

V.Reddy

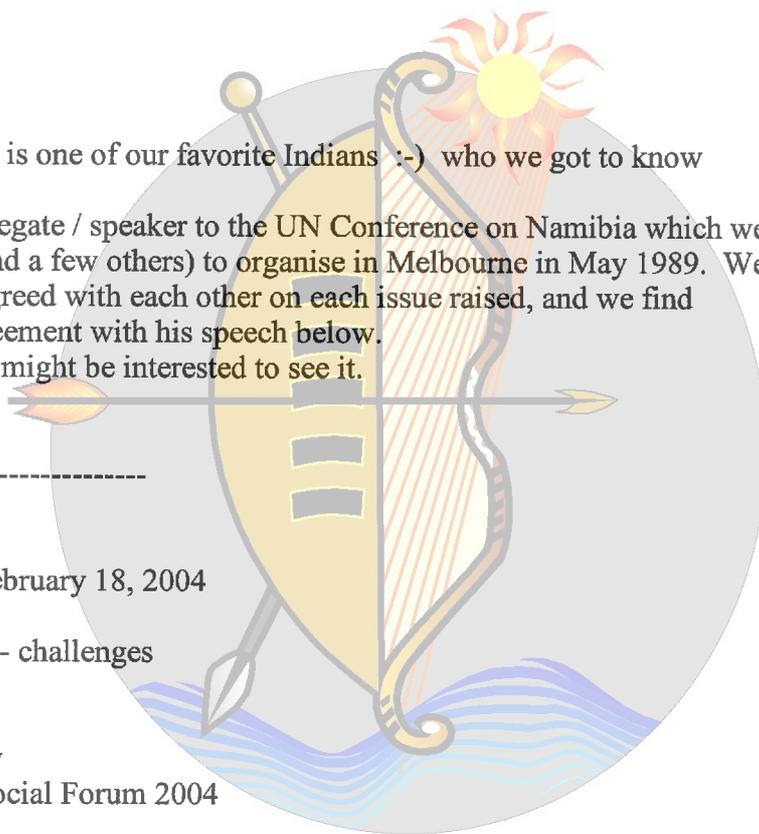
From: "Phyllis Naidoo" <phyllie@iafrica.com>
To: <Vino@pixie.udw.ac.za>
Sent: Wednesday, February 25, 2004 7:15 AM
Subject: Fw: Speech to World Social Forum - by Sitaram Yechuri

Vino,
 If this works please make me a copy of this article too.
 Love
 Phyllis

----- Original Message -----

From: "Ron Gray / Irene Gale" <grayle@bigpond.net.au>
To: <grayle@bigpond.net.au>
Sent: Tuesday, February 24, 2004 2:27 AM
Subject: Speech to World Social Forum - by Sitaram Yechuri

> Dear all,
 >
 > Sitaram Yechuri is one of our favorite Indians :-) who we got to know
 > when
 > he came as a delegate / speaker to the UN Conference on Namibia which we
 > helped Linda (and a few others) to organise in Melbourne in May 1989. We
 > found that we agreed with each other on each issue raised, and we find
 > ourselves in agreement with his speech below.
 > We thought you might be interested to see it.
 >
 > Ron and Irene
 > -----
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 >
 > The Guardian February 18, 2004
 >
 > Socialism today - challenges
 >
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 > Sitaram Yechury
 > At The World Social Forum 2004
 >
 > Sitaram Yechury is a Polit Bureau member of the Communist Party of India
 > (Marxist). The following is the contribution he made at the panel
 > discussion
 > organised by the Social Scientist and Social Science Probings at the World
 > Social Forum, 2004, Mumbai on January 17.
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 >
 > At the outset, we are extremely heartened and grateful that more than 20
 > important Communist parties of the world - from the
 > socialist, developed and developing countries - are participating in this
 > programme.
 >
 > I consider it both an honour and privilege to initiate this discussion. I
 > would, however, choose to provoke a discussion! On the basis of our modest



