

# THE PRESENT POLITICAL SITUATION IN INDIA

by

**COLVIN R. De SILVA**

*(Leader, Bolshevik Leninist Party  
Parliamentary fraction, Ceylon)*



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## COMRADES AND FRIENDS!

It is indeed an honour to have been invited from far Ceylon to inaugurate your conference. It is an invitation which I accepted the more readily because I felt it was intended as a tribute much more to my party than to me. Permit me therefore simply to say that I am glad, as a representative of the Bolsheviki-Leninist Party of India, section of the Fourth International, to have the opportunity to address you on this occasion.

### I. GANDHI'S ASSASSINATION

Since I have come here but a short ten days after the celebration of so-called independence in Ceylon, I would ordinarily have plunged from this abrupt introduction straight into the question of the "independence" which Britain is alleged to be giving to her colonies, India, Burma and Ceylon. But history has decreed otherwise. The assassination of Gandhi makes it necessary that I should deal with certain questions relating to his life and death before I go on to the question of this alleged independence. Let us therefore begin with these questions.

The first question is that of our attitude to this assassination. Gandhi died at the hand of no common murderer but of a *political* assassin. Nathuram Vinayak Godse acted politically; that is to say, he acted from political considerations and towards a political end. In this respect, and this respect only he acted as, for instance, Bhagat Singh did. And yet, our attitude to Bhagat Singh is different from our attitude to Godse! Why?

The answer lies much more in the objective sought than in the method employed. Godse's fell deed has not even the glamour of symbolising the insurgent hatred of the oppressed against their oppressors. It was a barbaric deed and wholly reprehensible. The hate that drove Godse was not the shining hate of the exploited such as drove Bhagat Singh to his desperate deed but the dark and primitive hate which religio-communal passion generates. The "wrong" he resented was not the exploitation of man by man or of class by class, but the demand for non-discrimination as between communities within the same state. He was that most dangerous type of communalist, the majority communalist. His act was therefore doubly indefensible in that not only was the method used

wrong but a thousand times more the cause in which it was perpetrated. Hence it was that proletarian revolutionaries throughout India, who have fought Gandhi's essentially bourgeois politics all their lives, found no difficulty in solidarising themselves with the protests against his assassination. We denounce his killing as genuinely as any and more correctly than most.

Having said this much, however, it is necessary to say more. *The assassination of Gandhi is a lesson in communalism and individual terrorism. It is not a lesson in non-violence.*

What do I mean? Anyone can see that it is a lesson in communalism. It is as if the killing of this man, who sought to interpose his frail body and colossal influence between communalist and communalist, lit up in one vast flare of clarity the enormity of what was being perpetrated in Pakistan and the Indian Union. Men saw thereby, as in a flash of lightning, the grim abyss down which they were being precipitated. And thereby they also gained an opportunity to realize that they must draw back immediately if they were ever to draw back at all.

This was what Godse in fact achieved, *although it was the very opposite of what he had himself intended.* Thereby he reminded people once more of the sheer futility of individual terrorism. You cannot obliterate a system by wiping out some individual. You cannot substitute the efforts of any particular individual, be he ever so determined or ever so great, for the movement of social forces. The mistake of Godse in this respect was curiously enough also the mistake of Gandhiji. He too sought by individual effort to dam up and turn back social forces. The intensity of his effort was also the measure of his failure. For, if any one man could have ended communalism, especially Hindu communalism, by the sheer force of personal will, wish and example, that man was Gandhiji. His very failure proved once more that no individual, be he ever so great, can substitute for the system. Communalism in India could not be obliterated by a Gandhi any more than it could triumph through a Godse. Other forces and other means had to and will intervene to resolve this conflict.

What are these forces? I answer roundly, immediately and briefly: *the forces of the class struggle!*

Let us remember: Communalism is wrong because it subserves the interest of the exploiters and oppressors by enabling them to divert the exploited and oppressed from their proper struggle and proper objective to a false struggle and a false objective. It turns the minds of the exploited away from the necessity to overthrow the system of exploitation. It plunges them into internecine conflict which lays them prostrate before their common exploiters and oppressors.

