

I have the honour of giving this lecture in the memory of Comrade Anuradha Ghandy, whose life is a shining example of a fighter for the emancipation of the most exploited and most oppressed people in India, and elsewhere in the world. Her life is a great lesson for all of us of how a fighter for the people should live.

Yes! Marx and Mao are back!

And I'm sure that if Anuradha were alive today, she would be able to elaborate why Marx and Mao are back far better than I myself could. Now, let me try to explain how and why I say Marx and Mao are back. What I mean is that Marxism should be understood as a creative thought in continuous development, one that has no end, a thought that started with Marx, but not ending at Marx. Creative Marxism was enriched by the contribution, the decisive contribution of Mao, particularly in understanding the present conditions of the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America, and how they are oppressed by modern imperialism.

I also submit that Marxism and Maoism constitute the best tool, by far the best tool, to analyse the present system of exploitation and oppression; to understand its logic and internal contradictions and therefore also its weaknesses. Of course, it is only a tool and the use of the tool depends on you. But it is also the best tool, not only to understand the world but to change it, that is, to formulate the most efficient policies, the most efficient strategies for the struggle of the exploited and oppressed people and for their liberation.

Now, I shall, in the first part of my presentation, try to use this tool precisely to analyse the present crisis. Not only the financial crisis but the systemic crisis of contemporary capitalism and imperialism. And in the second part, I shall, in the light of the conclusions that I draw from my analysis, try to discuss, or to offer, to submit for discussion - what kind of struggle, what strategies for the struggle can lead us, lead the people of India and of the world, towards socialism.

This crisis exploded 'suddenly' for most, for all the conventional economists, but it was fully expected by us, by the Marxists; or at least, by quite a number of the Marxists. Not because we are accustomed to repeat that 'capitalism cannot work without crisis' -- which is very trivial, but because the analysis of the present stage of so-called 'liberal' or 'neo-liberal' globalisation led us to understand that this system was NOT sustainable.

NONE of the conventional economists, including the most critical among them, if there are any, have had the capacity, the equipment, the intellectual equipment to understand that this system was not sustainable.

It was repeated to us that there is 'no alternative' but accepting that system, submitting to it, adjusting to it and eventually taking advantage of it. We were saying, and I am saying, there is no alternative but socialism! Exactly the opposite. Because, precisely, this system is not sustainable.

That doesn't mean at all that socialism is on the agenda for the next week! But it means that the struggle for socialism is the only possible response from the exploited and oppressed people to the challenges of imperialism and capitalism in crisis.

Now, the system, that system moved into a crisis through a quasi-financial collapse, very easily, two months ago -- the financial collapse. But, this financial collapse is only the tip of the iceberg. Under the tip of this iceberg is a deep systemic crisis of ageing capitalism. I would say even an 'obsolete' system which is capitalism.

A systemic crisis which reflects a number of crises -- the oil and energy crisis, the environmental crisis, the food crisis etc etc. Most conventional analysts try to describe and eventually analyse each of those crises per se, separating one from the other. We have the advantage of being able, if we use the Marxist tools properly, to understand how they are interconnected.

Now, in order to understand why the system moved, during the past 25 or 30 years, towards creating a financial bubble which had to explode at a certain point, why the system was moving towards being more and more 'financialised' as they say, we have, I think, to move beyond the mere description of it as 'neo-liberalism'. The term is really improper, because behind the mask of 'liberalism' was the reality of ultra-reactionary social choices and policies. Ultra-reactionary. Neo-conservative and worse. And globalisation is a word which means everything and nothing. Because globalisation has started long, long, long ago in the history of humankind. And capitalism has always been a globalised system.

After all, what was the colonisation of India, if not also a pattern of globalisation? Now, it is being used in order, precisely, to deflect from an analysis which would lead to the understanding that this globalisation is actually an 'imperialist' globalisation. It needs to be qualified as imperialist globalisation, and not just globalisation.

Now, in order therefore to understand this 'financialisation', we have to move beyond that point and understand it more deeply. This is what I'm submitting to you and to all comrades for further deeper discussion, debates and research, also.

