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TRADE UNIONS AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

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The stand of the AITUC on the present situation in the north eastern region has been made clear in the resolution of its General Council meeting held in Srinagar on 3rd and 4th July, 1980,

While urging upon the Government of India to take all necessary and positive measures to bring about a negotiated settlement and withdrawal of the Assam movement on a reasonable basis, the General Council appealed to all democratic and secular minded people in Assam and the neighbouring states to take resolute stand against all secessionist ideas and activities and for the unconditional protection of the linguistic, religious and ethnic minorities. The working class and trade unions in Assam which have been thrown temporarily on the defensive must rally their forces unitedly and fight back the chauvinist passions which have been roused.

The General Council of the AITUC drew pointed attention "to the indisputable fact that the people of the north eastern region, majority of whom are tribals, have historically been the victims of gross neglect and successive central governments have paid little or no attention to their problems of economic and cultural development. Their resultant resentment and deep seated grievances have created a fertile soil for the growth of the divisive and communal forces which are now trying to take full advantage of it to divert the mass sentiments into dangerous anti-national channels."

Unless the basic problems are tackled and special attention is paid to tribal and backward regions, the threat from the forces of chauvinism and disruption may crop up again and again in one form or the other and in some place or the other. It is the north eastern region today; it may be the tribal and backward regions of Bihar or Madhya Pradesh tomorrow. So constant vigilance is required against the danger of disruptive, communal and chauvinistic forces spreading their activities in other states and region.

The rapid spread of communal disturbances to Delhi and several other towns of U.P. in the wake of the PAC firing on the Muslims in Moradabad on Id Day has further underlined the serious nature of the growing threat to our secular and democratic set up and our national unity and integrity.

It is in such a grave situation that the AITUC is organising a National Trade Union Convention at Nagpur on 6th and 7th September, 1980 to mobilise the trade unions for the defence of national unity and national sovereignty and to fight against all fissiparous threats and imperialist conspiracies.

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The All India Trade Union Congress is deeply concerned at the grave situation that is developing in and around our country to-day. Both externally and internally the country is faced with serious threats to its unity and national integrity, as well as its sovereignty and independent economic development.

Externally, India is facing the hostility of the U.S., China Pakistan axis. The imperialist powers led by U.S.A. have generally been hostile to India and its policy of non-alignment, peace and friendship with Soviet Union and other socialist and democratic countries. They have been supporting the successive Pakistani regimes and arming Pakistan with a view to use it against India. Their intrigues in Kashmir for the last 32 years have been frequently exposed in the UNO.

The U.S.A. and Pakistan had first entered into a Military agreement in May, 1954. In September, 1954 Pakistan had joined the Baghdad Pact. It also became a member of SEATO. It had thus become an important base for U.S. Military Plans and was chosen to play an important role in U.S. global strategy. India faced military attack from Pakistan in 1948 and 1965. Again India found itself involved in a war with Pakistan on the question of liberation of Bangla Desh.

During the last 20 years the Chinese expansionist leaders have been stepping up their activities against India. They have been engaged in increasing collaboration with the imperialist powers headed by U.S.A. and supporting reactionary regimes in various parts of the world including the military dictatorships in Pakistan and Bangla Desh.

The intrigues of U.S.A., China, Pakistan and Bangla Desh against India have reached an alarming magnitude during the recent years. The territory of China, Pakistan and Bangla Desh has been extensively used to create serious problem in Kashmir as well as in the North Eastern States.

The story of imperialist plots in Kashmir has been well known for the last three decades. But what has not been so well known and what has only been coming to light in recent years is the large scale interference by the Chinese and Bangla Desh regimes in the North Eastern States of India.

The various imperialist agencies which have been operating in this region under religious, cultural and even educational sign-boards have been actively collaborating with the Bangla Desh and Chinese agents.

The activities of the U.S., China and Bangla Desh in the Eastern part of India have been further intensified after complete failure of American and Chinese plans in Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea. The Indian people have always supported the heroic struggle of the peoples of Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea. They opposed Chinese aggression against Vietnam and hailed the fall of the pro-Chinese genocidal regime of Pol Pot in Kampuchea. Recently, India has recognised the new democratic Government of Kampuchea, a step which has been furiously attacked by the governments of U.S.A. & China as well as their supporters.