Need this lesson be underlined in Bengal? Surely, partition has not obliterated the memory of how the agrarian discontent of the predominantly Muslim peasantry of East Bengal against their predominantly Hindu landlords was diverted from class objectives to communal objectives and thereby thwarted. Surely Bengal has not forgotten the propaganda of the Muslim League and the counter-propaganda of the Hindu Maha Sabha. Surely Bengal has not overlooked how communal strife in Calcutta dissolved a rising strike situation at the end of 1945. *Above all, surely Bengal has not forgotten how workers on strike have repeatedly prevented their own areas being engulfed in the destructive tide of communalism!*

Does it need underlining, therefore, that the only effective dissolvent of reactionary communalism is the progressive class struggle of socialism? The higher the class struggle of the workers and peasants against their landlord-capitalist exploiters rises the more the communal struggle will tend to be swept aside in every part of India. The more the class struggle ebbs the more will the communal weapon be available to the exploiters. That is the definition of the question as also the determination of our task in relation to it.

Now, the class struggle is not any more non-violent than the communal struggle. And since, as we have seen, the class struggle is the only true and permanent solvent of the communal struggle, *it is false and deceitful to pose the problem of communalism in terms of violence and non-violence.* That is why I said earlier that, although the assassination of Gandhi is a lesson in communalism and individual terrorism, it is not a lesson in non-violence.

It is necessary to stress the above proposition here, now and today, right in the shadow of Gandhi's death. For the public reaction to the circumstances of his death, as well as the public

veneration for the personality of the victim, are today being used deliberately, crudely, and also subtly' to prop up and buttress a theory which does not bear dispassionate examination. *Gandhi's death provides no additional proof whatsoever of the correctness of the theory of non-violence.*

We Marxists have long ago analysed this theory in the light of the class struggle and shown up its class meaning. It is not therefore necessary to enter on this analysis again and on this occasion. Suffice it to say that, if it is a question of social objectives, there can be no non-violent society which is based on a class system. A class society is a violent society in as much as it is an exploitative society. The only non-violent society possible to humanity is a non-class society. Let us therefore remind these who wish to convert non-violence into a cult for the masses and a class weapon for the exploiters that not only is the objective of the class struggle the abolition of classes but also that the development of the class struggle is the only means to abolishing class society. Let those who really wish to achieve non-violence, therefore, come into the class struggle on the side of the exploited and oppressed instead of denouncing it. Not class collaboration but class struggle is the road to the non-violent society.

So much for non-violence as a social objective. What of it as a political weapon?

Here we come up against the famous problem of ends and means, but I do not propose to go into it. Instead, I shall subject this question to the test of the activities of its official proponents. The present Government of India claims to be officially committed to non-violence: but it is at this very moment at undeclared war with Pakistan in Kashmir! Since Gandhi himself, when alive, did not condemn this war, it is clear that he himself accepted limitations upon this concept. Presumably, it does not apply in the realm of *external* relations.

Does it then apply in the realm of internal *state* relations? The answer is: Yes and No! That is to say, "No" in respect of the rulers and "Yes" in respect of the ruled. The state (which is but the organised violence of the ruling class) must be faced by the ruled with non-violence! Such is the genuine (i.e., class) content of non-violence as a political concept.

Surely we are entitled to say that non-violence, to be genuine, must be a matter of two-way traffic, whereas today it is very much a matter of a one-way street. Surely we are entitled to say that a theory which leaves the exploited disarmed before their armed exploiters is a theory for the defence of the exploiters and the perpetuation of exploitation. Surely we are entitled to demand that what is sauce for the exploiter gander be also recognized as necessary for the exploited goose.

## II. THE PARTITION OF INDIA

So much for the questions arising out of Gandhiji's assassination. Let us now turn, comrades, to some consideration of the contemporary political situation.

The present political situation in India is governed in the main by two powerful factors. These are the partition of India and the working out of the new relationship between the Indian bourgeoisie and the British Imperialists. Linked with them, of course, are the questions of the states and the relationship of the new regime to the worker and peasant masses. Upon the interplay of these factors principally depends the development of the political situation.

The partition of India, so readily attributable to the Muslim League alone, was fundamentally due not to League politics but to Congress politics. The politics of Congress in relation to British Imperialism was not the politics of struggle but the politics of settlement. And the politics of settlement inevitably fed the politics of partition in as much as it also left the initiative with British Imperialism. The partition of India was the outcome of the surrender-settlement of the Indian bourgeoisie with British Imperialism over the heads of and against the insurgent masses. Pakistan is the product of the bourgeois abortion of the mass movement.