What appears to me to be the main change which has developed, gradually of course, during the past 20,30,40,50 years, gradually, but which seems to me to be obvious today as a major qualitative change, is the following:

The degree of centralisation of capital has reached a point where it is no longer comparable with what it was just, let's say, fifty years ago. The degree of centralisation of capital has created a structure, a capitalist global structure, in which a handful of oligopolies, groups, maybe five thousand -- their names are known and there are catalogues giving the names and the importance of each of them -- are making decisions which determine almost everything at the economic, social and political level for almost any country on this planet today. Since a number of decades, gradually. That is new.

There are many other things which are new. Capitalism, as any society, is continuously changing and the fact that there are new scientific revolutions, new

technologies etc is correct and is even important. But this has to be also put in its real framework. That is, its relation to what has changed at the level of the organisation of capital. Because these changes are subservient in their own development to the requirements of the accumulation of capital.

This centralisation of capital has two consequences which are major:

The first consequence is: it provides the objective basis for what I'm calling the collective imperialism of the triad -- United States, Europe and Japan. Imperialism is not something new. I even believe that it did not start with the time of Lenin, at the end of the 19th century; but anyway, this is not the matter of discussion today. Imperialism in the past used to be conjugated always as a 'plural'. There were always imperialist 'powers', in constant struggle, including wars, amongst themselves -- Britain, France, later United States, later Germany etc. etc.

Now, we have, we are facing a collective imperialism of the triad which has developed gradually after the World War II. The tools for its organising 'together' the management of the global system, are its economic tools -- the World Bank, the IMF but more importantly the WTO; and its political and military tools -- the G7, the US military force and their subordinate allies of NATO and others. This is something qualitatively new.

It doesn't mean that there are no contradictions among the imperialist powers. But it means that those contradictions are no more 'primary', they are secondary. And these will not lead to what has happened throughout five centuries of capitalist imperialist history - continuous wars among themselves.

The second consequence of that centralisation of capital, new, qualitatively new degree of centralisation of capital, is precisely the 'financialisation'. The fundamental logic of capital is that capital looks out for opportunities of moving into areas of productive production in order to control labour, exploit it and extract surplus value, profits, from that exploitation in a variety of forms, not only in the direct obvious form of wage earners, which labour in industrial factories permits. That is its fundamental logic.

But, capitalism, once it has reached this level of a handful of oligopolies, has led to a shift towards another logic for its further expansion, one which is determined by the competition among the oligopolies for the redistribution of those profits. That occurs in the main market which is the monetary and financial global market. This is the arena in the framework of which this competition between oligopolies occurs and produces a permanent redistribution of those profits.

This therefore develops another nature — one of monopoly acts unrelated to the exploitation of, or not 'directly' related to the exploitation of labour from which the profits are extracted. The conventional economists speak of 'generalised markets', but this is 'blah-blah'. This puts what is decisive and major and commanding, and what is subordinated on the same level. There are markets, many markets, of women who are selling on the streets, food. Well, there are markets of many levels. But the market which commands the others, which regulates the others is precisely this financial and monetary global market in which occurs the competition among oligopolies for the

redistribution of profits. That is fundamental if we are to understand why the 'deregulation' of that market occurred.

Deregulation of that market was not a 'mistake', it was not a product of the economists and the power systems, believing in the 'Chicago boys', and admitting, accepting their nonsensical proposals. No! This was demanded and needed by the oligopolies, because this is precisely the way for them to compete among themselves for the redistribution of profits.

And therefore, we should not expect, that this 'deregulation' of the monetary and financial system will be questioned by the powers at present. That is fundamental, I think. Because, otherwise, we will continue to accept the discourse that this financial crisis is the result of some mistake, starting at sometime in the US, continuing with a set of 'other' mistakes, of over deregulation and that some cosmetic procedures for so-called 'correcting' the over deregulation would be enough to have the system working efficiently and continue to work.

But, before I come to what is the response of the power systems to this crisis, let us look at some other issues below the level of this crisis.

Under this financial crisis, there is what I'm calling the 'systemic' crisis of capitalism. Here again, there are many dimensions of that 'systemic' crisis of capitalism and as I mentioned, it is reflected in a series of crises. Well, here also there are many things which are new. And some things which are more important than others.

