government seems to have set the trend for the economic policy of India. It is very natural that any true representative of the Indian ruling class, who are completely dependent on imperialism, will succumb to the imperialists' dictum! But what about the state governments like West Bengal! Once, the main bone of contention of the government of West Bengal was the step-motherly attitude of the central government. In a classical inversion of Marxism they tried to pose the West Bengal government as a transitory revolutionary government. Hence all sorts of step-motherly attitude of the central government was put forward to dupe the people as if they were on the war-path for developing a self-reliant economy smashing feudalism and imperialist exploitation in stages. In real terms they want to be in power and as such have a share in the exploitation! This opinion is further reinforced when the West Bengal state secretary of the CPI(M) praised the new economic policy. The liberalisation policy was upheld because it scrapped the previous licensing policy and made scope for business to profit in West Bengal. But for whom? Is it the big bourgeoisie or the broad masses that were to benefit from the same? No, the big business houses have benefited from the policy. It is their demand! The West Bengal government, by explicitly supporting the liberalisation policy is, in real terms voicing the big business houses' demand. Oh, what excellent peaceful co-existence! Most probably their [CPI(M)'s] guru, even Khrushchev would be ashamed of such naked advocacy for the industrialists. Nowadays the imperialists and their agencies like World Economic Forum, — a conclave of the most evil on this earth, comprising top business, top politicians and top bureaucrats from the major countries of the world — are organising Global Investors' Meet in various states. Likewise, the World Bank is also directly penetrating in the state government's economy under the concerned state government's invitation. Thus it is not a fact that the state government remains a mere spectator. The government of West Bengal has in fact announced a host of incentives to lure big business and imperialist capital.

A West Bengal business promotion delegation led by Somnath

Chatterjee, CPI(M) MP and Chairman, West Bengal Industrial Development Corporation, visited Washington DC on July 4-7, 1999. It included a contingent of business persons to attract foreign direct investment in the state. The delegation had meetings in the United States — at the India Business Council (USIBC), International Finance Corporation, US Small Business Administration and IBM institutes of Electronic government. At the luncheon Meeting organised by the USIBC, Somnath Chatterjee highlighted the changing investment climate of West Bengal and invited US companies to invest in the state. Mr. Chatterjee referred to McKinsey, a US managerial consultancy firm at the service of MNCs, to justify his claims. The said notorious firm reciprocated by stating that *"Its (West Bengal) markets are large and growing, its resources base is rich and the level of rivalry in its markets is low. In addition, it has recently adopted a pro-investor orientation."* Thus ICC and McKinsey seemed to be one regarding the unique selling point of West Bengal; viz. low salary and wage and disciplined trade unions. These are sure to salivate business houses and the imperialists. Of course there is Mr Ashim Dasgupta to offer a range of incentives on behalf of the West Bengal govt. to lure the investors with high profits.

Mr Ashim Dasgupta, West Bengal finance minister, in his budget speech 2001-02, para 3.17 elaborated the West Bengal Incentive Scheme 2000. In that scheme there are provisions for a capital investment subsidy scheme (15% to 25% depending on area and subject to a limit), interest subsidy (50% interest for 5 to 7 years depending on the area and subject to a limit), employment generation subsidy, waiver of electric duty (upto 5 years) and remission of stamp duty and registration fee (50%) are included. In addition, for important industrial activities, as per the requirements of the business houses and multinational corporations, additional subsidies in the form of extra 10% interest subsidy for two years and full exemption of stamp duty and registration fees are declared in the sectors relating to information technology, electronics, agro and food processing, Haldia Petrochemicals downstream projects, biotechnology, jute diversification, agricultural implements, tourism etc. Moreover, any industrial unit with

investment of more than Rs. 25 crore will get the special benefits of a mega-project. It is to encourage private initiative to set up industrial complexes/centres with infrastructural facilities. Remission of 50% stamp duty and registration fees is proposed for first sale in relation to such complexes/centres. In addition the West Bengal finance minister in his 2001-02 speech, para 3.21 expressed the need to set up a 'Land Bank' to alleviate the problem of availability of land for industrial units.

There are also other recipes to attract investment. The government of India adopted other measures as the 'Fund-Bank' dictum. The Govt. of India web page described that Free Trade Zones/Export Processing Zones (EPZs) have emerged as an effective instrument to boost export of manufactured products. The zones set up as enclaves, separated from the Domestic Tariff area by physical barriers, are intended to provide an internationally competitive duty-free environment for export production at low cost. The basic objectives of the EPZs are *"to enhance foreign exchange earnings, develop export-oriented industries and to generate employment opportunities."*

The said web page further stated that the EPZs *"provides a host of basic industrial facilities — developed land, standard design factory buildings, built-up sheds, roads, power supply, drainage, in addition to a whole range of fiscal incentives by way of customs, excise and income tax exemptions"*.

In spite of the much anti-imperialist jargon, the CPI(M)-led West Bengal government set up Falta Special Economic Zone, which has also followed the same directives and proposed a concession of 30%, 25% and 20% in lease rent concession consecutively for the 1st, 2nd and 3rd year of agreement. The West Bengal State Electricity Board assures uninterrupted power supply for industries to be set up in the zone through its 132 kv service station within the zone itself. Power tariff is rupees 1.55 p to 3.72 per unit (basic rate for different categories of consumers) though in addition there is fuel surcharges, there is however a waiver of 20 percent to 40 percent on the basic electricity charges, granted for new industrial units or industries undertaking consumption over 50 hp. Units are also allotted initial captive electricity, with permission from the WBSEB, and obtain fuel with duty deferment

(exemption). There is an independent electronic telephone exchange installed inside the zone integrated into the Kolkata system.

Operation and maintenance of the water supply system has been leased to M/s Corrogannon India and is being supplied from deep tube-wells through a well-knit distribution system within the zone (Rs. 4.00 per kg).

The office of the Development Commissioner serves as the one window office for all the units in the zone including customs, security and the office of the labour commissioner of the government of West Bengal situated within the zonal West Bengal state electricity board.

The Special Economic Zone and the Kulpi Port Project are twin projects being shown as a great success story by the government of West Bengal!

Let us cite another example of its grand success of following imperialist directives. The CPI(M)-led 'left' front govt. even surpasses the record of the Gujarat govt. led by N. Modi! It has settled to transfer ownership rights of 4 thousand 400 acres land of the Kulpi area to the Bengal Port Organisation (a joint conglomeration of Mukunda Keventer and P&D ports) without imposing any condition.⁴ The Mukunda and Keventer jointly own 89% of the project while the West Bengal Industrial Development Corporation retain the remaining 11%. P & O pretends to be 'undecided' as pressure tactics. The government has assured to hand over the entire income from the project to shareholders and it will not retain a single paise. In fact even the fascist Gujrat govt leased out merely the land, only for thirty years,⁵ but the Bengal government has transferred ownership rights.

Most probably there is no such example of transferring ownership rights of such a huge area unconditionally to a private business house. The CPI(M)-led govt may claim this as an unprecedented example.

The Fact Sheet of the Falta Special Economic Zone was published with much fanfare in the Zones web page fepz.com/glance.html:

1. Total approval granted since inception	418
2. Units in operation	90
3. Units under implementation	53

4. Yet to implement	03
5. Cancelled	211
6. Debonded	22
7. Closed/Inactive	39
8. Total valid proposals	185
9. Investment by Govt. of India	Rs. 45.67(cumulative)
10. Revenue Expenditure	Rs. 01.37 crores(FY-2003)
11. Revenue Earned	Rs. 0.75 crores (FY-2003)
12. Investment by	Units - Rs. 254.37 crores
	NRI - Rs. 4.93 crores
	Foreign - Rs. 10.48 crores
13. Employment	Managerial - 121
	Supervisory - 228
	Other - 2404
	Total - 2753

Though the above statistics cuts a sorry figure, the govt. of West Bengal is desperate to have a share of 9% of India's total income from exports. It is for this reason they are putting forward one after another plans for Special Economic Zones. Apart from Falta, another special economic zone has come up in a 5 acre area of Salt Lake. In the month of August, the central government has sanctioned the Special Economic Zone (SEZ), 'Manikanchan', in the said area for the ornament industry, the first of its kind in India.

80% area of the 'Manikanchan' project is sold out. It is going to be lucrative business for the giants in this industry. Business magnets from Italy and other imperialist states seem to have benefited from the project. The markets of Europe, America, Japan will get quality products at throw away prices. The assurances for development of local businessmen and artisans are all a hoax. The basic criteria of SEZs, is that they guarantee full profit for business and any dissent of artisans, regarding wages or salary, will be dealt with an iron hand. The numerous small gold ornament shops that have developed expertise in this art for generations are sure to be ruined by this government offensive of EPZs. A relief indeed for which the government of West Bengal can boast of! Even then chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharya, the most eloquent 'anti-imperialist', does not feel

ashamed to state, "Even if any of them (imperialist capital/MNCs) come and claim that they will not abide by labour laws, it is not possible for us to accept. We are here, and there are pro-labour laws, until now no one has proposed this type of proposals. We are aware that, in our country a concept of Special Economic Zone is emerging. A law is going to be enacted in Delhi. I have heard that such dangers are creeping in that law."⁵ This is one glaring examples of his anti-imperialist phrase mongering!

Myth of Industrialisation

Industrialisation is one of the basic parameters to assess the state of any society. In any phase of industrialisation there evolved questions, such as who are to produce, and for whom to produce, how to produce and what to produce? In a socialist state or new democratic state, answers to all above questions should be — people. Even the technology in any given time depends on the questions which class is ruling the state/country concerned? In any exploitative society technology usage does not keep in consideration the interests of the people whatsoever. How a sham Marxist-ruled state government is dealing with the question of industrialisation is a very important lesson for the world communist movement!