The tragedy of the partition flows particularly from the declared objects of its architects. This gruesome cutting up of the living body of India on the one hand and of two living "nationalities" (the Punjabi and the Bengali nationalities) on the other was put forward as a *solution* of the communal problem on the one side and as a means of opening the road to freedom on

the other. Both pleas have proved false. Partition has proved in the one respect only a means of re-forging chains for the imperialist enslavement of the masses (as we shall see). In the other respect it has proved but a means of beguiling two states to thoughts of mutual war as the only means of canalising internal communal feeling away from civil convulsions. The war, by the way, may yet come, (if indeed, it has not already come in Kashmir and Junagadh). But the civil convulsions have come meanwhile in catastrophic fashion.

Yes, the partition of India has only rendered more acute a communalism which was entirely dissolvable without that operation. The attempt to erect communalism into separate states has only accentuated communalism in each state. The uni-communal state is the natural end-in-view of communalist partition's insane logic. It was not an accident that the Hindu Maha Sabha began to gain ground after the partition. They were logical if not modern; they were understandable if also primitive. They were not self-deluded like Nehru or delusionists like Patel. They were entirely themselves—and Hindus! against the Muslims and others. Congress simply could not compete against them with its own more covert brand of communalism except by steadily giving way to their pressure. Hence Vallabhai Patel's speeches in Calcutta last December, for instance; speeches which Gandhi himself was reputed to resent.

I declare to you, my friends, that partition killed Gandhi as certainly as it killed lakhs and lakhs of the unknown and innocent in the Punjab, for instance. The Nehru-Patel Government must bear the responsibility for his death in the far more profound sense of a false policy than of insufficient precautions. Until they recognize and acknowledge this, their tears will continue to be as pointless as their policies continue to be fatal and dangerous. You cannot kill communalism by fine words or even hasty deeds. The suppression of the Hindu Maha Sabha and other frankly communal organisations will not kill communalism. But it will surely open the way to a reactionary attack on the Left. Governments which take special powers to act against the Right always end up by using them more vigorously against the Left. It behoves us therefore to be on the look-out against "communalism" being spelt "communism" for the purpose of the violent defence of non-violence by this Government.

### III. THE PARTITION OF BENGAL

The consequences to India of partition need hardly to be pointed out to you in Bengal. Your own province, like the Punjab at the other end of India, is one of those whose living body has been carved up in order to facilitate the Raj-Congress-League settlement over the heads of and against the masses. And if you have been spared the horrors which post-partition Punjab has seen, it is mainly for two reasons. The first and more important reason is that you learnt in time the lessons of Noakhali and the Great Calcutta Killing. The second is that East Bengal is only an isolated out-post of Pakistan despite the fact of being Pakistan's most populous province. The mutuality of killing in the West of India is therefore being matched *for the moment* with a mutuality of forbearance in the East. The question is: how long will it last?

The answer to this question depends on wider forces and developments than are contained in Bengal alone. The state of relations between the Indian Union and Pakistan will obviously govern the relations between West Bengal and East Bengal far more than the state of relations between West Bengalis and East Bengalis. But the urge for Bengali unity is deep, historically old, and cannot in the long run be denied fruition. For, it cannot be that a people who fought one partition at the beginning of this century will allow another to become permanent towards the middle of it out of mere communal passion. In the long run, therefore, the urge to "national unity" is bound to prevail over the present communal division. The real task is to prevent the "national" movement for defeating the partition from feeding the chauvinist movement for re-absorbing Pakistan by conquest within the Indian Union (and vice versa). Those who on both sides of the dividing line are working for a genuine, i.e., voluntary, re-unification have therefore to find a way of carrying forward that work without embroiling the Indian Union and Pakistan.

How is this to be done? Clearly not by aligning themselves with the reactionary expansionists on either side of the boundary. These have, on the contrary, to be resolutely fought. For the task is *not* the forcible re-unification of Bengal (the province) within either the Indian Union or Pakistan but the *voluntary re-union of*



*the Bengali "nationality" on the basis of its right to self-determination. It is only by grasping this point and working along this perspective that the lever of nationalism can be prevented from becoming an instrument of reaction and become an instrument of social progress.*