I submit also, in that respect, that the major qualitative change, which indicates that the system is really ageing and has already become obsolete, is the relative scarcity of natural resources. And therefore, this system cannot continue to develop 'as it is'. That is, with massive consumption and waste from a minority of humankind, say 15%, in US, Europe and Japan. It cannot continue to develop without them having access exclusively to all the natural resources of the planet. And therefore, deny, for the majority of humankind, the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America, any possibility of sharing those scarce, already scarce, natural resources on an equal footing, with the people, the nations of the collective imperialism.

That is new. Because, I think, fifty years ago, natural resources appeared at least as being abundant enough, so that a new-comer could have his share, without menacing the survival of those who had access to those natural resources before him. This is no more the case. And, if we don't understand it, the enemy understands it perfectly. And says it. And writes it. That those natural resources cannot be shared anymore.

And this is the reason, for which, that pattern of imperialism, collective imperialism, cannot continue without some sort of military control of the whole planet by them. By the triad. Because, one day or another, this or that people, could become menacing, with their own development requiring more access to natural resources, and could have perhaps, some military means to get the result. And therefore, they must not be permitted to reach that point.

The militarisation of globalisation is not an accident. And, here also, it's not the imagination of the ultra-right of Mr. Bush, father or son, son more than father. No. it

is also the expression of the clear understanding by imperialism that it cannot operate in any other way. That is what in my opinion is fundamental to understand.

This is a picture of the changes that have already occurred today and how will they develop in the coming years and decades. I would say that new qualitative change is also indicative that yes, capitalism is obsolete. And Marx was perfectly right to say that capitalism is not the end of history, it's not a system which has its own rationality per se, forever, but is just one of the stages in the long history of humankind. And that its limits and contradictions must create the conditions of moving beyond it, that is, changing the pattern of social relations and therefore also of production, consumption, ways of living etc. etc.

Many people, without being Marxists, they discover it by their daily experience. A good number of ecologists have insisted rightly on the relative scarcity of natural resources, which demands the need for a rational, another pattern of rational use at the global level of those resources. But, unfortunately in many cases, not in all cases, they could not relate it to a critical analysis of the logic of the accumulation of capital, which has led to the limits of capitalism. In that respect, capitalism is obsolete.

What does it mean? It means, simply, that a growing proportion of humankind, and I will come in more detail later, becomes 'superfluous'. Because, they cannot have access, we cannot give them access to resources and therefore the dream of catching up and 'becoming like them' has no ground. Is impossible. Those people are 'superfluous'.

But, let me say the following: if a system, a social system, has reached a point where a growing part of humankind is superfluous, we should ask ourselves, isn't it that it is this system which is superfluous? Which is obsolete? And which should be changed?

A social system has to respond to the needs of all humankind. And not gradually become more and more unequal vis-à-vis the majority of them.

These are the challenges that I have submitted to you in an analysis which I believe is, but I admit that it can be discussed, a Marxist analysis, I hope, not a dogmatic one, not negating any change and repeating just general sentences which are always correct, but so correct that they are useless, but, in a creative way.

That method also leads us to formulating alternative policies in the most efficient way. What are the policies implemented today by the ruling powers? That is, the oligopolies and their servants? The governments of Europe, United States, Japan and many other governments here and there.

What is the target of their policies? It is simply to restore the system as it was before the financial collapse of September. Restore it. Not change it. That is, restore and integrate at the global level a monetary and financial system, largely deregulated. The 'blah-blah' of all the ... 'we should have better yardsticks for measuring the quality of debts' and so on... is cosmetic, is no serious change, especially that the implementation is given to the oligopolies to control themselves.

Restore it. And therefore, maintain the exclusive power of the oligopolies. And therefore, also, continue the same global policy, the same global strategy, against the protection, development of the South.

I will come later to what development is.

Now, restoring that system in the coming months and perhaps years is not impossible, provided three conditions are assumed:

One, that the injection of liquidities in order to restore the credibility of the financial institutions is large enough. It is already trillions of dollars. Thousands of trillions, two thousand trillions of dollars, at least, or something of that order of magnitude. Gigantic.