- > efforts in India and based on our experience, I wish to place before you
- > seven points in the nature of a healthy provocation!
- >
- > Socialism as a human conception
- >
- > 1. No matter what we may think about the actual experience of socialism in
- > the past, one thing is undeniable. It was the first time in human history
- > that a society had come into being not spontaneously, not on the basis of
- > the spontaneous movement of history independent of human will, but on the
- > basis of human conception.
- >
- > Karl Marx had remarked in Capital that the difference between the best bee
- > and the worst architect is that the architect, unlike the bee, erects a
- > structure in the mind before erecting it in reality. Socialism is the
- first
- > structure of society that was first erected in the mind before it was
- > erected in reality.
- >
- > True, what came into being might not have fully corresponded to what was
- in
- > the mind; nonetheless socialism, even as it existed, was the first
- > non-spontaneously evolved mode of production in human history.
- >
- > Quite apart from its historical significance in establishing the rule of
- the
- > hitherto exploited classes, in defeating fascism, in enabling the
- oppressed
- > nations to liberate themselves from imperialism and in forcing capitalism,
- > however transiently, to adopt welfare state measures, this aspect of
- > socialism, of representing the first grand effort of mankind to transform
- a
- > vision into reality, must never be lost sight of.
- >
- > In fact, socialism defined, to a significant extent, the contours of human
- > civilisational advance in the 20th century and left an ineradicable imprint
- on
- > all its aspects.
- >
- > Since mankind would never again rest content leaving its fate to the blind
- > forces of history, the victory of socialism, not necessarily in the form
- it
- > originally appeared in but maybe in some other form, representing a vision
- > going beyond capitalism towards social ownership, is assured and
- inevitable.
- >
- > Through all our present travails this is a truth we must never lose sight
- > of.
- >
- > In the context of imperialism
- >
- > 2. Nonetheless we must face the question: why did socialism collapse over
- > large parts of the world? The usual answer to this question focuses on the
- > defects of the system that was erected, notably the extreme centralisation
- > of power in the socialist societies, which were characterised by a
- > dictatorship of the Party and which ultimately ended up de-politicising

the

> working class to a significant extent.

>

> The CPI(M) had, in its 14th Congress, identified four areas viz: the
> character of the socialist State; the content of socialist democracy; the
> construction of the socialist economy; and inadequate development of
> ideological consciousness amongst the people, where distortions and
> deviations took place undermining the socialist State.

>

> There is of course much truth in this. But this answer itself has to be
> located within a historical context, and that context was provided by
> imperialism.

>

> Imperialism leading to uneven development kept socialism confined only to
> countries in the periphery while countries in the metropolis, belying the
> hopeful anticipation of Marx and Engels and the expectations of Lenin and
> his comrades, came close to,
> but never succeeded in, achieving the breakthrough to a socialist
> revolution.

>

> As a result, socialism, wherever it had come into being, remained
encircled

> throughout its entire brief history, resulting in an ossification of the
> centralised bureaucratic structure from which there was no escape other
than

> through a collapse of the system itself.

>

> Estimating changes

>

> 3. There is an additional point to note. Not only did revolutions not
happen

> in the advanced centres of capitalism but the very revolutionary
conjuncture

> itself passed.

>

> The Programme of the Comintern was based on the notion of a general crisis
> of capitalism from which the only way out could be provided by a
transition

> to socialism.

>

> All of us recollect the meetings of 1957 and 1960. Eighty-one communist
> parties in a 1960 declaration asserted that the international correlation
of

> forces shifted decisively in socialism's favour; that capitalism is

> incapable of developing any further; that socialism is irreversible in the
> existing socialist countries etc.

>

> In retrospect, it is clear that there was both an underestimation of
> capitalism and an over-estimation of socialism. An incorrect estimation
that