In this regard it is necessary to grasp also a further fact. *The re-union of the Bengali nationality on the basis of its right to self-determination is not possible except through the social revolution both in the Indian Union and Pakistan. In no other circumstances can the Bengali "nation" be free to exercise that right. But the social revolution in both the Indian Union and Pakistan can only mean a re-united India on a socialist basis. The perspective therefore is: A Soviet Bengal in a Soviet India! Thus does the proletarian revolutionary programme alone lead to the fulfilment on a progressive basis of the aspiration both for an united Bengal (and Punjab) and for an united India. Whom the bourgeoisie have torn asunder reactionarily, only the working class can unite progressively. Such is the dialectic of this period.*

#### IV. THIS FREEDOM

I turn now to another fact which needs to be grasped firmly in the India of today. This is the fact that British Imperialism still continues entrenched in India despite all the paraphernalia of "Constituent Assemblies" and "Independence" *The expulsion of British Imperialism from India has not yet been accomplished. Its definitive overthrow has yet to be achieved.*

There may be many among you who may be startled by the forthright and categorical nature of the above statement. Did not Gandhi himself announce independence, and the Nehrus and the Patels with him here? Has not Attlee declared abdication, and the whole tribe of imperialists in Britain with him? How, then, is it that we are free and continue nevertheless in chains?

This question deserves careful attention and explanation; and it is a poor Trotskyist who cannot provide the answer. Let me address myself briefly to the task.

Freedom is not a question of *who* runs the Government. The question on the contrary is: in whose *interests*, i e., in the interests of *which class* is the Government run? Otherwise, a brown bureaucracy can replace the white and create not only the illusion of freedom but also its reality.

Let us take an example. The Labour Party rules in Britain today, but no Marxist therefore pretends that Britain has gone socialist. *The Labour Party runs the government in the interest of the capitalist class of Britain* despite all the ballyhoo of propaganda to the contrary. Consequently, although Labour is in power, Britain remains a capitalist-imperialist state.

Apply this idea to India. The Indian bourgeoisie have undoubtedly taken over the administration of the state from the British imperialists. But has this fact changed the nature of the state they administer?

The answer to this question depends not on the subjective desires of Nehru, Patel & Co., but on the objective relationships between the classes as a whole. And here we come up against two facts. The first is that Britain continues to dominate the heights of India's economy and the seas that wash India's shores. In other words, Britain's economic and naval strangle-hold over India continues. The second fact is that the Indian bourgeoisie themselves continue to find their alliance with British imperialism necessary against the pressure of the Indian masses. The state in India today is thus the protector of the *joint interests* of the British imperialists and the Indian bourgeoisie: *and as between these, the British imperialists are still the dominant partners.* Hence what has taken place in India is not a transition to independence but a switch-over by imperialism from direct to indirect forms of rule *via* a re-arrangement of its alliance with the Indian bourgeoisie. India has climbed up the ladder of colonial status: it has not leaped from it to the ladder of national independence. British imperialism has not abdicated, but only retired to the back-ground, leaving its Indian partner in sole charge of the business. It relies on keeping its certainly ambitious partner to his agreement by exercising the direct and indirect pressure it can wield economically, diplomatically and militarily. It also relies on its partner keeping his agreement because of the mutual interdependence of their interests against the masses.

What are the consequences of this new division of labour between foreign imperialist and Indian capitalist? The first consequence is that the tottering power of British Imperialism in India has been shored up again, though on a new basis. This is the fundamental meaning of the re-arranged imperialist-bourgeois alliance of which the Raj-Congress settlement provides the legal-political frame-work. British Imperialism, by making timely (and important!) concessions to the Indian bourgeoisie, has secured the latter as a loyal ally. What we are witnessing in India today is the working out of the consequences of this deliberate and definitive shift by British Imperialism of her social base in India from the feudalists to the native bourgeoisie.

The second consequence of the new set-up in India is that, although British imperialism continues to be the "main enemy" (it is her power that ultimately sustains the present Indian state), nevertheless, the Indian bourgeoisie now become the *enemy face-to-face*. For it is now the Indian bourgeoisie which has, *in the first place*, to attend to the task of holding down the masses. British imperialism, stalking in the back-ground, reserves itself for *open* intervention only in the last resort.

