
STRUGGLE AGAINST IMPERIALISM IS NEITHER FUN NOR PICNIC ! IT IS A LIFE AND DEATH PRACTICE !

Statement of the Revolutionary Writers' Association,
at Asian Social Forum India

The Asian Social Forum is being held in Hyderabad from January 2–7, 2003. The organisers say that anyone opposing globalisation and violence in the name of religion can take part. They claim that thousands of people will participate in this programme consisting of eight conferences and hundred seminars with an estimated budget of Rs 8 crore. All this will happen in Andhra Pradesh, where people's consciousness against imperialist globalisation is rising, and where organised struggles in some form or another are taking place. There have been serious debates among concerned people on whether there is any relationship between these and the ASF. Debate is also raging about the organisers of the ASF, the funding, and their attitude towards revolutionary forces, and the attitudes taken by anti-imperialist forces in the state with regard to ASF.

The Andhra Pradesh Revolutionary Writers' Association (RWA — popularly known as Virasam) is a literary organisation that for thirty-two years has been spreading genuine anti-imperialist consciousness in the light of Marxist-Leninist-Mao thought. It has consequently stood by people's movements against imperialism, and would like to spell out its position on these issues.

The ASF is an attempt to turn the opposition against imperialist globalisation into a mere exhibition, a jamboree and carnival. In the context of imperialist conspiracies and machinations and new forms of exploitation being exposed before everyone, people are becoming increasingly conscious of fighting them. People's aspirations are being manifested in different forms. It is very essential to build unity among all these people. This effort is not only necessary but also possible, but it should not be restricted to mere *exhibition* of anger or *wailing* over imperialist exploitation for a couple of days, only to be forgotten later. Anti-imperialism has to become a *daily practice*.

However, the Social Forum's principles declare that practice is in the realm of

respective organisations, and it is not possible to take decisions on actions or proposals on *behalf* of the Social Forum. This is the crux of its essential nature. Even if they do not oppose action in words, their perspective prevents actions in deed. We do not mean to say that solidarity expressions and unity statements are not useful in the anti-imperialist struggle. But what is their objective ? At best, they will work as safety valves and self-satisfying expressions for all those who have anti-imperialist consciousness but are not willing to take risks involved in practice. In fact, these solidarity expressions should generate fear in the enemy, and inspiration and a sense of unity in people. But the January 2–7 event is being funded by the enemies or their representatives, and since the Social Forum does not have any action plan that fosters unity and solidarity among people, it would neither evoke fear in enemies nor develop unity among people.

There is a major philosophical and political-economy problem with the understanding of the Forum, if not with the NGOs who are spearheading it. Since imperialism in the post-Bolshevik revolution era has evolved a collaborative strategy with feudal elements, anti-imperialism would be meaningless if it is not coupled with anti-feudalism. If an anti-imperialist struggle has to be genuine, it has to be specifically anti-feudal and take up those local struggles. The Social Forum does not even like the word ‘struggle’, and most organisations at the helm of the affairs do not recognise feudalism in the country. They say “violence in the name of religion” instead of “Hindu fascist communalism”.

The WSF-India Chapter has eighteen principles and the India Programme Committee has formulated six major themes for the conference. None of these even mentions the principal problem of Indian people — the land question, or people’s struggles for land, or the government’s fake land reform programme. If the Social Forum believes that the process of globalisation has nothing to do with the land question, it has not understood the real import of globalisation in this country. Lakhs of acres of land being given away to MNCs, access of global market into the agricultural sector, denial of remunerative prices to peasantry, reduction in wage labour for the landless poor — globalisation is the direct cause for all these. Because of globalisation, the governments are trying to abolish adivasi (tribal) land protection legislation and surrendering those lands to MNCs and their compatriots. Many documents published by international financial and consultancy organisations during the process of globalisation clearly speak against land reforms.

With this backdrop, how should we see the fact that the Social Forum, which claims to oppose globalisation, has not mentioned the land question in Hyderabad ? This is the land where 4,000 small and landless peasants sacrificed their lives in the historic Telangana armed struggle (1946–51) for land and gave the slogan ‘Land to the Tiller’ to the political agenda of the country. This is the land where, even today, a great struggle for land, livelihood and liberation is surging ahead. The Social Forum holds its meeting on the same land, with no mention of land.

NGOs behind the Social Forum also substitute manoeuvring for struggle and patronising for questioning. It turns potential activists into managers. This is happening at a time when the forces of globalisation are forcing governments to abdicate the

responsibilities of the welfare state and withdraw from social sectors. These NGOs are also advising the same thing in a different language. They advise people not to look to the government. They preach to people under an attractive slogan of 'self-help', not to question the government. They distract the struggling consciousness of people with the help of charity from imperialist agencies. Whatever they may say about raising initiative, in the final analysis they are only converting people into beggars dependant on the mercy of the managers of NGOs.

The sources of funding to NGOs, their spending patterns, and their style of functioning are another important concern. Imperialist agencies and governments, religious organisations and MNCs provide funds to them, directly or indirectly. There is a lot of debate on the objectives of this funding. Some people are even indulging in misleading arguments about whether revolutionary organisations are not also getting funds from people's 'enemies'.

