

Two Centenaries on both sides of the Himalayas

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Together the two, on both sides of the Himalayas, is a vast mass of land with almost half of the world population, huge resources, wide varieties of ecologies, agro-ecological and climate zones, and rich with by-gone civilizations fossilized in history. Mountain ranges stand high between them. But the uniformity that once put them on the same plane is exploitative systems – feudal, semi-feudal, imperialist – chaining all the commoners and all possibilities for advancement. Peoples in both the lands were struggling for generations to overthrow the exploitative systems.

With this background they – India, considered as a subcontinent, now, trifurcated, and China, bigger than the subcontinent in geographical term – embarked on a heroic journey towards a humane society through toilers' revolution based on a scientific theory – Marxism-Leninism – a century ago. Both of them threw away respective colonial/neo-colonial masters: India got rid of the British colonial masters in 1947 as the masters, bled white in a world war, saw a gathering storm crossing past horizon while China declared its victory over imperialism and its lackeys two years later.

The Communist Party of China (CPC) led the wars for liberation beginning in 1921 that went through the periods of First, Second and Third Revolutionary Civil War, and the War of Resistance against Japan. The Communist Party of India (CPI) began its journey in the same year. Anyway, today, 2021, it can be claimed there're reasons to celebrate and reflect the two centenaries. With phases of heroic struggles and sacrifices, debacles and deviations, both of the communist parties struggled along the exploited and people, for the exploited and people. How their century-long struggles went on? A stock taking will not be a futile exercise; rather will have utility in forward march of people.

Communist Party of China

China, through its peasant movements in Hunan and in other areas, through its historic journey – the epical Long March, through its days in many guerrilla zones, liberated areas behind enemy lines, in Yen-an, through its political preparations before battles, mobile wars and war of annihilation by the People's Liberation Army (PLA) including the New Fourth Army, the Eighth Route Army, and the Second and Third Field Armies made a victorious march to Beijing in 1949; and Mao, the communist who stands as a symbol of the communist-led people's struggle in China, made the historic proclamation of liberation while "bidding farewell" to Leighton Stuart. Before reaching

Beijing, the CPC-led armed political struggle established people's political power in regions the exploited people liberated: "In every [...] Liberated Areas, [...] popularly elected governments, that is, local coalition governments, [were] set up, in which Communists and representative personalities of other anti-Japanese parties or without any party affiliation [were] cooperating."

This long march – a task like an old man removing mountains⁷ began with about a dozen communist revolutionaries. "It was through the Russians that the Chinese found Marxism. Before the October Revolution, the Chinese were not only ignorant of Lenin and Stalin, they did not even know of Marx and Engels. The salvos of the October Revolution brought us Marxism-Leninism." Mao reminded: "To ensure that we will definitely achieve success in our revolution and will not lead the masses astray, we must pay attention to uniting with our real friends in order to attack our real enemies." The leader of the CPC called to serve the people, investigate the rural areas. In 1928, seven years since organizing of the CPC, "China [emerged as] the only country in the world [...] where [...] areas under Red political power [...] emerged in the midst of a White regime which encircles them. [...] [O]ne reason for this phenomenon lies in the incessant splits and wars within China's comprador classes. So long as these splits and wars continue, it is possible for an armed independent regime of workers and peasants to survive and grow. In addition, its survival and growth require the following conditions: (1) a sound mass base, (2) a sound party organization, (3) a fairly strong Red Army, (4) terrain favorable to military operations, and (5) economic resources sufficient for sustenance." Within 17 years, by early-1945, the CPC's class enemy Kuomintang's "armed forces have shrunk to less than half their original size and most of them have virtually lost their combat effective-ness;" there emerged "a profound rift between [the ruling Kuomintang] clique and the broad masses and a grave crisis of mass impoverishment, seething discontent and widespread revolt [...]" and Kuomintang's "role in the war [to resist Japan was] sharply reduced." The communist leader identified contradictions, and proper handling of the contradictions, practicing revolutionary work, creating literature for people, and a correct military line for establishing people's political power. Mao dealt with practical problems of study, nourishing cadres, party committee system, discipline, intellectuals, and problems of protracted people's war – from foiling of encirclement and combing campaigns, organizing base areas and guerrilla war. The CPC, following Mao's line, had to sort out problems of organizing revolutionary government, production in base areas, civil and national resistance wars, and united front. The CPC had to, as Mao analyzed, identify and resolve the problems of democracy in China. The CPC adopted and practiced Mao's ideas and thoughts; and, no doubt, Mao's line had to enter into conflicts with opposing forces within the party while those forces created obstructions to Mao's line – an invariable

development coming out of class conflict in the society. History of the CPC, as with all political parties, is full with contradictions since its inception, but nothing failed the CPC in making advances and achievements, gains and successes, which ultimately furthered interests of the exploited.

This was a prairie fire from a spark, and, the journey moved to the Period of the Socialist Revolution and Socialist Reconstruction. In this phase, came the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution – unprecedented in the political history of humankind. The CPC, under the leadership of Mao, unswervingly opposed revisionism led by the Khrushchevites. That was a principled fight based on the principles of Marxism – Leninism, on contradictions on the world stage, on practical questions of the world proletariat's struggle against capital and imperialism, on the question of political struggle for establishing political power of the exploited.