There is, however, a third and important consequence which should also be noted. The political power of British imperialism in India now rests, in the final analysis, mainly on the capacity to intervene militarily in India. This flows from the fact that, in their present situation, the Indian bourgeoisie have *greater freedom of manoeuvre* between the various imperialisms of the world and therefore also as against British imperialism itself. But the capacity (and the need!) for military intervention is not the same as the *possibility* of military intervention. This depends on the relationships of power subsisting at the given time not only between India and Britain but also on a world scale. After all, military invention can well mean the necessity of military *re-conquest*; and India is no pocket handkerchief to be stuffed into one's pocket. History may therefore well show that British Imperialism, in her endeavour to re-fashion her methods of rule in India, has released (as well as generated) forces more powerful than she can readily control. In other words, the question of India's position in the imperial and world polity still remains to be determined in the crucible of events, although what Britain

has granted her is certainly not independence and the settlement she has made with the Indian bourgeoisie is thoroughly reactionary. The struggle against British imperialism therefore still remains to be concluded (and conducted!), although the Indian bourgeoisie now stand more directly across the road to its achievement. "Down with British imperialism!" now means more clearly "Down with the Imperialist-bourgeois Alliance! For a Workers and Peasants Government!" That is to say, the old error about "first with the bourgeoisie against the imperialists, then with the working class against the bourgeoisie" now stands more clearly exposed for the error it is and always was. Not "first and then" is our task but, always with the exploited against the exploiters.

## V. CONGRESS AND THE CONGRESS ADMINISTRATIONS

Such being the relationship of forces in India today, the burning question of contemporary politics in the Indian Union plainly is: what is the correct attitude to Congress and the Congress administrations? What are our tasks in relation to them?

These questions bring me to the central and urgent problem which I really wish to discuss with you today, viz., the nature of Congress and its role in current politics.

Let me state categorically and at once that Congress is the political party of the Indian bourgeoisie. This it has in fact been ever since its inception. But the fact has become clear today to many who hadn't been able to see it before. Such laws as the Public Safety Acts, the anti-strike measures, the victimisation of working class militants, the taxation policies and the like, have proved enormously educative in this respect. Congress stands exposed in its class nature as never before with the masses. The party of the bourgeoisie is *seen in action* as the party of the bourgeoisie.

But Congress as the party of the bourgeoisie now undergoes a profound change in its rule in relation to the masses. A bourgeoisie with monopolistic agency rights from imperialism, especially in the state field, now needs much more to suppress the mass movement than to mobilise it. Congress was *par excellence* the organisation of the Indian bourgeoisie to *control* the mass movement in the interests of bourgeois pressure politics against

imperialism. Now that this function has receded to the point almost of disappearance, Congress has to become very much the orthodox type of party which the bourgeoisie creates for the purpose of vote-catching. As for the function of controlling—and suppressing—the mass movement, this can now be done more readily and efficiently through the state mechanism. Congress continues to be the party of the bourgeoisie, but its functions in relation to the masses have *narrowed and changed*. Hence, incidentally, the proposals for changing its structure.

There is a further aspect to the matter. With the abandonment by imperialism of any direct role in the administration of the country, the Congress to some degree, and the Congress administrations in particular, become the main vehicles for protecting imperialism's interests. They become the primary instruments of the imperialist-bourgeois alliance against the masses.

This outcome of the closer inter-penetration of the imperialist-bourgeois interests has in turn two further consequences. The first is that the exposure of Congress is hastened. The masses in their movement come up too frequently and directly against Congress to escape the necessary inferences. They find in Congress their *enemy face-to-face*.

The second consequence is not so obvious but is perhaps even more important than the first. This is the fact that *Congress is becoming the rallying point of all the forces of reaction in India*. All those forces on which imperialism formerly relied as against Congress itself are now rushing to her with the speed of iron filings drawn to a new magnet. More significantly, Congress in turn has become the deliberate organiser (and re-organiser!) of these decadent, if still powerful, forces against the masses and in the bourgeois interest.

The best example for me to take as illustration of what I mean is the policy of the Nehru-Patel Government towards the Princes and the states peoples. Congress is here putting through a process of re-fashioning the bourgeois relationships with the princes not unsimilar to that with which imperialism re-fashioned its relationship with themselves. The princely order against which the states people were moving with a new intensity is

being given a new lease on life *via* a process of regroupment and sham concessions to democracy which only stultify the aspirations of the states peoples and their struggle. Be it in Kathiawar or in Kashmir, in Hyderabad or in Cochin, the predominant fact in the "reorganisation" of these states or their relations with the Government of India is the continuation *in power* of the princely order. In other words, the re-arranged imperialist-bourgeois alliance is being supplemented with a re-arranged bourgeois-feudalist alliance, the totality of both of which spells, not progress but reaction.