In the previous chapter it has become self-evident from the nature of incentives that the government is introducing for 'industrialisation', completely ignores the very interest of the people and the country. All those incentives are meant for big export-oriented firms, infotech, communications, polymer production, service sectors like hotels, call centres etc. Thus it is clear the policy is as per the basic requirements of global capital. Now, even the iron and steel industry, chemical or once favourite engineering industry is not in the state government's priority list. Chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharya has toured Italy, foreign countries to attract capital. The West Bengal government industry minister Nirupam Sen toured England to have discussions with the DIFB regarding industrialisation.⁶ The funding agency is directly run by a cabinet ranked minister of England. It sanctions loans and gives suggestions to recipient countries. It is very difficult to believe

that an agency of British parliament, an institution serving the interest of British imperialist capital, will set aside its interest/share of loot. It likes to make us believe that a tiger has changed its food-habit and has turned vegetarian! Actually the CPI(M) wants to make us believe that they are against agencies like the DIFB, Fund-Bank etc will be unfolded in the coming chapters. In regard to domestic capital also, the left front government, is serving comprador big capital. The Chief Minister Mr. Buddhadeb Bhattacharya is touring Mumbai and other centres to attract investment. He seemed to be at ease at the meetings with the business houses and is assuring a 'trouble-free' environment for investment. All these initiatives have not gone in vain. In the last year West Bengal ranked second in domestic investment, next to Gujarat (investment in Bengal: Rs. 1422 crores; investment in Gujarat: Rs. 1938 crores).⁷ In terms of capital inflow Bengal ranked 10th (Rs 714 crores)⁸ in the last financial year while in attracting foreign direct investment it stands 9th (Bengal FDI: Rs 132 crores, while Maharashtra FDI: Rs. 4865 crores which stands 1st in the arena).⁹

The government, though earnestly abiding by the dictums of the Fund-Bank and other imperialist agencies, the response is not very encouraging for West Bengal. Among other reasons one of the main hindrances is lack of adequate infrastructure. Now, the Bengal government is emphasising this issue. The Government is striving for private capital for building up and maintenance of all types of industry-friendly infrastructure. This new policy is known as private-public participation (PPP) or government and private/non-government initiative.¹⁰ Lack of funds (govt. envisaged a sum of Rs. 1600 crores for the project) and expertise actually has 'compelled' the government to go for imperialist capital, a short cut approach. The government seems to be aware of the long gestation period for infrastructure. Consequently, as per the PPP policy the government has stated that it will guarantee quick returns to the investors.¹¹ Infrastructure includes not only roads and bridges but also electricity, telecommunication, surface, air & water transport, development of residential and commercial areas, sanitation, health and water supply for industry etc. All these are to facilitate further entry of foreign capital as per

The Asian Development Bank is funding the north-south corridor project. In the said project, North and South Bengal will be connected through well-constructed roadways. It will facilitate better communication, a pre-condition for any imperialist capital to operate. The government of West Bengal is looking after a part of the project besides the central government. Right-left co-ordination does not end here. US business concerns are investing Rs. 600 crores for the 2nd Vivekananda Bridge, a central government project. The central government has rendered so much concession to the said concern, 'Barjesh', and pursued it with great tenacity, that it is has had to invest in the above project. A splendid example of centre-periphery (left) relations! Even then the CPI(M) projects itself to be in polar opposite to the BJP. Is it not a hoax! Is it not to confound the people of West Bengal!¹²

globalisation.

The West Bengal government once boasted for its industrial development. Now as per imperialist requirements all the traditional sectors are neglected. Now the blue-eyed sectors are Haldia Petrochemicals, infotech, food processing, hotel and tourism etc. In the year 1993, Haldia Petrochemicals was established after much fanfare. Now, it is run by joint collaboration of the state government, the Tata group and the Chatterjee Group. The Chatterjee group is headed by Mr. Purnendu Chatterjee of the USA an agent of financier George Soros. The project is in deep problem from its inception. It is in loss. The Chatterjee group has agreed to bail out the project and invest Rs. 268 crores more for the project out of the required Rs. 468 crores. The GAIL has also showed interest to have 10% share and invest 200 crores in the project.¹³ Thus, the project is running not only at the mercy of the NRIs but also of imperialist know-how. BB Lummas of the USA has rendered the technology for its naphtha cracker unit. 'Basil' of Netherlands has given the technology for the linear low density polythene unit. German's Mitsui Lurgi has also taken part in the project in terms of technology since the project's inception in the year 1993.¹⁴ It is a classical example, how Haldia Petrochemicals,

once projected as the pride of Bengal against the centre's step-motherly attitude, is totally dependent on imperialist know-how, NRI and big business capital.

The Government's most important area of attention is the infotech industry. The industry is in the hands of notorious companies, like IBM, Microsoft, Compaq etc. The industry has potentialities of practicing monopoly business in the modalities of its operation, is the opinion expressed by the state government technology and information minister Mr. Manab Mukharjee in the book entitled '*Prasanga—Tathya Prajukti*' (Context — Information Technology) published by the National Book Agency, the frontal publishing organisation of the CPI(M). Moreover, as the industry is knowledge-based it needs an educated mass to operate. In this regard also the government has entered into collaboration with a company like Wipro to set up training centres in different corners of the state. The government has initiated a failed attempt to start e-business and e-commerce. The information kiosks of the government have failed miserably. It is wasting crores of money, not for the welfare of the toiling mass of West Bengal, but to bail out the crises-ridden infotech and computer giants! With computer engineers working in retail outlets of petrol pumps of the USA due to lack of employment, it is clear the state of the infotech industry in the imperialist countries! They need new markets in underdeveloped countries by hook or by crook. The government of West Bengal tries to befool us by its two slogans: (a) employment opportunities (b) welfare of the people. The question of employment opportunities will be dealt with in the subsequent chapter. In regard to the second aspect it should be humbly noted that in West Bengal, like in India, a major portion of the population live a hand to mouth existence. Peasants are forced to commit suicide due to debt. There is no spread of basic knowledge among the people. In a nutshell, the people are in the grip of a semi-feudal social set-up. Here the use of e-commerce for the people is nothing but a big hoax.

From the above it is clear that the government's keen interest to attract these monopoly computer giants is out of its desperation to bail out the crises-ridden infotech industry of the imperialist countries.

In the World market, out of 600 crores people, 280 crores have a daily income less than 2 dollars and out of every five men one has a daily income less than one dollar. These people will never buy a computer despite price cuts. Then where will West Bengal be with these new policies of its state government!¹⁵

Cognizant Technology Solutions of the USA started business in Bengal from 1997. It is because of this company Bengal has found its place in the infotech map of India. Haldia and Siliguri infotech parks are in the offing. The nexus between the US, the state and the monopoly houses will be further evident in the case of the US insurance company AIG. Vice-chairman of the said concern Frank Wisner, ex-consulate/diplomat of the USA in India, is going to start a computerised data centre at the Salt Lake Infosys Bhawan in Kolkata. It can be noted that it is the first multinational corporation that has responded to the personal invitation of Mr. Buddhadeb Bhattacharya. He has assured the company to do away with all hindrances in the way of setting up of the AIG industry here. Frank Wisner reciprocated by stating "... *some Indian organisations are competing keenly to make some of the jobs of the AIG be done here in India. I will look into the fact that Kolkata should have its share.*"¹⁶ Though, till now, there is inadequate infrastructure, and the technology park is still to yield results, the government allotted Rs. 20 crores for setting up of this technology park in the state budget of 2001-02.

It is a notable example how the staunch anti-imperialist Buddhadeb Bhattacharya, chief minister of the 'left' front government of West Bengal champions the interest of the US government and multinationals to exploit the market. Though once the field of jam, pickles etc. were dominated by the small scale sector, there also the entry of multinationals seems to be dominant. The food processing industry is given special importance by the state government only to lure foreign investors. It is this compulsion of appeasing the multinationals that prevent the CPI(M) from taking any drastic step against companies like Coca-Cola, Pepsi etc. Our people are left to die of poison at the cost of the multinationals.

In the leather processing sector West Bengal dominates with 538 units, 92% of which are in the small scale sector. The state government has envisaged to double the amount of exports in the world market by 2006.¹⁷ Consequently, the state chief minister accompanied by the Chairman of the Council of Leather Exports toured Italy and invited the famous multinational corporation Guchhi to invest here and take the facility of cheap labour and a ready infrastructure. Still, the multinationals are scared. Hence they conducted their own survey. An inquiry was conducted at the behest of a voluntary organisation 'Pisie', in which participated a group of delegations of the Italian consulate, Italian Trade Commission, Italian Association of Machinery and Accessories (for shoes, leather goods and technology). They concluded that the bulk of the tanneries are having problems in quality and quantity production, the main constraints being their location and infrastructural backwardness.¹⁸ Hence, the government of Bengal, with great concern, is developing the Bantala Leather Complex in collaboration with M L Dalmiya and company. The high level committee which toured Italy of course is yielding results. MOUs were signed with Greenwood Leather Accessories (P) Ltd (India), Sepel SRL (Italy), Council of Leather Exports of India and the National Association of Italian Manufacturers of Footwear, Leather Goods and Training Machinery.

Thus, the small scale sectors, once the backbone of Bengal is being leased out to the multinational sharks as throw-away prices to be most loyal to the policies of globalisation!

Disinvestment: Khetoric & Facts

Globalisation has not spared the industries run by the West Bengal government. 'Left' MPs on the one hand oppose privatisation of 'Balco' of Chattisgarh, and on the other hand carries on the project of privatisation in West Bengal, with every cunning and utmost deceit.

A special discussion took place in the Lok Sabha on August 1, 2003 on dis-investment of the public sector undertakings. Among the opposition MPs who criticised the NDA's disinvestment policies, Somnath Chatterjee, veteran member of CPI(M), voiced the most

scathing criticism.

Mr. Chatterjee's attack was: the NDA's disinvestment policy demonstrates that for the central government, making money through sale of the PSUs is more important than protecting the interest of workers. He stated that many of the sick public sector units in West Bengal had originally belonged to the private sector; these had been taken over by the government because of their sickness. He called for a complete reversal of the Centre's disinvestment policy.

Mr. Chatterjee's 'opposition' to the disinvestment policy came in sharp contrast to the West Bengal government's act. On July 12, 2003 the CPI(M)-led government in West Bengal unveiled its own disinvestment policy. Nirupam Sen, the West Bengal commerce and industries minister announced a new thrust towards industrial restructuring in the state whereby non-viable units would be closed down and joint ventures with private sector partners (74 percent shares to be sold) would be pursued. With this broad policy outline in the backdrop, the minister announced the closure of two units — the Indian Paper Pulp Company and the Sundarban Sugarbeet Company. Moreover the state govt has been granted loans from the imperialist funding agency DFID to the tune of Rs. 400 crores for 16 state government enterprises.¹⁹ It will save Rs. 65 crores in the cash-starved fund of West Bengal, as stated by the commerce minister. There are 89 more sick industries in West Bengal. The 'Left' government is planning to satisfy their imperialist masters and seek funds for more projects of disinvestment.²⁰

Thus in the entire aspect of the government's drive for industrialisation there is no space for the people or the toiling mass. The products which are given due importance by the government have little resemblance with the people at large. Infotech, processed food, hotel, tourism etc. are not the people's/society's thrust of necessity.