It is possible to argue that Indian people tend to innocently suspect everything that is foreign. But after the bitter experience of 200 years of colonial rule, exploitation, oppression and violence, they should recognise that charity is a weapon in the armoury of imperialists. Even if there is no conspiracy in the charity, and even if it is real philanthropy, they know that after all, it is only a one-day free meal scheme of the rich, who exploit them all through the year. The lower rung employees and local managers of NGOs may not be aware of the pros and cons of the funds and the real objectives of funding. They may innocently believe that it is social service. But the funding agencies have clear-cut aims. They fund research studies that assess the struggling consciousness of the people of this country, to amass data to suppress their movements. They fund to tame all those who participated in struggles and then came out. They fund education, health, minor irrigation, agriculture, etc, to silence people who may otherwise question the government on the abdication of its responsibilities. They fund to create an illusion that problems can be solved with tinkering, reforms, and charity and to divert people from the idea of transforming the system. They fund publicity campaigns that pretend to be progressive but are aimed at blunting the struggling spirit.

These funds are a vicious circle. What forces of globalisation do with the right hand, NGOs do with the left hand. There may be one or two NGOs which do not have this kind of funding and collect donations from individuals and working masses in imperialist countries. But that is only an exception. Ninety-eight per cent of NGOs get their funds from imperialist governments, religious organisations, and MNCs.

The question is also not about funding alone. What are the perspectives of funding agencies and funded organisations ? Those funding NGOs do so to divert people from struggles and inculcate 'service' in place of struggle, and to create an atmosphere where people will not question the state or seek to radically transform the system. NGOs are toeing this line. It may be true that some revolutionaries are collecting levies from the enemies also. But those funds have not blunted the struggling perspective. There is no occasion when revolutionary practice was abandoned because of funds. Instances of changed life-style due to funding are also few and far between. But in the case of NGOs, it is everyone's knowledge how wastefully and conspicuously

they spend. The life-styles of NGO managers clearly demonstrate that there is no relation between funds and serving the people. Organising a programme against globalisation depending on these NGOs is either ridiculous or deceptive.

After NGOs, is the question of the role of the mass organisations of both the revisionist parties. These parties have contributed to spreading globalisation — the CPM by giving outside support to the United Front government and the CPI by joining it. The UF government continued and enhanced the implementation of globalisation. The CPI's top leader Indrajit Gupta was the Chairman of the Cabinet Committee on Disinvestment which took privatisation further and deeper. The Government of West Bengal is not only implementing all the globalisation policies, but also recently approached McKinsey and Company to further the implementation. The top leaders of the CPM have once again declared that they do not have any objection joining hands with World Bank agent Chandrababu Naidu [Chief Minister of the state of Andhra Pradesh, of which Hyderabad is the capital — Ed], if he severs his relations with the BJP. The CPM Chief Minister Buddhadev Bhattacharya (of the state of West Bengal) is seeking lessons from Chandrababu Naidu in suppressing the revolutionaries who genuinely fight imperialism. With this history, who are these affiliated organisations of CPI and CPM trying to cheat ?

The Forum's list of speakers include a jurist who formulated the most notorious piece of legislation, the POTA, and a former Finance and Prime Minister, the real force behind Rajiv Gandhi's import liberalisation policies, the precursor of the New Economic Policies, not to speak of bureaucrats who have implemented globalisation in the country. We are aware that there are some really pro-people organisations and intellectuals behind the Hyderabad Forum. We do not know with what innocence, what lack of information or what temptations those people are there. But although we know that some of them have joined it in order to change it, there are also lessons of history. After the withdrawal of the Telangana armed struggle in the 1940s, some of the communist leaders proposed to join the Nehru government to change it. The end result was nothing but a change in them.

The Social Forum directly or indirectly says it is against practice, perspective, theory and movements. Speaking against structures is fashionable nowadays, but when you want to face an enemy like globalisation which is strongly structured, backed with an ideology and practice, what purpose would this Forum serve by denying practice, theory, politics and organisational effort ? Though the Forum speaks of an 'alternative', this becomes meaningless without practice.

In reality, the Forum becomes an alternative to the existing and ongoing people's struggles instead of being an alternative to the capitalist order. This Forum is trying to cheat people under the garb of a great slogan 'Another world is possible !' which sounds very good. But do the agencies that fund the Social Forum have a right to adopt this slogan ? Do the majority of the organisers have a right to raise this slogan ? If it were an action plan against imperialist globalisation and capitalism, why is this ambiguity on 'another' world ? Would it not be better to say that *socialism* is possible ?

The Revolutionary Writers' Association appeals to all those participating in this event with real anger against globalisation, with real aspirations to explore alternatives

to capitalist violence and exploitation, and with illusions about the Forum, to think over these issues. RWA strongly believes that this anger and aspiration call for a united action of broad masses. But there is no place for conspirators, back-stabbers and wolves masquerading as sheep in that unity. RWA thinks that it would be better to have a small-organised action instead of an empty carnival with a hundred thousand people. RWA feels that today is the time to repeat the great slogan of Marx and Engels given 150 years ago : 'workers of the world unite' but with much more vigour to (also)isolate the enemies of the people. Mao, who creatively applied Marxism-Leninism to the era in which imperialism would be vanquished, said, "Imperialism is a paper tiger". This is proved today much more than ever. RWA believes that this paper tiger can only be destroyed with people's unity and appeals once again to all those who are participating in this event to take part in genuine anti-imperialist practice.

**Defeat imperialist globalisation !
Long live RWA !
Long live revolution !
Another world is possible only through class struggle !**

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Revolutionary Writers' Association (RWA), popularly known as Virasam, is a literary organisation based in the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh. It has been spreading genuine anti-imperialist consciousness in the context of Marxist-Leninist-Mao-Tse-Tung thought for the last 32 years.