We are now in a position to answer the two questions with which we started. What is the correct attitude to Congress and the Congress administrations? What are our tasks in relation to them? The answers can be given in two sentences. *The correct attitude to Congress and the Congress administrations is that of intransigent and relentless opposition. Our tasks in relation to them are their systematic exposure with a view to bringing about their downfall.* There is no other way forward to independence and socialism.

## VI. OUR TASKS

The urgent task before revolutionaries in India today is the mobilisation of the masses against the imperialist-bourgeois offensive which advances under the sign of Congress (bourgeois) nationalism. The interests of the "nation" (i.e., really of the "national" bourgeoisie) are constantly contrasted in official speeches (including those of Jaiprakash Narain) with the "selfishness" of the working class. We must, in the interests of the "nation" (!), apparently produce more and consume less, for, what is demanded is higher production *without* higher wages. We must (in the interests of the "nation", of course!) apparently take the kicks but never fight back; for what is demanded is a so-called "industrial truce" under which we shall toil patiently while the screws of exploitation are being tightened on us patiently. Above all, we must readily obey and not even accidentally criticize: for, have they not added to the old imperialist jail the new nationalist detention camp! Hail freedom! Hail independence!

Everywhere, thus, the imperialist-bourgeois united front has taken the offensive against the worker and peasant masses. The

most vicious form which this offensive has taken is, of course, the so-called Public Safety Acts. By this most lawless of all laws every concept of democratic liberty has been undermined and the Congress Governments have placed themselves at one fell stroke in dictatorial position. Administrative arrest and detention are the hall-mark of a police state; and this process, if allowed to develop unchecked, can culminate here in India too only in a military-police supported one-party dictatorship of the Chinese Kuomintang.-Chiang Kai Shek type. As to who will be the Indian Chiang Kai Shek is not for us to speculate now; but the Indian Kuomintang is, and cannot be any other than, the Indian National Congress!

How, then, to conduct the resistance? The forces to be mobilised are obvious: but who is to mobilise them and how? That is to say, which parties are to mobilise the resistance, and what is it to be their relationship to each other? This is the most urgent political question of the day and demands a clear answer.

We Trotskyists have a clear and logical answer to this question. We call for a UNITED FRONT OF THE LEFT PARTIES as the first step towards the mobilisation of the masses.

There are certain points which it is necessary to make in regard to this United Left Front slogan. The first point which I think ought to be stressed in regard to it is that it is a *front* and *not* a new united organisation which replaces or in any way substitutes for the parties which come into the front. The parties which come into the front retain in tact their own organisations and their respective programmes. They come into the activity of the front on the basis of these programmes and in accordance with them. They do not, or, at least, should not come into the front *via* any compromise on the question of their principles and programmes but in terms of these and for the service of these. That is why united fronts are sought for no other reason than the more effective carrying out of specific actions or courses of action.

The above will also help to make clear a second point, viz., that the task of building the United Left Front does not displace or substitute for the task of building the proletarian revolutionary party. This is the abiding and ever urgent task of the present

epoch, in India as elsewhere. The United Left Front, which is the instrument of the masses in resistance against the present reaction, is not and cannot be the instrument of the masses in carrying through the revolution. The one instrument for that task is the party, the proletarian revolutionary party. In all circumstances and amidst all turns of the situation, this remains the abiding task of every revolutionary in India.

Having thus demarcated the limits of the United Left Front in one direction, it is necessary in face of current Stalinist policy in India to demarcate it also in another direction.

The UNITED LEFT FRONT which we demand must not, in the first place, be confused with the Democratic Front or People's Front which the Communist Party of India demands. The so-called Democratic Front is fundamentally a class-collaborationist front, whereas the United Left Front proceeds along the line of developing the class struggle. The United Left Front proceeds from the necessity of the working class being the spear-head of the mass movement, whereas the Democratic Front is anchored elsewhere—precisely in the orbit of the petty bourgeoisie. The United Left Front, in other words, seeks to draw the radicalised petty bourgeoisie behind the working class and into alliance with it; the Democratic Front on the other hand constitutes an *adaptation* of the working class to the petty bourgeoisie and, therefore, in the final analysis, a *subordination* of the working class to the petty bourgeoisie. The United Left Front is therefore not contained within the Democratic Front but *contrasts* with it.