Second, that the protest of the victims -- of course it is going to be the people who are going to be the victims, the working classes and the people, in one way or another -- their protest remains as they are. And that they stay fragmented, relatively therefore weak and that they do not crystallise into a political alternative that they choose.

And third, that the people, through the states, through the governments of the South would understand and accept this plan of restoration by integrating, or re-integrating or integrating more, into the global integrated monetary and financial system. This was the talk of the G20.

Why this body was formed? Not to associate them, but because that form of integration is precisely one of the means, and not the least, for oligopolies to plunder the resources of the South, of Asia, Africa and Latin America. And therefore to maintain their high profits, and to redistribute those high profits among themselves. They need that integration to plunder the natural resources, to plunder, through over-exploitation the cheap labour etc etc. That is the plan.

Should they succeed, and I do not exclude that in the short run, that would lead to nowhere. That means that the system would go fast into another similar crisis, even deeper and worse. So we would be just back at point zero of the game.

Now, what is the alternative, therefore?

The alternative, I have said, there is no alternative, but socialism.

But, let us discuss it more. What does it mean? There has been successive understanding of the term socialism. From the very beginning of the development of capitalism, industrial capitalism with Utopian Socialism, with Marxism, with historical Marxism of the Second International, with historical Marxism of the Third International.

The vision was that socialism can be:

One - there is a need for a radical revolution and that is anti-capitalist

Second – Once that revolution has succeeded here or there, it can build socialism within a short historical time.

Now what happened additionally was those radical revolutions or popular movements happened to occur exclusively in the periphery of the system and not by pure chance. That is from Russia a semi-periphery in its time, to China, Vietnam or Cuba or has taken the form of radical or less radical movements, the gigantic movements of oppressed nation for their national liberation from India, the rest of Asia, Africa, etc etcetera.

Now, that was the understanding and in the 20th century I believe that the first wave of struggles for socialism, for emancipation of labor and oppressed people was linked to that vision of socialism. Now it's not that it was wrong. It was not only the objective condition of that century, 20th century, which created that possibility, but also its internal deep contradiction and limits. But anyway that page is turned.

Now that this page is turned, we're moving into a new period in which we need, indeed, a new strategic vision of the struggle for socialism, not just to rehabilitate the legitimacy of the ultimate goal of a classless equal society for every people on the planet but also an efficient strategic thought on how to move towards that goal, on what should be considered as a long secular transition. Not building socialism within 5 or 10 years because you have nationalised everything and that you have reached socialism, but through a long secular transition. One century, perhaps, and this will possibly be the history of the coming, of the developing 21st century, a long, long transition.

How to qualify this, and what are the characteristics of that long transition? First I will give you the name, and then I'll see what that name covers as realities. The name -- I would call it from the point of the view of the peoples of the South -- is a "National Popular Democratic Hegemony Block" replacing the hegemonic blocks ruling which are an alliance of other classes basically like owners, capitalist, rich peasants in some cases, and some important strata, more or less, of the middle classes.

Now if we look at the reality of our societies -- and India is a perfect case, but not very different from many others -- the majority of the people are still in Asia, Africa and Latin America. And a majority of them are landless, are exploited poor peasants, exploited, super-exploited tenants, are small peasants but poor -- that is the vast majority.

This is one of the basis for the socialist alternatives. Nothing can be done, if those people do not mobilize themselves and struggle for their rights, the access to land through a radical land reform. Let's call it even a revolutionary land reform or agrarian reform in a variety of forms according to specific conditions of countries.

Second, the workers. But when we say the workers we do not mean the very small minority of those who happen to be working in units, mills, major trade, in enterprises and so on -- who are relatively, relatively stabilized et cetera, but the vast and growing majority of the unemployed informal sector, and this growing majority is the effect of the permanent crisis of rural areas caught in the pre-existing capitalist system.

The questions of how to rebuild or build the unity of those working people is a major challenge for trade unions among others -- how to create the forms of organizations

which make possible common struggle, with common strategic targets of the various segments of the working people.

And I believe that such a project would be very strongly attractive for segments of the middle classes, who are not necessarily all co-opted and subordinated to the logic of global capitalism and of local capitalism for a variety of reasons.