Hence it is nothing surprising that the Indian Chamber of Commerce in their last survey report of 2003 gleefully hailed the role of the West Bengal government. Over 79 percent of the industrialists acknowledge the government's 'conductive' attitude to business and 73 percent admit

that initiatives over the past three years have brought a change in the investment climate.²¹ A recognition for a pro-toiling peoples' government indeed! The Chief Minister also boasts fully to acknowledge the fact that some results have been achieved by the government. He also put forward the logic of private/imperialist investment in explicit terms, *"our government is in favour of investment. We want investment here. We have to convey this to the industrialists of our country and also foreign countries in the backdrop of recession. Recession has gripped the entire world. Despite this if Mitsubishi or IBM comes, let them come."*²² The plea that the government of West Bengal usually puts forward for nakedly prostrating before the enemies of the people, is for the sake of employment opportunities. But, what's their real intention can be clear from the humbug statement of Mr. Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee. He stated *"what we are stating is for mutual interest. We want to fulfill both interests. Their interest is profit (of course through inhuman exploitation) and our interest in employment."*²³ Let us venture the validity of these crocodile's tears.

Anti-Labour Policies

Imperialist and big business capital wants to extract profits, super-profits. Hence, they carry on production through labour-saving technology. The main theme today has become jobless growth. In this aspect how far is it possible that their capital investment will be translated into sizeable employment opportunities? Actually Buddhadeb pretends to be in the era of the first phase of capitalism when there was scope for huge employment opportunities. That was the progressive era of capitalism. But now in the era of imperialism it is not possible. Let's hear from the horse's mouth *"that increasing international competition and free-wheeling capital will not only cut jobs, but will effectively wipe whole nations and regions off the economic map. It understands that scenario of workers' fortunes worldwide. Converging is less likely than growing divergence. In brief, globalisation offers opportunities, but also exacerbates risks."* (World Bank, 1995, p.124) Still then, Buddha a 'simpleton', a happy-go-

lucky man is inviting foreign and domestic big business houses luring them with incentives. We will now trace the facts as to how far the employment scenario of West Bengal will be brightened by these steps?

Before discussing the same, let us explain the prospective of the West Bengal labour scenario. In 1991 employment in the manufacturing sector was 7.75 lakhs, a negative growth rate of 25.81%. The service sector, hotel etc. shows a positive trend. In 1991 the employment in this sector was 0.32 lakhs while in 2001 the employment in the said sector was 0.37 lakhs, a positive growth rate of 15.62%.²⁴

This signifies a grave situation for Bengal. The government of West Bengal, at this juncture, is implementing the policies of liberalisation to tide over the above stated unemployment problem. But as per the liberalisation policies, labourers are the most hit. Flexibility of labour is a pre-requisite condition for imperialist capital vis-a-vis the ongoing crisis management measures. The dominant theme of imperialist capital is that labour flexibility leads to economic growth, which in turn creates new jobs. According to the OECD (Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development) the flexibility of labour takes five main forms: ²⁵

- (1) External numerical flexibility: number of employees adjusted in accordance with the employer's needs.
- (2) Externalisation: Part of the firm's work is put out through sub-contracting.
- (3) Internal numerical flexibility: working hours and their 'delivery' is adjusted according to the employer's need.
- (4) Functional flexibility: Worker's jobs modified according to employer's needs.
- (5) Wages flexibility: Labourer's reward according to productivity and market condition.

The flexibility of labour implies a smaller workforce, fewer rules in the workplace, weaker unions etc.

Thus flexibility of wages is upheld by the imperialist's conclave as the panacea of all capitalism's problems, in particular of employment opportunities. If the masters show the way, how can its pet lag behind?

The CPI(M) has opened the floodgate to domestic and foreign investors. But what is its result? The private sector, though it registered a growth rate of 8.02% during the year 1999-2001, the growth of employment opportunities shows a negative growth rate of 12.95%.²⁶ The government is touring throughout the globe. It has signed a number of MOUs, of which a percentage is really invested. But the labour-saving industries like infotech or food-tech etc., ie. the much hyped industries, shows a dismal figure in terms of employment scope. The table below testifies this fact.

Year	Capital invested in industries (in lakhs)	Employment numbers	Employment per lakh invested
1980-81	4,17,741	9,50,026	2.28
1985-86	63,78,331	8,06,434	1.26
1990-91	12,51,767	7,40,980	0.59
1991-96	30,87,549	8,25,154	0.27
1998-99	17,21,524	6,85,108	0.16

Source: Labour in West Bengal, Department of Labour and Paschimanga: Anya Chokhe. Compiled in *Prasanga Sramik* booklet published by Nagarik Mancha.

Moreover, in 2001, 412 new factories were established employing 40 new labourers per factory. In the same year 325 companies were shut down retrenching 456 workers per factory²⁷. From all aspects, the tall claims of the government of West Bengal are dashed to the ground. Still Buddhadeb Bhattacharya and his party are chanting the slogan of privatisation! Not only this, the CPI(M) is also there to safeguard the interests of private and imperialist capital. It is acting like a reliable watch-dog to look after the peaceful profit extraction of the business houses. Consequently they are appeasing the business houses, and are assuring them of guaranteed return!

The Left front government's acts remind us of the faithful, Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) of multinational corporations. The Bengal chief minister, on repeated occasions is accusing the militant trade union movement as the sole cause to prevent industries from operating. This, according to him, subsequently leads to loss of man days, ie. Employment! But the table below shows a different picture. It shows

man days lost due to lockouts far outweigh the loss due to strikes.

Year	Lockout		Strike		Total Lockouts & Strikes	
	number	mandays lost %	number	mandays lost %	nos	mandays lost (lakh)
1995	136	80.8	33	19.2	169	65.0
1996	144	85.66	17	13.76	161	121.4
1999	161	92.49	29	7.51	190	82.6
1998	213	98.10	25	1.90	238	115.7
1999	264	82.00	34	18.00	298	216.7
2000	286	83.78	27	16.22	313	191.7
2001	305	93.53	20	6.47	325	211.7

Source: *Labour in West Bengal - 2001*

Even then, who cares? On December 13, 2003, in the presence of as many as 80 top industrialists of India, the West Bengal chief minister categorically said that his government shall not hesitate to resort to lathis if the workers movement crosses the limits.²⁸ He also begged apology for the CPI(M)'s past mistakes, which translates the 26 years' rule for them in West Bengal! Buddhadeb exclaimed that, "*We gheroed in 67-69, that was a mistake. Gherao is not the path of the workers movement, ... gherao cannot be the path of the workers' movement. Fighting-clashes cannot be the path.*"²⁹

The industrial houses may render mercy to the CPI(M) and Co., but will the martyrs forgive them? The martyr workers of Hindmotors or other factories who laid down their lives; who had sacrificed their yesterdays for these nymphs' cozy life and utter surrender!

The Chief Minister further added that, "*Democratic trade union movements, demonstrations, rallies, strikes are legal rights. Who can take away these rights? Nobody can take away the rights.*"³⁰ Which is your real face? What you said at the business conclave, or what you explained at your party meet? Yes, Mr. Bhattacharya, nobody can take away the rights earned through the movements. The red banner that your party hails is stained with the blood of so many martyrs. Hence please dare not take away the rights of the trade union

movement on one pretext or other. Refrain from appeasing the court by stating that your government will enact laws to curb rallies or processions. Justice Amitava Lala's recent order of banning rallies or processions is an excuse for the CPI(M) to come down with more draconian measures.

The West Bengal government is planning to enact a law in the coming winter session, namely the Special Economic Zone Bill 2003. In the bill it is proposed to ban any type of militant strike, demonstration or sudden demonstration. The government has also planned to increase the number of special economic zones or export processing zones in different corners of Bengal (Haldia, North Bengal etc). Now, in the changed situation, the CPI(M) is creatively applying Marxism so that very soon Bengal becomes a peaceful oasis to the investors. They have perfected the art of betrayal. Let us cite a representative example!

On July 28, 2003 employees of Wimco went on strike after the management dismissed eight workers, and suspended and chargesheeted 16 others on disciplinary grounds. The deadlock failed to be solved even after three tripartite meetings held at the Labour Commissioner's office at the New Secretariat. At last the chief minister intervened. In a meeting held by the special secretary to the chief minister, S.A. Ahmed, at the Writers' Building the leaders of the CITU and INTUC agreed to call off the strike. The suspension of 16 employees were called off, but the sacked workers were not taken back. This type of classic surrender of the workers cause in West Bengal, courtesy the CPI(M), is very much evident. (Source: 'Sramik Andolon', the monthly organ of CITU, September 2003) The left front government led by the CPI(M) is now not concerned about the retrenched workers, but about pursuing them for a VRS scheme. The Bengal chief minister expressed that, "*if factories are to shut down then we have to decide about our future course of action on the basis of discussions with the workers. We cannot tell them that you all get lost. Or tell them about VRS etc. We have to take the social responsibility to save them.*"³¹ But, on the contrary the CPI(M) forced the workers to take VRS. Recently, the Mulajore workers of CESC, owned by the Goenkas were forced to take VRS,

even distorting the CPI(M) consent and the supreme court's verdict.³² (The matter will be dealt in detail in the POWER chapter). Not only this, the government is seeking a fund from the imperialist funding agency, DFID, to implement VRS in the sick industries. The DFID has sanctioned, until 4th September 2003, Rs. 18 crores with a right to supervision of two government institutions to facilitate VRS. More conditional funds are to trickle down in future. Mr. Bhattacharya what about your slogan of sovereignty?

The CPI(M)-led government, in a recent bid for disinvestment of the public sector units, have expressed that it is "*open to manpower restructuring and waiver of outstanding liabilities to ensure sustainable viability of these units.*"¹² Dear reader, can you hear the foot-steps of OECD which expressed what it means by labour flexibility, the pre-requisite for globalisation!

The Imperialism-CPI(M) nexus is very much evident. Still Mr. Bhattacharya will express that they are not surrendering! Then what is it? It's not fun but a crude joke to the teeming multitudes. The CPI(M) is not callous to the social security measures of the workers. It consciously goes against the issue. The Central labour minister recently announced to freeze the PF (Provident Fund) and other social security measures in the special economic zone areas. The days are not far off when the Bengal government, like other states, will follow the centre with regard to the above said measures. But at the same time will dupe the people by telling the story of '*compulsion*'. The surrender before the imperialists and big business is sure not to be limited in those special economic zones alone, because there is no Chinese wall in between other areas and the special economic zones of Bengal!