With contradictions, debates, deviations and struggles against deviations, changes in the manifesto of the party and in definitions related to classes opposed and allied, the journey is moving forward. The CPC has always emerged victorious adopting correct line. There're differences of opinions among experts on the CPC and the revolution in China, on its present character. With a lot of issues for investigation pending in the areas of economy, politics, ideological struggle and class struggle, it will not be scientific to brand the CPC, at this stage of enquiry, as "capitulationist", "capitalist roader", "part of imperialist system", "surrendering class struggle", "imperialism", and similar other brandings. Despite many unique developments within the CPC over the last few years, it can be summarized: With class conflicts, with inequalities, the advancements the people in China under the leadership of the CPC have made till today in the areas of economy, education, livelihood, science and technology, in getting out of clutches of imperialism and in opposing imperialism, in gaining dignity are unprecedented. These were achieved under the leadership of the CPC. It's significant in the post-Cold War period, the period that was initially characterized by imperialism's thumping and clawing, including invading, occupying, destroying of many countries, of all the peoples in all lands as an imperialist world order was reigning for a number of years without facing any meaningful obstruction and opposition. Still today, the CPC is standing opposed to the imperialist camp providing a space to many countries and people oppressed /threatened by imperialism. The revolution in China, writes Jack Belden, "has so changed the coorelation of forces in the Orient that the whole history of the world is likely to be altered." The observation Belden made long ago now appears factual as the revolution under the leadership of the CPC is still struggling with realities of contradiction charged with powers of different classes in China, and with the existing imperialist world order.

Communist Movement

in the Subcontinent

At the same time, the CPI's journey began with a correlation of class forces in the subcontinent – a vast multitude of poor peasantry, a young industrial proletariat, a big chunk of middle class versus imperialism and its lackeys in rural and urban economic and political scenes. Blazoned with heroic struggles of the working people in parts of the subcontinent, with immense possibilities of making advances in political struggle, the party had to encounter appeasements, capitulations, deviations, experiences, often with failures to properly summarize, and endure through immortal sacrifices by industrial workers, peasants and party activists and leaders thousands in number.

Increased expropriation and indebtedness of the cultivators, peasantry's increasing land-hunger, stagnation, deterioration and unbalanced agriculture situation including low yield and waste of labor, extension of landlordism, and rapid growth of agricultural proletariat characterized the rural/agricultural scene in the colonized south Asian land. The indebtedness led to creation of landless proletariat. The scene – inefficient, disorganized, parasitic and exploitative – was a mountain-like obstacle to all sorts of development of the agriculture economy and the broader society. The land experienced peasant unrest, risings and movements in increasing number and velocity – unparalleled in the sub-continent. The peasants were increasingly joining national political struggle.

The years 1918-21 witnessed a great strike movement by the industrial proletariat in the sub-continent. Their wage and living condition, and appropriation of surplus value were inhuman.

With this background on this colonized land, the CPI emerged and operated. The CPI, following the Chauri Chaura incident and the verdict of condemned to death of 172 poor, majority of them poor cultivators, called for a general strike demanding release of the condemned. It was a call for political struggle in 1923 – significant, no doubt. In the article "On trade unionism" on November 1922, M N Roy called for "revolutionary mass action involving the pauperised peasantry, as well as city and rural wage-earners, who must be organized by those who want to see free India enter a period of social progress." Although, as "the task before the Trade Union Congress", it called for revolution, not reform, it said: "The Indian National Congress [...] must lead the struggle under the banner [...] of revolutionary nationalism." The leadership was voluntarily offered to the Congress!

Through debates on name of political party, political strategy and tactics, stage of revolution, allies, etc. the working people's movement under the leadership of CPI advanced in different parts in the sub-continent; and a number of those including the struggles in Telengana, Solapur, Bombay (now, Mumbai), vast parts of Bengal were promising and significant. "The communists", said a Home Department Political Report

of 1940, "have the whip in hand in Bengal, Andhra, Kerala and the Punjab where the Kisan movement is comparatively more developed."

But, the party ultimately failed to formulate an appropriate line that could lead it to take initiative and leadership in people's political struggle against imperialism and feudalism, mobilize the vast masses of people for seizure of political power. It failed to formulate any appropriate program for democracy. It was opposite to the approach of the CPC, which was marching for New Democracy. The same is found on the form of struggle. In this context, Naxalbari came as a strategic breakthrough – "exploded", to quote Samar Sen, "many a myth and restored faith in the courage and character of the revolutionary Left in India. It seemed that the *ever-yawning gap between the precept and practice* since Telengana would be *bridged*. [...] The upheaval was such that *nothing remained the same* after Naxalbari. People had to read just their position vis-à-vis every aspect of the system: political, administration, military, cultural." Naxalbari emerged as a pathfinder to the strategic questions the sub-continent has to resolve for a radical change.