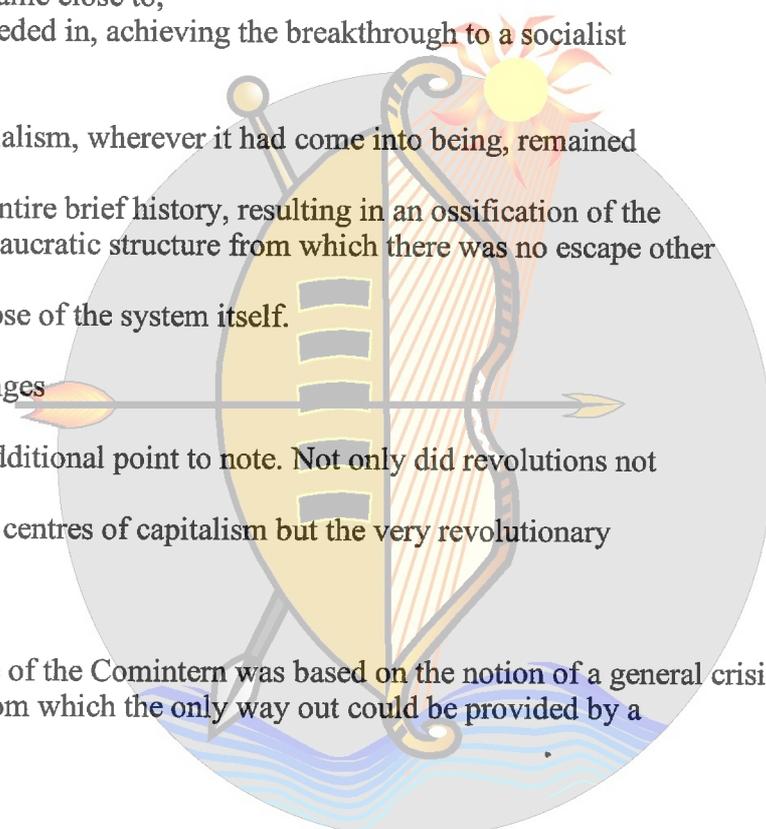
> had grave consequences for the advance of the socialist cause.

>

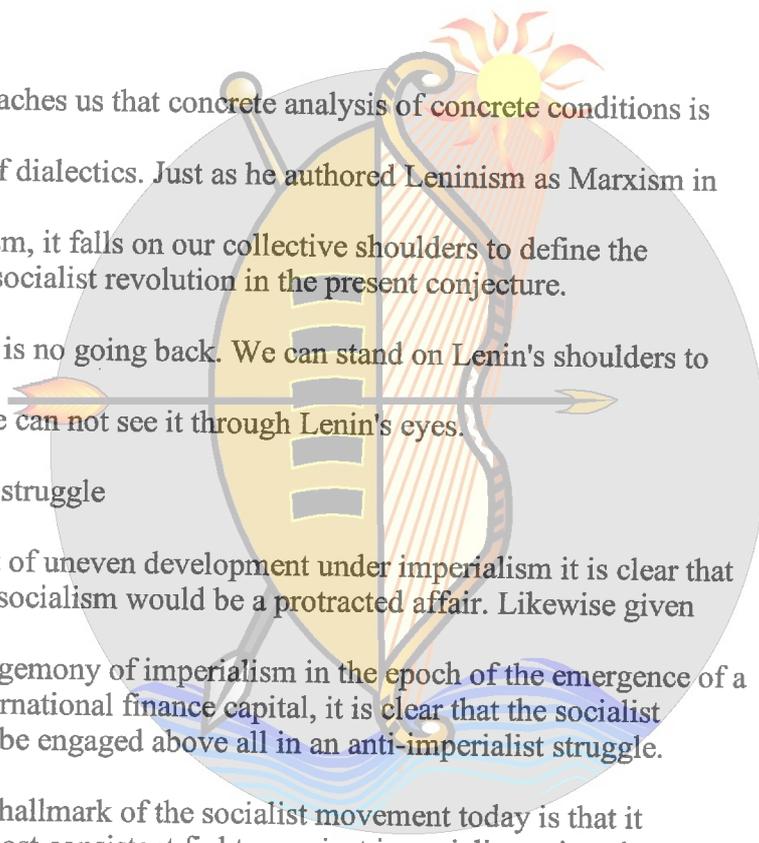
> Capitalism restructured itself in the aftermath of the Second World War,