In 1999-2000 though there were 267.32 lakhs employee eligible for PF only 23.35 lakhs are registered as EPF members.³³ The CPM-backed bureaucracy, meant to look into the affair, is busy taking bribes from the business houses.

Not only this, the business houses evade PF dues, thereby depriving the workers of their legitimate demands. In 2000-01 and 2001-02, Rs. 309.2 crores and Rs. 296.8 crores are the dues owed by the business houses. Till 2002, 164.06 crores is due from the jute-mill owners in the

PF account.³⁴ Though there are provisions of stringent legal measures against the defaulter business houses with regard to PF, they are moving freely in the 'oasis' of West Bengal guarded by the CPI(M) and its partners. With the government defaulting for the same reason, how can it penalise others? In the Bengal government owned jute-mills, the PF due is to the tune of Rs.22.89 crores in the year 2002.³⁵

ESI is an insurance guaranteed medical benefit for the workers. The business houses are to deposit the amount. But only in 2002, the ESI amount due was Rs.155.04 crores.³⁶ Till now, only in 8 districts out of 17 districts; workers are covered under the ESI scheme.³⁷ Even the workers do not receive compensation for professional diseases. In West Bengal 620 factories, notified as 'red', are dangerous from the perspective of workers' health. There, thousand of workers are involved. But, in 1999 and 2000, compensation was received by 9 and 17 workers respectively. In 2001 there were no workers who received compensation.³⁸ Such is the seriousness of the 'pro-people government' committed to the workers' health!

The left front as per their election promise of 1977, promised unemployment dole to the registered unemployed youths. The left front government started collecting professional tax from service-holders to collect funds for this purpose. But, the monthly unemployment dole of Rs. 100 is now stopped. A new scheme for a one-time unemployment dole has been introduced. Consequently in this scheme the government, which collects Rs. 288 crore from professional tax, gives/distributes Rs. 14 crore (approx) to the registered unemployed youth.³⁰ The benevolent scheme started on the ground that employed persons will contribute a meager amount of their income to heal the pain of the unprivileged unemployed youth, to an extent. But the amount of money collected has become a source

Moreover the West Bengal government from 2nd April, 1998 started a 'scheme for financial assistance to the workers in locked out industrial units'. In that scheme, the workers of the closed units get Rs. 500/- per month as a dole. Now, the government has stopped the said scheme due to "scarcity of funds".

of income to the CPI(M). It is like a Bengali story written by Parashuram, a famous writer, where in a temple everywhere there is money — sometimes in the form of donation, sometimes in the form begging. Whatever be the form, the temple, authority cuts the devotees pockets on any excuse.

The 2nd labour commission of 2002 of the central government seems to drag society towards a classic fascist set up, where everything is at the whims of the imperialists and the big business houses. The CPI(M) is an important ally in this regard. They disagree with the central government's proposal only to agree on the next day! This holds true with regard to the 2nd labour commission report as well.

In the inter-state council meeting held in Srinagar in August 2003 there was a discussion regarding contractual employment.⁴⁰ Andhra Pradesh chief minister, Chandrababu Naidu, pointed to the 'success' of the scheme which he has introduced in the Hyderabad Municipal Corporation. Naidu said, government employees would work only if their jobs were made contractual. The West Bengal chief minister said that the wage bills of government employees in most states were increasing so much that they had become unmanageable, though Bhattacharya cleverly did not say anything on the issue raised by Chandrababu Naidu.

On the contrary the comments of Mr. Bhattachareya has resemblance with the 2nd labour commission's observation: over-manned organization are also a cause of poor work-culture. "*When the number of hands recruited exceeds the optimum requirement for efficiency, it lowers the normal level of work efficiency and the work hours per employee. Workers then have to fritter along. One has only to visit a government office to see this situation.*" (para 5.19 of 2nd labour commission — compiled in 'Marxist', the theoretical quarterly of the CPI(M), volume XVIII: 3-4, July-December, 2002) The 'left' chief minister is on the same side of the reactionary arguments of the NDA government. Actually this argument which ultimately concludes in downsizing, and the contractual system devoid of any social securities. Consequently it can be safely concluded that sooner or later, today or tomorrow, Bengal led by the left front will follow the labour reforms framed by the centre. Of course, in the same inter-

state council meeting Mr. Bhattacharya stated for not downsizing but rationalisation, the other name for anti-labour 'rationalised' steps.

Let us see one example of rationalisation of the IISCO glass factory at Kulti. The factory was declared shut down in April 2003. 380 temporary and 2500 permanent staff were retrenched. The former received no facility and the later were forced to opt for VRS (voluntary retirement scheme). The company is shut down in a planned way.

The factory, was shown to have losses while other private factories like Electro-steel of Khardah and Kalinga Pipe have standard profit in the business. Actually backward technology and corrupt management made this unit sick in a planned way.

The CPI(M) on the one hand opposes the 2nd Labour Commission and on the other implements the provisions of the 2nd Labour Commission recommendation of the NDA government.

In line with the 2nd labour commission in 2002 there was a tripartite agreement in the jute industry. There, wage is related to productivity to the extent of 67%-33%. The 'vouchers', 'vagawallas' — contract labourers are settled to receive Rs. 100 per day and thereby the system is legalised. Moreover in the jute factories run by Arun Bajoria or Wardha, wage is related to productivity by 100%.

The State government has planned to go for a joint venture in the coal sector. A state government organisation, the Mineral Development and Trading Corporation (MDTC) has explored good quality coal. The government, in order to have business, is going for joint ventures with private houses. It is implementing contract production defying and negating the workers voice of protest. The CPI(M), in order to carry on the contractual system has even removed its local CITU leadership from its post for his opposition to the said system.

The 'left' government, trailing behind the business houses by the way it is carrying on the informalisation of industry, one of the basic objectives of globalisation, is very thought-provoking. In 1992 the West Bengal government took on lease from the central government two mines as captive mines for the West Bengal State Electricity Board and the West Bengal Power Development Corporation. These undertakings formed a joint venture company with Emta, a private

sector enterprise. The entire management is controlled by the private sector. About four thousand workers toil in the mines and load coal on to railway wagons which carry it to power companies. But the company has not a single worker on its roll. A number of contractors supply workers who are made to work much more than usual hours in inhuman condition, have no security of jobs, are given the lowest possible wage for the day they are engaged, and are deprived of all usual benefits.⁴¹ The legal machinery of the government even refuses the union rights as per law. The government has also many other feathers in its cap. It passed a law by which workers are entitled to elect their own union by secret ballot. In this case also the CPI(M) and Congress combined at the behest of the state government, to oppose union elections for many years at the Hindustan Lever, in Kolkata.

Thus in each and every aspect, the government of West Bengal is in the service of the comprador-bureaucratic and imperialist capital. Labour/working class — the vanguards are forced to be backbenchers, to be under a defeatist mentality, to be betrayed and deprived of their economic and democratic rights for the long 26 years. It is an important key to the 'left's success to become right reactionary.

Privatisation of Education

Those are the bygone days when the university campuses of West Bengal were decorated with slogans against commercialisation of education. The youth comrades of the SFI/DYFI, youth organisations of the CPI(M) were martyred in Kerala while opposing commercialisation of education. Whereas in West Bengal they are implementing commercialisation of education, as a part of the liberalisation policies. But unlike others, the CPI(M) has a double face. Its hypocrisy knows no bounds.

Big business and the imperialists are in need of such an education that serves their unhindered production, for maximisation of profits. It serves them in many ways. It creates a social and cultural lease for the imperialists' penetration. It supplies trained labour as per their necessity. Moreover, it opens a new front for lucrative business.

With globalisation, new industries are emerging. Consumerism is engulfing entire society. Computers are making their way into the

suburban and even rural trading centres. Cellular services like cell phones have facilitated fast track communication even in some remote rural areas. All these, demand that the rural illiterate population should be literate to an extent. A survey shows that a literate farmer can increase the sale of fertilisers, seeds or any other items of multinational corporations by 25%. Consequently, imperialist capital does not lag behind to take up the challenge.

This position was marked by the Ashok Mitra education commission report of 1992. It stated that there is a *"deficiency of a minimum infrastructure — there are 30% schools with one room, deficiency of teachers are eminent. More than 30% of schools are run by one or two teachers. There is a lack of commitment of the teachers. They are engaged in many economical activities besides education, etc..."* The CAG report of 1998-99 also pictured a dismal scenario. It stated that since 1991-92 there have been no grants for primary school education. If such is the situation, then without going into details it can be concluded that this is not a conducive atmosphere for imperialist capital to operate. Consequently, the Overseas Development Corporation of the British government is engaged in the 'spread' of primary education. The program started primarily with 5 districts since 1994. Now the area of operation has increased. The State government's share is 15% of the total expenditure. There are other projects meant for primary education run by the UNICEF. Moreover, the West Bengal government has plans to solve the problem in its own way.

The West Bengal commerce and industry minister has appealed to the NRIs and business houses to build up their schools, thereby justifying private educational institutions right from the primary level. Now, in Kolkata and the suburbs numerous kindergarten and Montessori schools are coming up. These spurious institutes are only hankering after money. They charge huge tuition fees. The government of West Bengal, though in its Commission in 1992 opined against these institutions, it takes no step to control their activities. On the other hand Buddhadeb Bhattacharya is busy training English teachers through the British Council. Moreover, a UK govt organisation, has made clear its real intention with regards to its concern for education. It stated that, *"profit-making is the driving force of progress."* This

profit-making attitude delivers no secured job for the teachers, non-teaching staffs etc.

The government, in line with this, is introducing primary teachers' recruitment on contract basis for Rs. 1000/per month with no PF or other facilities, under a central govt scheme named '*Sarba Shiksha Abhiyan*.' Thereby the government is legalising the inhuman exploitation of the teachers/non-teaching staffs. It also justifies the hire and fire policy. The school education minister, when asked about this contract system proudly exclaimed that there are 26 lakh graduate unemployed youths and as such there will be no dearth of teachers. Of course, he promised to appeal to the central govt to extend the tenure of contract teachers.⁴² Oh, what a pity for the teachers and commitment towards education!

The West Bengal government is utilising the noble idea that exists in our society regarding decentralisation, for namesake. Actually, nowadays the World Bank and its allied agencies are using this term to perpetuate their exploitation. In the Bengal case, an idea is cropping up that decentralised education through panchayats is beneficial for the people. But the govt of West Bengal has not spared this example to also champion the cause of globalisation. It is because the panchayat-run schools are sure to face a fund crunch problem. Thus the schools are left prey to fund-sanction/donations from the rural elite or will be forced to increase fees under various excuses.