The over-throw of reactionary regimes and the establishment of socialist and democratic governments in Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea have greatly weakened the U.S.—Chinese influence in this region, which has made them more desperate, in concentrating their attention on India's North Eastern States.

A lot of evidence has come to light regarding the interference of China, Bangla Desh and the pro-American Thailand regime in fomenting trouble in the North Eastern States by means of propaganda, supply of arms and training of elements hostile to India on Chinese territory or on Burmese territory, which is not under the effective control of the Burmese Government.

The recent events in Assam, Tripura, Manipur, Meghalaya etc., have shown the extent to which these activities have progressed.

In the North Western Sector, the U.S., China, Pakistan conspiracy against India has got linked up with their open attacks against the Revolutionary regime in Afghanistan.

Ever since the April 1978 Revolution in Afghanistan, the Americans, Chinese and Pakistanis have mounted a large scale offensive against democratic Afghanistan. They are supplying money, arms and giving training facilities in Pakistan to the reactionary elements of Afghanistan to engage in terroristic activities against the people of Afghanistan. In this they are supported by Egypt and some other reactionary Arab Governments and the Islamic fanatics in Iran. But the American Chinese-Pakistani plot has been successfully foiled by the Soviet Union by providing timely and effective help and support to the democratic government of Afghanistan. The stand taken by India on the Afghanistan question has made the imperialists and their henchmen furious and they have stepped up their activities against India in various ways in this sector also. Their target for destabilisation is once again the State of Kashmir, a part of which is under Pakistani occupation. Through this part, China and Pakistan have already constructed Kara Koram Highway, which is being used for the transport of Chinese arms and supplies to the terrorists of Pakistan.

The recent threat of the Jamaat-e-Tulaba, the student wing of the Jamat-i-Islami to launch an "Iranian type of liberation struggle" in the Kashmir valley is to be seen in this background. The Tulaba was planning to hold an International Conference in Srinagar, inviting foreign delegates, from over 20 countries most of which are known for their pro-American attitude. This plot was defeated by the Kashmir Government by banning the conference.

The plans of the U.S.-China axis to encircle India with the aim of undermining and subverting its Independence and National Integrity have assumed very serious and menacing proportions. Their threat is further enhanced by American activities in the gulf countries and the establishment of a huge U.S. Military base in the Indian Ocean Island of Diego Garcia.

In the background of such extensive and menacing plots of imperialism, its allies and agents, we have to see the various negative developments inside our country during the recent period. The external and internal forces of disruption and destabilisation of India are working in close collaboration among themselves.

II

India is a land of many religions, languages cultures and even races. Notwithstanding all such diversities, our national unity was built up and strengthened during the glorious period of our fight for independence from the British yoke. The National independence movement against British Imperialists was strong enough to defeat and overcome repeated imperialist attempts to foment many types of divisions and conflicts amongst the people of India. The British, however, were successful in fanning the communal conflict by giving encouragement to the two nations theory, which resulted in the partition of the country and the formation of Pakistan.

History has demolished the two nations theory. Pakistan disintegrated and Bangla Desh came into existence as an independent sovereign State. But both Pakistan and Bangla Desh have failed to evolve into democratic secular States and have been mainly under military rule, getting deeper and deeper into obscurantism. Their present-day Governments have mostly become pawns of world imperialism and people have been denied basic democratic rights, including trade union rights. India, on the other hand has continued to be a democratic and secular State and has survived external and internal challenges to its democratic and secular State structure. It has also been able to defend its sovereignty and national integrity in the face of such challenges. India has faced many attempts to destabilise and weaken its democratic and secular set up and its federal state structure.