> through Keynesian demand management ushering in an unprecedented boom,

> through political de-colonisation removing the moral stigma of being an



- > oppressor of other nations from it, and through the diffusion of a degree of
- of
- > development to certain pockets in the third world, such as East Asia, which
- > appeared to belie the Sixth Congress thesis that development of the third
- > world could occur only through socialism.
- >
- > These changes, together with the experience of the very horrors of the
- > Second World War, contributed to the passing of the revolutionary
- > conjuncture of the period 1913-1950.
- >
- > While we have a renascent imperialism today and the moral stigma associated
- > with oppression and stagnation is once again beginning to adhere to
- > capitalism, portending the beginning of yet another possible revolutionary
- > conjuncture, the fact remains that this would not be a return to the earlier
- > conjuncture.
- >
- > Lenin always teaches us that concrete analysis of concrete conditions is the
- > living essence of dialectics. Just as he authored Leninism as Marxism in the
- > era of imperialism, it falls on our collective shoulders to define the
- > contours of the socialist revolution in the present conjuncture.
- >
- > Therefore, there is no going back. We can stand on Lenin's shoulders to see
- > the future but we can not see it through Lenin's eyes.
- >
- > Anti-imperialist struggle
- >
- > 4. Given the fact of uneven development under imperialism it is clear that
- > the transition to socialism would be a protracted affair. Likewise given the
- > reassertion of hegemony of imperialism in the epoch of the emergence of a
- > new form of international finance capital, it is clear that the socialist
- > movement must be engaged above all in an anti-imperialist struggle.
- >
- > Indeed the chief hallmark of the socialist movement today is that it
- > constitutes the most consistent fighter against imperialism, since it alone
- > can visualise a transcendence of capitalism, which is a necessary condition
- > for the transcendence of imperialism.
- >
- > For Marx has irrefutably proved that capitalism can never survive without
- > its raison-d'etre, i.e., exploitation of man by man and nation by nation.
- To
- > those who spread illusions of reforming capitalism (since Bernstein) and to
- > those who parrot the TINA (there is no alternative to globalisation) factor,
- > the Communist answer can only be that the alternative to TINA is SITA -
- > socialism is the alternative.



- >
- > We can therefore carry the struggle for socialism forward today only through
- > the adoption of an uncompromising stand against imperialism. This is our
- > historic task in an era when the vileness of imperialist predatoriness,
- > notwithstanding all high phrases about freedom and democracy, is becoming
- > apparent to everyone in the aftermath of the war on Iraq.
- >
- > Ascendency international finance capital
- >
- > 5. There is an additional point to consider. The reassertion of imperialist
- > hegemony is occurring in a situation of the ascendancy of international
- > finance capital in a new form, which has the effect of causing deflation,
- > recession, and unemployment everywhere.
- >
- > In other words, the contemporary imperialist aggressiveness is the other
- > side of the same coin, which imposes enormous burdens on the working
- classes
- > in the advanced capitalist countries in the form of unemployment and cuts in
- social wage.
- >
- > Imperialism of course tries to pit the workers in the advanced countries
- > against those in the third world by arguing that the latter are snatching
- > jobs away from the former. Nothing could be further from the truth. It is
- > the world-wide deflation imposed by finance capital that is the cause of
- > unemployment everywhere, not the re-distribution of employment from one
- > section of workers to another.
- >
- > An anti-imperialist struggle, provided it can make this point clear and
- > present a vision for improving the lot of mankind as a whole, embracing the
- > working class and other exploited classes in all countries - developed,
- > developing and underdeveloped - can acquire world-wide support and
- > contribute to a change in the conjuncture.
- >
- > A future socialist society
- >
- > 6. Of course the precise contours of what a future socialist society would
- > look like still need to be drawn, based on the past experience of
- socialism.
- > The road map of this would naturally vary from country to country
- depending
- > on the concrete realities.
- >
- > Each one of us has this historic responsibility to discharge in our
- > respective countries. However, the task of advancing the anti-imperialist
- > struggle world wide cannot afford to wait.
- >
- > Neither can it wait until that intellectual task of evolving a coherent
- and
- > comprehensive revolutionary theory for the socialist revolution in the
- > present conjecture, important though it is, is completed.
- >

- > Unsustainable capitalist globalisation
- >
- > 7. Finally, let us confront a reality squarely. The present phase of
- > capitalist globalisation is simply unsustainable. This is precisely
- > because,
- > by sharply accentuating economic inequalities - between countries and
- > between the rich and poor in individual countries - the vast majority of
- > world's population are increasingly placed beyond market operations as
- > they
- > simply lack the requisite purchasing power.
- >
- > Imperialist hegemonic drive, therefore, will increasingly be determined by
- > military aggressiveness. Under these conditions, as Rosa Luxemburg said
- > earlier and as Fidel Castro says today, the choice before humanity's
- > future
- > is between socialism or barbarism.
- >
- > Each one of us, working in tandem with our domestic revolutionary goals,
- > will have to work for integrating the worldwide anti-
- > globalisation protests with the global anti-war upsurge into a mighty
- > anti-imperialist movement.
- >
- > This requires, simultaneously, the intensification of the ideological
- > combat
- > within these movements that seek to obfuscate socialism as the only
- > alternative available to humanity.
- >
- > Come, let us together rise to the occasion.
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