Thus, the entire programme of primary education, funded and guided by imperialist agencies, seems to enhance the spread of education to an extent. But who will be educated? Despite tall claims, sons and daughters of the privileged families will be educated and others will remain waiting.

Higher education is the sector which has a huge potentiality for profit. Consequently an idea is slowly championed by both the central government and the West Bengal government, that higher education is a waste for society. This idea is paving the path for privatisation, thereby opening a vast area of profit for big business and imperialist capital. The idea becomes further clear if one goes through the report published by the research division of the World Bank's education and training department. The report stated that *"unless educational*

development becomes less dependent on public funds, developing countries well not be able to tap fully the profitability of further educational development". The report even advised to change the syllabus as per the needs of industries. In order to hide its intention, it argued against subsidised education that "most of the very few who benefit from heavily subsidised higher education comes from relatively wealthy homes."

In this context the CPI(M) is operating from two fronts. Through one action it is working in favour of commercialisation of education, fee hike etc. Through the other, the SFI, its student wing is fabricating a story/logic in favour of fee hike, as a compulsion!⁴³

In West Bengal colleges and universities fee hikes are being carried out. Sometimes the monthly fees, admission fees, examination fees are increased more than 100%. Various colleges under Calcutta University are run by part-time lecturers with minimum salaries per class basis and devoid of any job security. But the fees are very high. In Paskura college, a suburban college, the annual fees for the microbiology course is Rs. 31,000 per month.⁴⁴

Privatisation of education is so rampant that the state government has even started an information technology college by one business house, without any formal recognition from the All India Council of Technical Education. The annual fees for the said college in the first year was Rs. 40,000. Now, in private colleges the government has decided the fees to be Rs. 31,200 per year. But what about their opposition to the fees hike? Previously, in the 10.10.'85 issue of '*Ganashakti*', the daily newspaper published by the CPI(M) in West Bengal, it was reported that the teacher's organisation of the CPI(M), the ABTA, has vehemently criticised the policy of education of Rajiv Gandhi for its business and profit-making orientation. It seems that in real terms the CPI(M) has used that opposition to hoodwink the people! In Himachal Pradesh the SFI agitates against fee hike to tap student support, in West Bengal the same SFI not only supports fee-hike but physically attacks any students who try and oppose it. During the general election of 1996, the CPI(M) published a book titled '*Merciless Marketisation : Education Under Rao Raj*'. Please read in between the lines — CPI(M) is against '*merciless marketisation*' of education,

not against marketisation!

The desperateness of the West Bengal government in pleasing the business houses is further evident in the recent row over the medical college entrance. An eye-wash examination was conducted for the doctors who can pay. It could rake in about Rs. 7 crore into the West Bengal government's coffers.⁴⁶ A dental college has already started, owned by one J Singh, on B T Road, Kolkata. It obtained a no objection certificate from the state government. It has fixed the 1st year annual course fees at Rs. 2,90,000/-; Rs. 50,000/- as admission fees and Rs. 40,000/- as refundable caution deposit.⁴⁷ Still can we say that the West Bengal government is against capitation fees and it is different from states like Tamilnadu or Karnataka where education is on sale like any other commodity?

Previously the CPI(M) opposed the deemed university, the autonomous college or the model schools because they felt these were to promote privatisation, elitism, dual citizenship in education.⁴⁸ But now they have changed their stand. The Presidency and the St. Xavier's College of Kolkata are first to apply for autonomy. It simply implies that the colleges concerned, have to look after everything on their own, starting from syllabus to finance. In line with this the Shibpur Engineering College has been turned into a deemed university by the West Bengal Government. A more astonishing fact is that the Bengal Government has withdrawn its objections regarding model schools, a brain child of the IMF-World Bank via Rajiv Gandhi.

It has also started a distance education programme under the open schemes, like the Netaji Subhas University, Vidyasagar University etc. These have minimum costs with maximum profit and no responsibilities.

Vocationalisation is always championed by multinational corporations for supply of trained cheap labour. Buddhadeb Bhattacharya started to 'impart a ray of light' for 4 to 5 lakh students appearing for the secondary and higher secondary exams. A maximum of students, according to Mr. Bhattacharya, will be in 2nd or 3rd division. For them vocational training will be conducted in schools. A committee headed by Dr. Sparshamani Chatterjee has also been formed. Oh, what a well wisher! In real terms, once the CPI(M) objected to

vocationalisation of education, for its imperialist inclination. Now, they have come out in their true colours!

Thus, from each and every aspect education is on sale abiding by the whims and dictums of the IMF-World Bank and by business houses. Now, Birla is setting the trend of computerised education at the school level. The CPI(M) on its own has taken major steps to serve the purpose of globalisation.

Health: Following TNC Dictates

In recent months in West Bengal there is a hue and cry over the health system of West Bengal. Everyday news of maltreatment, death due to wrong diagnosis, ill maintained government hospitals are on the front pages of newspapers. The West Bengal Government led by the CPI(M) pretends that all is normal with inhuman coolness. Neither the big business-backed newspapers, the opposition and ruling parties seem to be serious to bring out that the core cause for poor medical facilities is nor the fall out of 'he globalisation-IMF World Bank policies. Still all these parliamentary parties are pretending to be blind to what those imperialist-aided agencies are prescribing for West Bengal!

Health has become one of the important sectors necessary for a smooth operation of imperialist capital. However health care is one of the biggest industries in the world, worth \$2.8 trillion (Rs. 1175,00,000 crores). In India the total business is worth Rs. 73,000 crores with a growth rate of Rs. 8000 crores a year (13%). The total money circulating in this sector is more than the total turnover of the 12 top companies including Hindustan Lever, ITC & Reliance.⁴⁹ Obviously, it is evident that in the health sector the imperialist sharks will endeavour for maximisation of for profits. After Davos, the World Bank is directly pursuing the states, negotiating with them, to carry on its agenda.

The government of West Bengal has borrowed Rs. 701 crores from the World Bank to revamp the State's health system. The World Bank has chosen West Bengal as one of the three states to carry on the pilot project; along with Punjab and Karnataka.

Recently the Germans, World Bank, DFIF of Great Britain, have proposed to revamp the West Bengal health system according to their terms. The Central health ministry is working overtime to facilitate

the smooth handover of the West Bengal health scenario. Sushma Swaraj has rightly stated there is no policy regarding the health question. A politics of apolitics is actually a surrender to imperialists' dictates.

The State government has selected 251 block primary health centres and sent the list to the German government. Now it is settled that GTZKFW, an organisation under the German government will provide 170 crores for the development of the aforesaid health centres. In other centres the World Bank and DFID of Britain will extend necessary aid. In the mean time the World Bank has granted Rs. 750 crores for the West Bengal health sector. Now, under the background of a collapsing health system, it is decided that the state and central government will form a joint action plan. On the last 7th November the central health secretary has stated that the central government would provide Rs. 16 crores as aid to revamp the West Bengal health system.

It is an eye wash, that the government of West Bengal has decided that all primary health centres should have 30 beds. But, considering the sorry state of affairs it is decided that the primary health centres should have a minimum of 10 beds, the government has also decided to set up two medical colleges, where there will be paid seats for the NRIs and high fees for others. These are to be formed only to fill the government's exchequer, thereby paving the way for the privatisation of the entire health system. Now, despite the government's verbal opposition to the World Bank policies, those very same policies are implemented on various excuses.

'Decentralisation' in the administration of the health system is being hijacked in order to implement World Bank dictates.

The government of West Bengal has planned full autonomy for hospitals. It simply implies that the concerned hospitals will have to collect its own funds for its operation i.e. privatisation in all spheres of treatment. Now, polyclinic centres with high fees, various pathological tests are conducted inside the hospital premises by private business houses. Bed fees etc. are so high that sometime the hospitals are at par with nursing homes with regard to fees.

The government of West Bengal also planned that the panchayat presidents look after the local health centres or hospitals. The

panchayats have a very small resource base. But, the above decision is tantamount to the fact that those panchayat-supervised health centres will soon be privatised and at the service of the imperialists.

Now, joint ventures like AMRI, and private hospitals, like Ruby, Appolos etc., are patronised by the West Bengal Government. Nursing homes are coming up in increasing numbers with no government supervision. Contractualisation of medical and non medical staff of government hospitals are started under directives of the government.

Thus the health sector is for sale to serve the imperialist aided policies of globalisation. In the near future, private insurance, like mediclaim, will be part of the privatisation drive of the health sector.

Ruination of Agriculture

It is a very much known fact that Goebels, comrade in arms of Hitler used to lie. He lied to dupe the people and build up faith in the facts that Goebels himself propagated. The CPI(M) brand of the communist party is aware of this and as such has taken lessons from Goebels. They propagate their myth of 'achievements' relentlessly among the masses. In this list of achievements, the agrarian question is a top priority. They are creatively applying Marxism to implement the imperialist agenda in the agricultural scenario.

In recent times the CPI(M) is on the offensive to implement its new agricultural policy. The then central agricultural minister Nitish Kumar stated the objectives behind the implementation of the agricultural policy in explicit terms. He stated that "*this policy is promulgated to fulfill the responsibility of increasing private investment in the agricultural sector in tune with the commitments to the world trade organisation.*" Before going into details of the left front's agricultural policy, let us discuss in brief the perspective of the West Bengal agrarian scenario.

Though the West Bengal left front government carried on Goebelsian propaganda regarding their 'success' in land reform, the statistics put forward tell a different story.

Distribution of vested land :

Congress Government (upto '67 election)	3.76 lakh acres
United front government (9 months + 13 months)	2.50 lakh acres
In '77 and after	4.26 lakh acres
Total	10.52 lakh acres ⁵⁰

It should be noted that 10.52 lakh acres is only 7.5% of the total agricultural land of the state. Above all the left front government's much orchestrated distribution of vested land is only 4.26 lakh acres, much less than the previously distributed 6.26 lakh acres of land. This 'success' also can be attributed to the social pressure of the turbulent last half of the 60s and 70s, which made the ruling classes panic. Tremours ran down the spine of the ruling classes when the Communist Party of India (Marxist Leninist) led by comrade Charu Mazumder gave the clarion call of seizure of power with armed agrarian revolution as its axis. The party also raised the call to confiscate land of the landlords without compensation and go ahead for implementing land to the tillers. It had a deep imprint on the toiling mass. The state and its agents like the CPI(M) wanted to appease the common people with a drama of distribution of vested land, besides their much hyped unique programme of 'Operation Barga'.