Now this, which is the vast majority, is what I am calling the social constituency, social constituency of the left -- communists and others, with a variety of ideologies, historical roots and so on. The social constituency is a concept which is very different from the concept of electoral constituency of this or that party, whether of the left or not of the left, because those electoral constituencies are very volatile.

Constructing, how to construct, how to make of this social constituency a real force which will change the balance of forces and therefore patterns of power and open the road to gradual change towards socialism, that should be the constant debate among activists of all kinds and organizations.

Time will not allow me to go into all the various facets and details of these challenges, but I would just indicate some of them which appear to me to be the major ones.

I would say that the achievement of such a project is impossible without firstly, an agrarian radical reform and that would not happen unless the majority of the peasants are struggling. And I feel that Anuradha understood that perfectly. I think that this is why she was a Maoist and I think that precisely, the major contribution of Maoism to creative Marxism is the understanding of that prerequisite for a further progress – not for building socialism within five years, but for further progress.

Second of course, there is a need for a battle at the ideological level, which includes of course the theoretical understanding of society. I do not separate the ideological battle from the battle for a better scientific, lucid as far as possible, understanding of society.

Why – because there is something that has terribly contaminated the people, particularly the younger generations everywhere in the world, in India but elsewhere as well. And this is widespread, widespread particularly probably among the middle class, who can play a very important role in history, because of relative higher education and because of their other capacities. They can use this to play a positive role in the mobilization of the people, or negative role against them.

Another facet and it's a challenge of the liberal values, is that very conventional bourgeois concept of democracy, which leads to qualifying India as a democratic country. Why – because it has ruling parties, it has elections, which are almost fair, say, perhaps much worse than those of the United States, and that it has a respect to a certain degree, a certain numbers of rights. And therefore it's a democracy.

And that historical socialism has been the opposite -- undemocratic, and has negated those rights and has not admitted the ruling parties, and made a caricature of processes of election. And therefore that this democracy is better than the alternative -

- real existing socialism as it was; and as it could be and also as it 'has to be' in the future. But there is no proof of that of course.

That is a concept of democracy separated from social progress. What is needed on the long road to socialism is a gradual permanent struggle for the continuous democratization of the society, which is far, much more than just the blueprint of elections. It holds many dimensions including gender of course, including caste which for a country like India is fundamental -- to move beyond that, including all other aspects of democratization of the society. Along with, associated with and not disassociated from social progress.

I'm cautious – I am saying social progress in the perspective of moving radically towards socialism – not building socialism immediately. That is the challenge – of inventing new forms of democracies, which submit some rights to others and put on the top priority the social rights, the rights to food, the rights to land for those who are landless, the right to shelter, the right to education for the children, the right for health for everybody, and submit the other rights, including property rights, to the needs and logic of further development. Give it a name if you wish – though I don't much like giving names – 'participative democracy', but this has been so vaguely used with different meanings that I prefer to avoid using it in that way. Forms of democracies, which are gradually developing, and which have to be of course, indeed respectful of human rights including individual human rights, freedom of thought, of organization and so on. I am saying even more. Those social rights cannot be established in a sustainable way and deepened, unless they are conquered by the people themselves.

In some cases they have even been given by the top, by the leaders, by the power system. That has been the case in a number of historical examples of historical socialism, as well as in the half-half national bourgeois radical independence movements such as in India and elsewhere.

But that's not enough. Unless the people conquer those rights, and this is the real plurality -- not the so-called political electoral plurality -- the real plurality is the variety of popular organizations from the bottom, which create the conditions for the power from above to be different from what it has been and what it could be again.

That is the alternative. I think that there are other dimensions of that alternative, other demands from it. Let me conclude by looking at that dimension of the challenge that is the immediate challenge, the challenge today with the global financial crisis.

The strategies of the power systems is just to restore the system and to integrate more. This is possible and that is their vision. This is the choice of the Indian ruling classes, and of others also. They say, well restoring the system is not so bad, it was not so bad and we were doing not so bad, so why not continue restoring it and we continue to benefit from it as previously.

Yes, they will continue to benefit, but what benefit? Their pattern of development shows that with a whole amount of people excluded you can have the high rate of growth, and India has a rate of growth which is average high, not bad comparatively.

