

MARXIST

Theoretical Quarterly of the Communist Party of India (Marxist)

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Editor's Note

This April-June 2020 issue of Marxist is also delayed for reasons beyond our control. We had informed that the January-March issue was being sent to the printers when the national lockdown was announced on March 24. The printing finally became possible only in the first half of June. The printed copies, however, continue to be stacked in the office as the postal services have not yet resumed for these to reach our subscribers. Hence this issue of the Marxist is being issued in the electronic format that would also be available as a PDF on the website. As and when the postal dispatch returns to normal this will be printed and posted to all the subscribers. I am sure that all of you understand the circumstances in which Marxist is being forced to do its work.

Since the Covid-19 pandemic and the associated ill-prepared lockdown has caused the disruption of the normal life and created conditions of what is being described as a 'new normal', we decided to focus this issue on the pandemic and the consequences of this lockdown on the Indian people and the economy. Naturally, this also deals with the implications that are in store for the country and the people in the future.

The discussion opens with a contribution by Prabir Purkayastha on the 'Covid-19 Pandemic and the Pathologies of late Capitalism'. Prabir traces the journey of early capitalism—mercantilism: the loot and plunder associated with it. This was accompanied by a genocide of the local population of the lands

that they captured. What is missing in this recorded history is the manner in which this process caused the spread of diseases resulting in various epidemics in the past.

Further, much of the spread of such viruses like the coronavirus, in its various mutated forms, are often *zoonotic*, i.e. spread from animals to humans. How a mutation causes this transmission is still a matter of study. But one thing is clear that *zoonotic* viruses and consequent diseases thrive in conditions of environmental degradation. Such degradation is the constant companion of capitalism's predatory urge for maximizing profits.

Clearly, countries that have invested in universal public health, proper sanitation have done much better in containing the Covid pandemic than those who pursue neoliberal policies of privatization of public assets and services for the loot of private profit. This distinction is discussed by contrasting the experience of socialist countries with that of the advanced capitalist countries. In India, the success of the LDF government in Kerala with its record of decades of investment in public health is in sharp contrast with the manner in which the pandemic is surging in other parts of the country.

The failure of PM Modi's abrupt, unplanned, unprepared national lockdown highlighted its inability to contain the spread of the pandemic. On the contrary, facilitating its spread due to the economic woes most chillingly seen in the movement of migrant labour has compounded the situation. The grave consequences are being borne by the people.

At the global level the desperate race for the much awaited vaccine cannot prioritize the maximizing private profits at the expense of human lives. This vaccine must be removed from the ambit of intellectual property rights and the patent regime. USA and UK have resisted such efforts in international fora. Far from assisting the containment of Covid-19 and strengthening the efforts to combat it, the USA is preparing itself to strengthen its global hegemony in the post-Covid world. Its withdrawal from the

WHO and the international campaigns it is mounting are actually pushing the world into a deeper health and economic crisis.

Professor C.P. Chandrasekhar discusses the crisis being faced by the Indian economy in the wake of this pandemic and the national lockdown.

Pre-lockdown the Indian economy was already plunging into a recession due to severe demand compression in the economy. The efforts by the current BJP central government to meet this crisis through growing concessions to private corporates resulted in a big shrinking of governmental revenues constraining its capacities for expenditures. This led to a further contraction of domestic demand.

The Covid shock and the lockdown calamity came in this background severely disrupting, both at the global and domestic levels, the production and supply chains. This resulted in a further compression of domestic demand in the economy. The BJP central government's response even here was to focus on provision of resources to private capital at cheaper terms rather than expanding domestic demand through cash transfers and through free food distribution and a sharp rise in public expenditure. The result is that we are now in the midst of both an economic as well as a health emergency.

As a document we are reproducing the resolution adopted by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Brazil (PCdoB) on the serious situation in the world and the country with the spread of Covid-19. This resolution affirms that the logic of the capitalist system has, once again, reconfirmed two antagonistic camps: one that defends life and the other that defends bankers and their monopolies. This discussion is in the concrete situation of the right-wing Bolsonaro government and its policies compounding the crisis in Brazil.

We are reproducing this in the light of the fact that India is

among the countries like the USA, Brazil, Turkey, etc., that have right-wing governments pursuing policies that engender the strengthening of authoritarianism rather than providing relief to the people.

Finally, all through the period of the Covid outbreak and the national lockdown, the CPI(M), its various units and members have played an active role in organizing relief to the people who were the worst sufferers of this lockdown, particularly the lakhs of migrant workers who marched through intense heat to reach their homes when the central government refused to arrange transportation for them.

During this period at the central level the Party's Polit Bureau consistently intervened through statements, through joint Left parties' intervention and calls for action and for forging a larger unity on common issues with 22 opposition parties that adopted a common charter of demands and gave a call for action.

The mass organizations were active all through this period. They continue to be so and have taken various initiatives to mobilize the people in popular protests putting pressure on the government both centrally and at the state level to provide the needed relief to the people.

The Party's Polit Bureau and Central Committee met online and the Central Committee gave a call for a nationwide protest action on a 16-point demand charter.

Of the many communications and calls that were issued by the Party Centre, we are reproducing a few that encapsulated the Party's understanding and its active intervention during this period.