Operation Barga is the programme to 'ensure the right of the share croppers'. In this regard, necessary amendments were made by the most reactionary Congress government led by the infamous Siddhartha Shankar Roy. The Left Front, after assuming power, implemented the amended act. The change that the front government made was that, to eject a share cropper the landowner would have to substantiate his claim, and not the share cropper (bargadar). Till now 14.95 lakhs of share croppers have been recorded and usufructory right was conferred to them on 11.06 lakh of the land, which is 7.9% of total agricultural land. (*Economic Survey 2001-02*) Thereby the Front government has rendered a new lease of life to the feudalistic sharecropping system.

Moreover, through CPI(M)-style land reform the distribution of vest lands to landless and poor peasants and conferring usufructory right to share croppers constitute only 15.4% (vestland distributed

7.5%+operation barga 7.9%) of total agricultural land.⁵¹ In economical terms it is true that communists do not assess their gains or losses through economical parameters. On the contrary the communists are concerned about the development of political consciousness against the status-quo. Let us go through the CPI(M)s' understanding regarding this question!

The West Bengal government's much advertised and 'respected' programme of vested land distribution accounts for 25.44 lakh of landless and poor peasants. The amount of land distributed is 0.41 acres per head. (*Economic survey 2001-02*) This small plot of land is economically non-viable and of inferior quality in general. Still, the motive can be best understood through a government report. The report stated that *"It is perfectly understandable that if we want to maintain the status-quo we should try to involve as many people as possible in it so that at least a majority of the population acquire a stake in the status-quo or the system in question. Keeping this view, it is perfectly reasonable to distribute small bits of land however uneconomic to land hungry peasants and/or agricultural labourers so that they never look for any radical alternative to the present property system and be eager to acquire some property. However to call it socialism is a sad travesty of truth."* [West Bengal Board of Revenue, statistics cell, *Land Reforms in West Bengal: Statistical Report VII* (Calcutta : 82)]

This ideology of subversion of revolutionary politics can also be noticed in the case of operation Barga. In this regard the left Front government seemed to be less progressive than the colonial Floud Commission which, in 1940, opined for conferring ownership right to peasants instead of usufructory rights. On the contrary the CPI(M) opposed any step that can hit the rich peasants, zamindars etc. A demand was raised that all land belonging to zamindars be acquired and distributed to landless and poor peasants. It was also demanded to lower the ceiling. The former demand was set aside as the *"slogan was pure phrase mongering"* by Pramode Dasgupta. (Ref — Link January 26, 83) The later was not implemented for the same character of licking of the boots of the zamindars and rural elites. The Indian Supreme Court, also endorsed the fact by stating, that, *"the ceiling*

limit of 6.18 acres in the case of an individual and 12.35 to 17.29 acres of irrigated land in the case of a family in the Gangetic plains of West Bengal, is not small by any standard." (*Land reform in Eastern India*, edited by Manjula Bose Page 185)

Hence it is clear that the CPI(M)-led Left Front has implemented the land reform in its own unique style. The landless and poor peasants are to bear the vagaries of the movement of market forces. The small plots of land distributed to landless and poor peasants are economically non viable. They are compelled to depend on rural credit.

Rural Credit

The West Bengal finance minister let us know that Rs 10,000 crores of annual rural credit is necessary for the peasants of Bengal. But, agricultural loan is available to the tune of Rs 800 crores. The rest amount of Rs 9200 crores is mainly available through the rich peasants and private moneylenders. The State government remains a mute spectator to an annual rate of interest to the tune of 120% to 150%. But, in this set up, there is also the option of a RBI/NABARD direct credit line through credit co-operatives. The government, supposedly committed to the peasants' cause, does not bother about the plight of the peasants.

The plight of the peasants is further aggravated by the increasing price of inputs. The Left Front government from the very beginning is an ardent supporter of a liberalised economy despite some sporadic protests. On 11.5.97 Anandabazar Patrika, a Bengali daily reported, Jyoti Basu as being in favour of utilising the scope of a liberalised economy. This has multiple effects on the depleted economic scenario of Bengal.

The government has patronised the use of high yielding varieties of seeds, fertilisers etc in line with the principle of the green revolution. Consequently the cost of agricultural inputs has increased because the cost of chemical fertilisers, pesticides, irrigation has increased many-fold. In only the chemical fertilisers sector the rate of increase is 78.36%.⁵² All the increases in price of agri- inputs are attributed to the central government, but what the left front government's contribution in this hike in prices remains hidden.

The Bengal Government through imposition of cess and excise duties increased the prices of agri-inputs. The price of electricity necessary for running water pumps is the highest in the case of Bengal. In case of shallow tubewells of 5HP, the yearly cost of its running in 1985 was Rs. 3904. In 2001 the proposed increase was to the tune of Rs. 2504.⁵³ The state government with its 'limited' power, imposes indirect tax on diesel and some daily necessary items to add fuel to the fire of the increasing trend in prices. The peasants, burdened with such huge expenditure for survival are forced to bargain away their last hope, that is their land. Poor peasants and sharecroppers are gradually dispossessed of their lands. The recent 10th Finance Commission has dictated that it will recommend more grants to the states that would carry on the programme of liberalisation. The Bengal government is a fore-runner to implement the reforms to have a share in the loot, rendering more and more increases in prices.

Dispossession of land

The sharecroppers are entitled to have 75% of the agricultural production if they spend on all agricultural inputs. But, in reality the practice that exists is 50%. Legal Marxists like to overlook the facts. They also overlook the fact that many legal sharecroppers are forced to mortgage their land. A reversible process has started in favour of the rural elite. During the 25 years of 'left' rule the number of agricultural labourers has increased by 30 lakhs and marginal farmers has increased by 2 lakhs 44 thousand and 47 lakhs 63 bighas of land (1 acre = 3 bigha) have gone away from their possession. (*The Anandabazar Patrika*, 11.5.03).

In this context it is very likely that the poor and marginal farmers are not able to repay their loans. The question of support price also goes against the very interest of the farmers. The state government in 2002 declared Rs. 530/- for fair average quality of paddy per quintal and Rs. 560/- for the fine one. The rice mill owners are entrusted to purchase at rates fixed by the government. It is as if the cats are to look after a bowl of milk! The rice mills are owned usually by rich peasants, jotedars or persons having a close business nexus with them. The result was not unpredictable. The peasants sold paddy at Rs.

275/- for average quality and Rs. 350/- per quintal for fine quality.⁵⁴ Hence, distress sale started. But one of the important features of liberalisation in agriculture through land reform in West Bengal is that it is on the verge of becoming a rice importing state. In the 80s the annual growth rate of paddy production was 2.5%, but within the 1995-96 and 1999-2000 period, the growth rate of the same has become 2.4% annually.⁵⁵

In this context of the hopeless condition of the West Bengal agrarian scenario, caused due to the surrender to liberalisation of agriculture, the left government has decided to put the final nail to the coffin. It has put forward a new agricultural policy in consultation with Mckinsey, an American consultancy firm. But it will not be irrelevant to state what the World Bank, Mckinsey's father organisation, states regarding the agrarian policy.

The World Bank has issued a host of directives regarding the development of the agrarian sector. Some of them are:

- 1) Reduce crops which are not very profitable and increase the production of export oriented crops. Food grains to be imported
- 2) Reduce Government subsidies in agri-inputs like fertilisers, water, seeds and also reduce loan allotments.
- 3) Withdraw all restrictions on export of indigenous agricultural produce
- 4) Withdraw all restrictions on import of agricultural produce from foreign countries
- 5) Privatisise purchasing, transporting and preserving paddy, rice and wheat

Following the above dictum the government of India, for the first time declared a New Agricultural Policy since '47. The name given to the policy is "Rainbow Revolution." The policy envisaged that India will become the largest exporter of agricultural products.

Some major aspects of the New Agricultural Policy of the centre is as follows:

(a) Promoting private participation, "through contract farming and land leasing arrangements, to allow accelerated technology transfer, capital inflows and assured markets for crop production especially oil seeds, cotton and horticultural crops. Lease markets

will be developed for increasing the size of holdings and legal provisions will be made for giving private, and on lease for cultivation and agribusiness."

It implies to capture vast fertile lands for foreign capital, and turning the farmers as mere agents of transnational corporations

b) *"Developing agriculture through effectively using the resources and technology in accordance with geo-climate-indigenous conditions. New plant varieties will be protected through a legislation to encourage research and breeding of new varieties particularly in the private sectors."* So MNCs like Monsanto, Cargil will carrying on Genetic engineering through their Indian agents and counterparts. It is quite clear that the MNCs actually want to monopolise the agrarian sector, under various sweet pills.

c) Extension of market facilities to counter fluctuations in prices and due to natural calamities.

But, there is no single space, for price fluctuations. A good number of MNCs are already operating in India-Hindustan Lever (UK), Cargil (USA) Hibred International (USA), Sandoz (Switzerland) etc.

The Government of West Bengal, true to their character, has followed in the Centre's footsteps. **It found it's panacea, not in the communist party principle but in Mckinsey.** In a letter dated 13th May, 2000 issued by Jawhar Sircar, Principal Secretary to Commerce and Industries Department, Government of West Bengal, DO No. 1329/CIS/2002 the Mckinsey prescription will be evident. Before going into the prescription let us see what Mr Jawhar Sircar said in the letter. The letter was intended to let know of the proceedings and results of the co-ordination meeting between Nirupam Sen, West Bengal Government Commerce and Industries minister and concerned ministers and secretaries regarding Mckinsey Agri-business projects in West Bengal. Mr. Jawhar Sircar stated for immediate action by the concerned department *"with specific reference in each of the 10 projects that have been short listed by Mckinsey & Co for immediate implementation."*

Hence, the projects are short listed and dictated by Mckinsey, a US consultancy firm, to be followed by the West Bengal Government. The projects includes, food retail, fruit and vegetable processing, Rice

retail and export, shrimp export, Poultry breeding and hatching; the companies included are 'Subhiksha', Rallis, HLL, Cargyl, RPG, Pepsi etc.

Mckinsey also wanted to have a guaranteed return on investment. Hence Zero labour problem and all hassle free environment for investment was sought by Mckinsey. In the above said letter of Mr. Jawahar Sircar the "suggestions" of Mckinsey regarding necessities of contract farming policy, labour policy, re-orientation through the tune of reviewing the Shops and Establishments Acts, Contract Labour Acts etc., to encourage retail. All the changes are in line with the imperialist's interests.