But the growth has been throughout the last 40-50 years, continuously benefiting exclusively a minority, not 1% - the billionaires, but 20% maybe including the middle class and excluding, and increasingly excluding, the 80%. That is the target of the power system, to continue that type of 'development'.

The alternative is an inclusive pattern of development - that is with growth and high growth if possible, but to the benefit of 100% and even starting with the poorest. The landless, the dalits in India and others. The vast mass of paupers living in slums as in Bombay and elsewhere etcetera, etcetera.

Now for that I think the challenge is the following. Well if a government chooses to move more into the system -- and this is true not only for India but for many others -- then they will see that they will have to pay a growing proportion of the costs of restoring the system in many ways, and we will have to pay for it.

That also creates a learning opportunity for society for struggling for the real alternative, which is to immediately move out of the -- not globalization -- move out of the monetary and financial global integration. That should be demand number one.

Demand number two should be not move out of globalization, not 'No trade -- we're going to escape to the moon and have no relations with anybody', but "No Free trade". Trade doesn't mean free trade, it can be negotiated properly in a way that protects the internal development and favours the internal development of a country, focuses more and more towards the internal market of popular classes and depends less and less on export. That is the second side of the alternative.

The third one is political, and directly political, but no less important. Collective imperialism has started its plan of military control of the planet by the US military intervention. It's not by pure chance that they began immediately after the breaking down of the Soviet Union, 1990 or 1991 the first war against Iraq, with the United States giving to themselves this right in the name of the War against so called Terrorism, real or not real. They exploited that to launch a 'preventive' war that is a crime against humanity. The right that the US gave to themselves of use of nuclear weapon, first strike against anybody whom they think could be a danger for them which is also human crime.

That war which is precisely an objective need for the continuation of that pattern of imperialism has started. It's a project with invasion of Afghanistan, with the invasion of Iraq, with the continuous interventions in Central Asia, in Caucasia, the menace on Iran, with encircling China more and more and therefore putting a more menace on it etcetera, etcetera. All that is going on.

And then I will say simply that we have to defeat that. It's not yet the case. They are defeated politically because they are already in a situation where they have proved to be unable to put in place even propaganda which would provide enough strength to continue the war by themselves. But, they have not yet been militarily defeated and they continue due to this.

There are other dimensions of the immediate challenge that we can face -- technology. The difference between 1955 Bandung and today from that point of view is enormous.

At the time of Bandung, when the peoples of Asia and Africa came together to face the imperialism of that time, they were coming out of the long colonial night or they were coming renewed through a radical revolution in the name of socialism such as in China, but they were all deprived of any industry or almost any technology.

The education levels, especially the scientific and technological level, were very, very low, didn't exist in the most cases. And therefore, the technological dependency was total, just as it had been for Soviet Union at the beginning, for China, and for Africa, Asia, Latin America.

This is no more the case.

Whatever have been the contradictions and limits of the Bandung era, it's achievement from that point of view are enormous, and today every country, not just a single country, but the South as a whole, has a level of technological capacity which makes us capable of getting rid of, of defeating the monopoly of the North on technology. This is not only for the very-very big like China or India, but also smaller countries like Cuba which has proven it in the industry of pharmaceuticals and medicine.

To defeat by not only absorbing those technological novelties but developing them by ourselves. We have this capacity. This is why the North is trying to overprotect through the WTO rules on industrial and intellectual property, overprotect those monopolies, because we could challenge them, we have to challenge them.

I think that a country like China will probably do it – is doing it and we will see that down the line. I will state that a country like India which has the capacity does not do it. Bangalore is the example of how the intellectual capacities of India are just used to the benefit of British and American and other multinationals to get the work done at lower price for them.

But we can challenge them, and this could be I think a very reasonable program for an alternative today, by moving out of the integrated monetary and financial system. Develop the country – take the unilateral decision and develop freely the technologies for your own use, reorient the development towards the internal market and particularly the popular market.

And, of course along with that develop at the global level a common struggle and support the struggle to defeat the military interventions of imperialism.

Well, thank you. We all of us would have benefitted to an enormous extent of having Anuradha with us in this discussion. Let us regret it once more and continue the struggle for which she has been an exemplary fighter. Thank you.