One of the most significant positions the CPI took was its stand against the tact imperialism was persistently following and imperialism's allies were bolstering: Sectarianism/communalism – disuniting the people. But, ultimately, within a quarter of a century, the party failed to foil the tact – a historic failure with a far-reaching implication on the entire people's struggle for emancipation in this sub-continent as the land was bifurcated that cemented communalism, and CPI and the toiling masses paid with streams blood and disjointed struggles for the exploiters' tact.

There were moments the CPI with a huge mass following and with areas of strong position having possibilities of building up strongholds/ areas of influence/base veered from left to right to left to right – a constant pattern that made it appear, at times, a vessel losing destination, and, at times, a camp follower of the political forces representing the dominating capitals – a tragic character in the modern-day history of the land. The masses of the working people were having massive mobilizations for political struggle, waging heroic struggles and making immense sacrifices, which no other class in this land has ever made; but these mobilizations, struggles and sacrifices were building stepping stone and a wide, smooth staircase to the enthronement of the exploiting classes – assumption of political power. In fact, the exploiting classes carried on conspiracies to secure their interests and to keep people chained, and waged all their political struggles by mobilizing the people of this land, and the exploited, toiling masses were the biggest part of this people that played the most forceful role in these struggles, that provided the steam in this political locomotive driven by the exploiting classes. A seriocomedy it was!

There's every reason to cite Mao to ascertain the reason behind this precarious position of the CPI: The forces of reactionary ruling classes were many times stronger than the subjective forces of revolution. Deviations, immaturity, appeasements, betrayals, all having class basis, which have already been discussed by many scholars and politicians, had respective roles in this pathetic journey.

The entire scene changed in mid-1947, the moment the sub-continent was bifurcated. With this bifurcation, the CPI was divided into two parts, which within a short time, practically took shape of three parts; all of which having distinctive characters. The dominating class forces the three parts of the CPI, three communist parties with three names (CPI, Communist Party of Pakistan and East Pakistan Communist Party), had to encounter, the political struggles these parties had to wage, the programs these parties had to formulate were different. Since March 1971, the communist movement in East Pakistan had to face a situation completely different from the rest two. Split in the inter-national communist movement with the rise of the Khrushchevites in the Communist Party of Soviet Union (CPSU), the CPSU-usurpers' politics in the name of de-Stalinization, and the Great Debate split the three Communist Parties (CP) in the sub-continent, which was followed by further splits in the camp of the CPs upholding the ideological position of the CPC/Mao leading these into factions while the followers of the Khrushchevite-line could hold on their unity to many extent till the emergence of Gorbachevites in Moscow.

While there're glorious sparks and thunders in class struggles in different parts of the sub-continent, in which a number of the CPs/factions took lead, and at moments, a number of the CPs resorted to armed struggles and successfully challenged states, the CPs are yet to formulate line, as one part/faction accuses others, appropriate for uniting and mobilizing the masses of people for the revolution they strive to organize and lead. A few of the struggles a number of the CPs/factions waged over the decades are exemplary and indicative for paving the path of revolution while failures in ideological struggle find witness in the rise/spread of the right/extreme right. No significant peasant and labor movement could be organized in a number of parts in the land while significant peasant and labor movements rose with force in others. A few years after the CPI was organized, the party told the workers: "Yet still today bourgeois 'leaders' are controlling the movement. [...] They are still burning foreign clothes – as if that will get independence! They are still giving imperialism 'another chance' as if they are not certain that imperialism is their enemy! The bourgeois labour leaders are still trying to enter into cooperation with imperialism. They still hold back the development of the labour movement splitting and disorganizing it for their own class purpose." Over a century, how far change is there in the scene? Political developments and imperialism's position in the region provide the answer: Not that

much, or broadly nothing, or the bourgeois leaders/politics still control /dominate everything – from life to economy to politics, from ideology to world view to agenda, from discourse to debate to mass communication and publicity. Moreover, in areas, their grip has tightened; and many of capitals' onslaughts go unchallenged. In many areas of politics and social mobilization, the initiative, and in cases, all activities have been handed over to the so-called NGOs, the non-political appearing political organizations, the long arm of foreign policy of imperialism. Vacuums in many areas of politics, culture, environment and ecology, and struggle have not been filled by the CPs/its factions, but by the NGOs. Environment and ecological rights, a vital democratic space to clench from capital, have not been effectively pronounced as part of democratic rights.

In no part, the question of democracy of the people – New Democracy – could be thrust forward as alternative to the “democracy” the exploiting classes organize and uphold although the “democracy” of the exploiting classes, after so many years since it began its journey in different forms, stands as non-representative, participatory, accountable, transparent and responsive. The question of democracy is always considered in relation to, and by connecting to the “democracy”, in all its sham character and appearance, the exploiting classes have erected. It's a major failure reflecting many aspects of the CPs' programs, working, approach, and staying under the shadow of politics of the exploiting classes.

As a whole, it's a part of the reality in this sub-continent, going on for a century, dominated by the ruling capitals; and this signifies that the dominating capitals are more organized, powerful and efficient than their class enemies – the exploited as the exploited masses of people are constantly bombarded with bourgeois ideology, politics and political programs, which the exploited peoples have to smash and send to the pages of history.