The West Bengal government in toe has abided by the 'suggestions' of Mckinsey, in line with the Rainbow revolution of centre. The 3rd draft policy of agriculture as proposed by the West Bengal left front government includes the

a) development of commercialisation in Agriculture, establishing food park in rural-urban centres,

b) Transformed food oriented agriculture to cash crop cultivation

c) Ensure profit for agricultural products etc.

In a provincial council meeting of the West Bengal Peasants' Committee, an article of Binoy Konar was endorsed, on 18.07.2002. The article was later published in 'Marxwadi Path', August 2002. There, Mr. Konar, a supposedly staunch anti imperialist, put forward arguments in line with the Rainbow revolution of the central government and as per the demands of the World Bank/WTO dictums. He stated ten points with pro people phraseology. There he opposed hybrid varieties of seeds of Monsanto, Cargyl, Deltapine and advocated the use of organic fertilisers etc. But, there he also proposed to set up and diversify the agro-based food processing industry. In this case he said that, *"if the peasants are assisted to cultivate a particular agri-product and get a guarantee of selling it at a profitable price, then the peasants will take initiatives to produce by themselves. For this, there was a need for mutual understanding. If there is any scope, the government and peasant movement both have to take the initiative."* The writer, a CPI(M) central committee's leader, has been deeply influenced by Mckinsey. The Mckinsey, rainbow

revolution are championing the cause of contract farming. The importance of Panchayats are upheld by the McKinsey Plan to act as a negotiator between peasants and multinational companies. In real terms the panchayats will be turned into local agents of the companies. McKinsey or Mr. Konar no one deals with the question of price fluctuations. No, it is not a mistake. Both the McKinsey plan and CPI(M) see the peasants to guarantee profits, super profits. Mr Konar and MNCs will not assist, they will dictate their terms. Hence, if there is any problem of market price or natural calamities the peasants are to suffer.

Mr Konar also suggested in the same article to select agricultural products as per the nature of land. Very good suggestion indeed! But, he also cautioned the peasants not to venture alone. He advised for joint cultivation in case of new agricultural production. In this case also Mr Konar put forward the agenda envisaged by McKinsey. Owing to the small holdings of West Bengal, McKinsey advised for joint ventures of a handful of peasants with a company in contract farming to tide over the small holdings problem. Mr. Konar seemed to have more resemblance with McKinsey than Marx or Lenin. Moreover, Mr. Konar in the same article advocates in favour of cotton cultivation in salty areas of West Bengal. But he seemed to set aside the omnipotent authority of the cotton corporations. These corporations controlled by MNCs and big comprador capital take advantage of the hopeless condition of the peasants. They are forced to go for distress sale. MNCs actually fix and regulate the price artificially. Mr. Konar seemed to forget the danger that the peasants have to suffer at the whims of imperialist capital. His forgetfulness and neglect of the peasants' interest can be attributed to his organisational stand.

It was stated that *"land is a private property. A peasant of it's own decides what to produce and how to produce and how much to produce but the peasant produces commodities to sell in the market and to maintain his family. In this backdrop of liberalisation it is the bounden duty of the left front government to lead the agricultural production in the interest of the peasants, considering the economy, market, compensation etc. The peasants' organisation believes in class struggle. It is the struggle for settling*

which class will have how much portion of the wealth. But if the very quantity of wealth can not be increased rapidly, the struggle for division of the wealth cannot be useful. Moreover the struggle for producing with less expenditure is an inseparable part of the movement against globalisation!" (quote from the report of 22nd state conference of West Bengal Pradeshik Kishan Sabha on January 2003)

But what the CPI(M) led peasant front wants to teach us is not Marxism Leninism, but McKinseyism. It is because *"..... the essence of the agrarian question and of the agrarian crisis lies not in the removal of the obstacles to the advance of agricultural technique to a higher level but in the following : in what way are these obstacles to be removed, what class is to effect this removal and by what methods."* (Lenin on the Agrarian question in Russia towards the close of the nineteenth century)

Thus, the CPM is very much concerned in increasing production and not about class relations. They have not taken any lesson from the national or international experience. In Africa, Latin American countries, Mexico, Argentina, Sudan or Morocco, lakhs of peasants have lost everything. Lakhs of acres of land has become barren. In an annual report on worker's rights, *Agricultural Workers 2001*, it is stated that *"On March 30, 1998, the American Banana Transnational United fruit company celebrated it's 100 years of operations in Central America. For share holder, both in the United States and in this region, it was a day to rejoice. But, for thousands of Central Americans it was a day of mourning.... the multinational corporations that for years have profited from banana productions have discharged thousand of workers. Today Plantations were filled with unemployed workers who have almost no social assistance."*

Three years ago during the time of its inauguration the department of Karnataka horticulture, identified Mysore district as the major producer of horticultural crops. Many promises regarding infrastructure, exploring export potential for local fruits and vegetables providing with cold storage facilities and finally support to farmers to venture into food processing. But, now all the promises ended in a fiasco. (*The Hindu*, Sept. 14, 2003) Prime Minister A. B. Vajpayee, like

Bengal Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharya, refers to Europe as a ready market for flowers. But, Buddhadeb and Vajpayee both know very well it is not the farmers of Bengal or Karna aka who will benefit. Promoting floriculture seems a way of providing concession to agri-business companies in the name of agriculture. A floriculture export unit in Bangalore in 1998 estimated that modern export of flowers needs Rs. 20-25 million per hectare. Then who are to receive the incentives for the floricultural industry. In Karnataka many floricultural units have closed down due to their inability to compete in international markets. In Bengal the experience can't be otherwise. Still, we are to be in a make believe world; for what sake?

West Bengal, has been opened to MNCs to loot at their sweet will. The peasants are to depend on foreign multinational companies for seeds, fertilisers and every aspect of cultivation. Once a process of dependence on high yielding varieties of seeds, fertilizers, etc. is initiated it can't be taken aback or changed. Binoy Konar, CPI(M) state committee member and leader of it's peasant front, voiced against multinational corporations and advocated indigenous development of high yielding varieties of seeds in the Bengal agricultural university. In this connection it may be stated that university/business-houses joint venture have started in the educational institutions of West Bengal. Then it is very natural that big agri-giants like Cargil, Monsanto, etc will have an edge. Our suspicion is further aggravated because the name of the MNCs are found in the priority investment companies put forward by Mckinsey which are opposed by Mr Konar. Oh! what a double play and a relentless effort to befool the people. Though contract farming is not passed legally by the West Bengal government, it will be practised in Bengal. In Bengal for shrimp farms, contract system has started. Companies like ITC has planned to enter in business with local fishermen having their own ponds and necessary infrastructure. The secretary to the minister of fish let us know that the government has taken a decision to facilitate contract farming in the fish sector.⁵⁶ A concerned company will afford capital and inputs and buy back the fishes for export. ITC's plea of starting the contract system in oil seeds production has also been given the green signal by the West Bengal government.

At present 61 lakh hectares of land is used for paddy cultivation. It is prescribed by Mckinsey to decrease the land for paddy cultivation to 48 lakh hectares.⁵⁷ In Bengal, now the growth rate for paddy cultivation has decreased. The deficit is prescribed to be met by increased production per hectare by 1½tonnes. It implies, total dependence on high yielding varieties of seeds, fertilisers etc. Thus, the grip of MNCs will be strengthened in agriculture.

The imperialist tightening grip of agriculture in West Bengal will not only ruin food security, make this land barren, but also prices of all essential agricultural products will increase manyfold. This is nothing unusual, because the left front government, during the entire period of its rule uses imperialist funds from the World Bank, Ford Foundation, IDA, Asian Development Bank for so called development projects. The CPI(M) since it's inception has been following the imperialist dictum. The CPI(M) led Left Front government has imposed capitalist factors of green revolution on the semi-feudal agrarian economy of West Bengal, misguided the peasants, destroying the traditional agri technology and knowledge. Consequently the agrarian economy of Bengal has become more and more dependent on the imperialist economy. The new agricultural policy of West Bengal is but a natural culmination. The increase in the number of poor and landless peasants will be higher in the coming years. **Courtesy : World Bank dictated and Mckinsey guided new Agricultural policy of West Bengal!**

Electricity Policy: Cringing before Imperialists

Infrastructure is the most important sector necessary for imperialist capital to operate. Power, is the crucial aspect in the infrastructure. It opens avenues for imperialist capital to operate and earn guaranteed, secured profits from the same. The West Bengal Government, aware of this fact, encourages and initiates the process of the entry of private capital in this sector. But, here also it implements the World Bank directives with a note of 'dissent'! What a democratic aspiration of the government led by a 'communist party'!

From the very onset of liberalisation, the IMF/World Bank have pressurised for the privatisation of the State Electricity Boards. They assess that SEBs are incurring losses to the tune of Rs. 25,000/- crores

each year for the production and distribution of electricity. The World Bank-IMF pursuance resulted in the Electricity Bill 2000 and subsequently the Electricity Act 2003. The salient features of the act are: the SEBs (State Electricity Boards) will have to act as a business organisation; Transmission companies under the Companies Act 1956, will be reconstituted through public and private investment for generation and transmission of power from different Generating Companies; Transmission Companies will enter into agreement with Area Distributor/Purchaser/Retailer for transmission and distribution of power. An Electricity Regulatory Commission (Centre/State) will take policy decisions regarding fixing of tariff/fuel surcharges/cess, taking the reasonable profit element, at every level, into consideration. Before dismemberment of SEBs the respective States will constitute 'corporations' (Generation, transmission and Distribution) registered under the company's act 1956. TRANSCO will come up as the main company after the unbundling of SEBs and all their assets will vest with the State Government. The state government in turn will hand over the assets to the respective stake holders in accordance with the sale deeds. The liabilities of the erstwhile SEBs including the terminal benefits of their employees will be met from the sale value of the assets. Thus received by the government; employees are not entitled to prefer any suit against the Government/Stake holder/SEB for relief or compensation for such transfer in any court. The consumers will have to enter into fresh agreement with the distributors of power, at their own cost etc.⁵⁸

This bill is a deed of sale of the country's interests to the MNCs abroad. The central government has proved itself as an enemy of the people. How can the left front government lag behind? It is supposedly implementing the provision of the electricity bill with a voice of 'protest'!

A booklet entitled "*New Electricity Act: Devastation of the people*" has been published by CITU, the workers' front of the CPI(M) on 16.6.2003. The small booklet is written by Shyamal Chakraborty and Prasanta Nandy Chowdhury. The former is member of the West Bengal State Committee and presently CITU President. Hence, regarding the issue it may be taken for granted that we will have an official view of the CPI(M) vis-a-vis the Left Front government.