The second point I wish to make about the United Left Front demand is that it is in the first place addressed to the CPI and the SP. A Left Front which does not contain *both* these organisations fails to be a Left Front at all (though it may constitute a step towards its achievement). They are the key to the question; and of the two, the SP is undoubtedly the key of keys.

What is it that stands in the way of the SP coming into such a front? Basically, its loyalty to Congress. Though the SP has ceased to be the CSP in name, it unfortunately continues to be a CSP in fact—with the accent on the "C", moreover, and not on the "S", at all material times. It therefore limits itself fundamentally to functioning only as a "loyal opposition" to Congress



that is to say, not as a constitutional opposition to the Congress regime but as an opposition *loyal to the Congress itself*.

This is the old "capture Congress" perspective adapted to the new conditions in India. And it is bound to be as fatal to the SP and the masses today as it was in the old days. For, on the one hand, it ties the SP to the bourgeois apron-strings at the very moment when most they need to be cut; and on the other hand it generates not only in the SP but among the masses themselves fatal illusions about Congress.

The urgent task in building the United Left Front on an all-India scale, therefore, is the task of pushing and pulling the SP in that direction. This is first and foremost the task of the SP membership itself. All we can point out to them at this stage is that they will find in practice that the fight to bring the SP into the United Left Front orbit is also the fight to bring the SP out of the Congress orbit. There is no middle path between opposing Congress (as distinct from opposing *within* Congress) and supporting it—although, of course, you can vacillate between the two. And let all SPers also realize that the drive of the Congress today against the "Marxist" parties is but a preliminary to the drive against all the Left parties tomorrow. Let them take warning in time from the events in Jai Prakash Narain's "own" Bihar—and act! Time not only marches on: it also ebbs quickly.

Comrades and Friends!

I am afraid I have taken more time than I ought to have and perhaps also more than you would have wished. It may also be that many of you are wondering what relevance this analysis of the general political situation has to your tasks.

My answer is that the proper assessment of the new situation in India has everything to do with the definition of your tasks. It is clear from what I have said in this address that it is impossible to work with the old perspectives. In particular, as I have pointed out, the entire attitude to Congress has to be revised in the light of its role in the present epoch.

This necessity applies as cogently in the student field as in other fields of political activity. It is necessary for students who really wish to engage in revolutionary activity to grasp that there

is no longer room for manœuvre within Congress-dominated organisations in the student field, even as in other fields. The task now is to organize counter to Congress itself, directly and separately.

From what I have gathered of your history, life seems already to have forced this lesson on you in action before you set about the theoretical comprehension of the necessity. I understand that the struggle against Public Safety Bill led to a sharp break between pro-Congress students and revolutionary students. The task before you is to generalise that experience and to apply it on a nation-wide scale.

In seeking to do this, it is essential that the true nature of Stalinism be also clearly grasped. A party whose policies find their main-spring in the foreign policy needs of the Soviet bureaucracy and not in the revolutionary interests of the international working class movement cannot provide a field of operation for revolutionary parties. The utterly bureaucratized All India Students' Federation is but an extension into the student field of the utterly bureaucratized Communist Party of India (Stalinists). The AISF too cannot therefore provide room for operation by revolutionary students.

The task which arises before you in this period is therefore the building of a separate socialist student organisation which will, on the one hand, counterpose itself to the Congress-dominated student organisations and, on the other, seek united front activity (*not* unity!) with the AISF. If your organisation can give the necessary drive for the formation of such an organisation on an all-India scale, you will have done well by history.

May I add that I have no doubt of your capacity to perform this task. The students of Bengal have a heroic history which testifies to their courage. I am sure therefore that you will go to this task with the necessary boldness. The students of Bengal have also shown clear discernment of issues as was illustrated once again, for instance, in your recent struggle against the Bengal Public Safety Act. The students of Bengal will therefore, I am sure, not feel that sense of emptiness in life which the recent tragic assassination from which I started this address seems to have induced especially in high places. No, my friends, the light has not gone out of our lives, nor is the future dark. On the contrary, the road before us is clear—the road of unremitting class struggle. If there is any final call I have to make as a form of conclusion to my address therefore, it is to invite you to tread firmly on that road and to go ahead. The revolution beckons—especially to youth. Forward on the revolutionary road! Inquilab Zindabad!

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