The booklet starts with a note of despair that the Electricity Bill 2003, was passed by a majority in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha and has been turned into an Act. The booklet criticised all the parliamentary parties except the CPI and their party. It patted its own back by stating that Basudev Acharia of the CPI(M) and VV Raghavan of the CPI opposed the bill in parliament. Oh! What a great act of glorification!

The booklet severely criticised the division of SEBs as per the Electricity Act 2003 into three components; Generation, Transmission and Distribution as those are feared to be sold at throw away prices and the concerned state government would be a mere spectator. In the next para the booklet praised the state government for its far-sightedness. It is because West Bengal has divided the SEBs long before the electricity Bill 2003. The SEBs of Bengal was divided into Generation, Transmission and Distribution and rural electrification. In the central bill transmission and distribution are dealt separately and there is a new section for rural power. But, this minute difference in real terms matters less for SEB privatisation. Actually the Bengal government under the cover of 'left' phraseology is implementing the provisions of the Central Electricity Act.

The Front government swears to distribute electricity at low cost to the consumers. Hence, the booklet of CITU stated that "*while other states are searching for probable buyers, the West Bengal government has started to build up a mega project of 2000 MW at Sagardighi, in Murshidabad two projects at Bakreshwar of 2100 MW each etc*" The booklet wants to hide the fact that Japan is a partner in the Tista Canal, Bakreswar Project, the British MNC, Rolls Royce, has been collaborating with the government for the Balagarh project. Japan is also with the Purulia pump storage scheme and revamping of the extra high voltage transmission system including a part of the satellite communication. All the above projects were undertaken long before the Electricity Act 2003. All this penetration of foreign capital into the power sector, in the near future will end up in the take-over any of the profitable divisions to the private sector under one pretext or the other.

The above stated CITU booklet severely criticised the system of

assuring 16% to 31% profit guarantee to MNCs. The central government will have to give counter guarantee money to the business houses by siphoning away funds from the legitimate demands of state governments. But, what did the left front government do long before? The power purchase agreements (PPA) concluded with MNCs by the West Bengal government are deliberately shrouded in secrecy. The Congress government of Maharashtra has to pay counter guarantee money to Enron. But what about the left front government? The Comptroller and Auditor General has rapped the West Bengal State Electricity Board for extending undue favours to the power utility CESC in its latest report tabled in the West Bengal Assembly. The CAG pointed out that the SEB suffered a loss of Rs 204.69 crore due to this benevolence. (*The Times of India*, 17.3.03) This is the art of deception and betraying the people by one way or another.

Though the Electricity Bill was tabled in 2000 and enacted in 2003, the West Bengal government handed over the responsibility of fixing electricity charges to a separate regulatory commission way back in 1998. Hence the CPI (M), on the one hand accuses the central government Act to raise electricity charges and on the other, became a forerunner in implementing the same, with a cunningness that knew no bounds!

Recently the CESC is campaigning that thousands of workers will be given VRS; in their words voluntary separation scheme. This will result to decrease the per unit charge of electricity. But at the same time it is demanding money in terms of security, metre rent to give VSS to the employer. The CITU & the state government not only has turned a blind eye to the above vague logic but also it termed any movement against the draconian high electricity charges as creating disturbances and nuisances.

West Bengal is against all nuisances. Hence, since long, it has been paving the way for a labour trouble free SEB. Previously, to run a shift, required five workers. Now, it has been reduced to two per shift. Hundreds of posts, at all levels, in the Board are not being filled up. All these have been recommended by the CPI (M) leader Dipen Ghosh lead Committee, in time with the signing of the Dunkel Draft by the government of India in 1994.⁵⁹ All are coincidental! On 12th

July the University Institute hall CITU declared that the CESC has turned 4500 workers as surplus as per the Central Electricity Act. Later the number was increased to 6000. Actually on 21.1.2003 itself three unions settled with the CESC authorities to shut down the Mulajor unit of the CESC under the pretext of a Supreme Court order. But the Supreme Court order also has a clause of re-employment.⁶⁰ But, who cares! The New Act turned to be an excuse both for the union and the government.

The left front government is not only playing into the hands of the imperialists and big comprador bourgeois capital, it is a fore-runner in implementing each and every clause of the power sector selling out to MNCs. The people are to suffer. Today, West Bengal has the highest electricity charges/duty. Recently, a cess was imposed to electrify the Sundarban people; nay the Sahara Project of tourism of the Sundarbans. Still, the booklet published by CITU earlier contains only threats and politics of defeatism. They are trying in vain to hide their faces. Actually, they are very much exposed, at least in West Bengal!

CONCLUSION

If the CPM-led West Bengal government is so happily implementing imperialist globalisation policies in the state it rules, how is it seen that in the rest of the country they are one of the most verbal opponents of these policies. Why is it that they are in the forefront in the WSF? The reasons are two-fold:

First, much of their cadre force and sympathisers have anti-imperialist sentiments. In order to dupe them and keep them within its fold the CPM leadership must resort to some anti-imperialist rhetoric. Often their rank-and-file may go beyond the constraints put by their bosses.

Second, with the rising tide of anti-imperialist sentiments amongst the masses in general and intellectuals in particular the ruling classes desperately need a safety valve to diffuse this growing anger. The CPM, while they make much noise they rarely convert this into action — and even if they do so, it is more nominal and token, given their size. With this, they are able to dupe a sizable section of the masses/intellectuals and thereby retard the growth of an effective

anti-imperialist movement in the country. Their 'left' rhetoric and 'socialist' phrase-mongering is ideal fuel for a fake fire.

Today, the imperialist forces are facing people's wrath world wide. Movements in various forms are even sweeping centres of the imperialist hub. Subsequently, it has become a must for the imperialists to arm itself from top to bottom. USA, enemy number 1 of the world people is pursuing and pressurising different nations to enact and implement draconian laws to continue their inhuman exploitation unabated. The Central government of India has enacted laws like POTA. In this act even trade union activities are branded as antinational. The West Bengal government opposed POTA in the parliament, but in West Bengal it is strangulating any voice of protest. Hundreds of common people are arrested and sent to jails under some pretext, as with the Peoples War, MCCI, KLO, ULFA, SIMI etc. While the US and BJP are on the same deck and up in arms against Muslim fundamentalists, the Bengal government does not lag behind. In some districts even members of their front partners are arrested accusing them as being Muslim fundamentalists. As the US and Indian governments are collaborating to crush the Maoist movement of Nepal, the Left Front government also raises an alarm. It is trampling under foot all democratic norms in order to be a reliable ally of the imperialists and indigenous big capital.

So, today while building the anti-imperialist/anti-globalisation movement in the country it is necessary to distinguish clearly friends from foes. If not, the movement will be continuously stabbed in the back. On issues, there is no problem in uniting with all those who take part in the battle, but in any alliance one should beware of any such false 'friends'.

While fighting and targeting the imperialists and their comprador agents within the country, there is utmost need to consistently and continuously exposes such false elements, whether they be the CPI/CPM revisionists, or the Swadeshi Jagran Manch types or the imperialist-sponsored NGOs. It is only with such an approach that one will be able to unite all the genuine anti-imperialist forces in the country, against the horrors of globalisation that are devastating the lives of millions of people every day.

Notes

1. *Unatataro Bamfront O amader bhabna*/Developed left front and our thought; published by National Book Agency.
2. Ibid from lectures delivered by Nurupam Sen
3. *The Telegraph*, 3.9.03
4. An article written by Suparna Pathak, *Anandabazar*, 18.6.03
5. Ibid.
6. *Anandabazar Patrika*, 4.9.03
7. *The Telegraph*, 1.9.03
8. Ibid
9. Ibid
10. *Anandabazar Patrika*, 19.5.03
11. Ibid
12. *Anandabazar Patrika*, 6.9.03
13. Article written by Partha Ghosh in *Jojana*, November 2003
14. Ibid
15. *Prasanga Tathya Prajukti*, Published by National Book Agency
16. *Anandabazar Patrika*, 12.7.03
17. Article written by Tapan Kumar Bhattacharya in *Jojana*, Nov. 2003
18. Ibid
19. *Anandabazar Patrika*, 12.9.03
20. Ibid
21. *The Telegraph*, 3.9.03
22. "Unatataro Bamfront O amader Bhabna" published by National Book Agency
23. Ibid
24. *Labour in West Bengal 1991 and 2001*
25. *Globalisation and Labour* by Ronaldo Munck published by Madhyam --- books, page 72
26. *Labour in West Bengal 2001*
27. *Labour in West bengal O Pachimbanga .anya Chokhe* compiled and published by Nagarik Mancha.
28. "Unatataro Bamfront O Amader Bhabna" published by National Book Agency
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid.

32. *Ekhon Bi-Sambad*, October 2003
33. Employees PF Organisation, Ministry of Labour, India 2001-02.
34. Ibid
35. Ibid
36. *Labour in West Bengal*, dept of Labour
37. Ibid
38. Ibid
39. *Anandabazar Patrika*, 23.7.2003
40. *Telegraph*, 3.9.03
41. *Indian Constitution and it's Review* by Suniti Kr. Ghosh published by Research Unit for Political Economy, Page 81
42. *Anandabazar*, 10.9.03
43. An article written by Tarun Banerjee in *Chatrasangram*, West Bengal State Committee Organisation of SFI
44. Siksha Bhabna, *Samaj Bhabna Kichu Dik* by Manas Joardar, published by Ekhan bisambad
45. Ibid
46. *The Telegraph*, 19.8.03
47. *Hindustan Times*, Kolkata edition 12.9.03
48. 'The Marxist' July-December 1985
49. Article written by Dr. Siddhartha Gupta in *People's March*, November 2000
50. Article written by Ajit Narayan Basu in member West bengal Planning Commission, in *Paschimbanger Krishi Niti*, page 64, published by Mrittika
51. Ibid
52. Article written by Ratan Khasnobis in *Paschimbanger Krishiniti*, page 34, published by Mrittika
53. Shankar Ghosh, leader of SUCI, Peasant front in the above mentioned book, page 82
54. Ibid, page 83
55. Ratan Khasnobis written article in the above mentioned book, page 31
56. *Anandabazar Patrika*, 16.6.03
57. Article written by Shankar Ghosh in *Mrittika*
58. *Globalisation: An attack on Indias Sovereignty*, published by New Vistas publication, page 134
59. Gautam Ghosh written article in *People's March*, September-October 1999
60. *Ekhan Bi-sambad*, October 2003

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