It successfully defeated the imperialist conspiracy to break Kashmir away from India, a conspiracy, in which the rulers of Pakistan played the role of main agents of imperialism. But it lost a sizeable part of Kashmir's territory, which is still in Pakistani occupation and which is being used for continued attempts to destabilise the political and communal unity of Kashmir. Inside Kashmir itself, communal and pro-imperialist forces like the Jamat-i-Islami and Jamat-i-Tulaba have been operating and are once again raising their ugly head, threatening cessation from India by launching so-called liberation movement against India.

In Jammu, on the other hand, Hindu communalists are indirectly aiding the communal forces operating in the Kashmir valley by raising the demand for separation of Jammu from the rest of the State.

Ever since independence, the communal organisations and political parties like the R.S.S., the Jansangh (now renamed the Bhartiya Janata Party) and the Jamat-i-Islami have been fanning the fires of communalism and provoking serious communal clashes in different parts of the country. All these activities of the communal elements undermine the secular character of our State and seriously weaken the democratic movement and the struggles of the toiling people for their basic demands including the struggles of the trade unions.

Our country has a federal structure in which States, generally formed on the linguistic principles, have been given a measure of autonomy though limited in certain respects, with their own legislative assemblies and State Governments. But this linguistic set up is sometimes sought to be exploited by reactionary, feudal, pro-imperialist and pro-capitalist forces by intensifying conflicts between people speaking different languages within the same State or between the neighbouring States. Such conflicts also greatly undermine the democratic movement of the people and at times seriously disrupt the trade union movement and other organisations of the toiling people.

The country has seen the extremely harmful role played by organisations like the Shiv Sena in Bombay and other urban parts of Maharashtra. For several years its violent and disruptive activities against workers belonging to the Southern States and employed in Maharashtra caused grave damage not only to the trade union movement but also to the general democratic movement and particularly the left movement.

Shiv Sena raised the cry of jobs for the 'sons of the soil' and exploited the slogan to attack and split a number of trade unions in Bombay. It attracted a good deal of support for a time and even became a political force in the city of Bombay,

but the democratic movement, the left movement and the trade union movement boldly faced the challenge of the Shiv Sena and unmasked its reactionary disruptive and pro-capitalist face. Its potentiality for mischief has been largely contained and it has now remained in the field as a right-wing political party entering into various opportunistic alliances with a view to gain some seats in the elections.

The Shiv Sena movement was the first serious manifestation of the "sons of the soil" theory. The slogan of "sons of the soil" has since been taken up by several other reactionary organisations and opportunistic politicians in other States.

There is nothing wrong in demanding preference in employment for the local people in any area, where new industries are established. In particular, where big projects come up, often leading to displacement of some villages or the occupation of lands of certain farmers, it is but just and fair that preference in employment should be given to displaced persons, whose traditional occupation has been adversely affected by setting up of new industrial projects. Otherwise also, when new industries are set up in any region, the local people naturally aspire to find employment in such industries. For this purpose it is necessary even to provide training facilities to local people and enable them to learn the various trades.

It is an entirely different matter, however, when the slogan of "sons of the soil" is exploited and utilised to divide the working people and set the local people against the outsiders. Employment in an industrial project has also to be need-based and people with the required skills and qualification may not always be available in any particular region or locality.

The system of hiring labour for many new projects through contractors has often intensified this problem. The labour contractors tend to bring cheap labour from far off places, so that they are isolated from local people and are at the mercy of the contractor and his henchmen.

While supporting the claims of the local people for finding employment in industry in any region or locality, we must not overlook the fact that India is one country and its citizens have a right to seek and accept employment in any part of the country. There are today tens of millions of workers throughout the country who are working in States or Regions which are far away from their places of birth. The trade unions, therefore, have to be on guard against pernicious attempts to drive away workers who are already employed, under the garb of providing jobs to the "sons of the soil".

The problem of unemployment, which is very acute in our country cannot be tackled by counter-posing the claims of one section of workers against another on the basis of either lan-

guage or region or even caste or religion. We must be always vigilant against subtle methods of dividing the ranks of the working class.

Our country has suffered from uneven economic development over long years. The economic development under the British colonialists was primarily motivated by their own strategic and economic requirements. They were not interested in planned and balanced economic development of the country. After attaining independence, and adoption of economic planning, some attempts have been made to develop industries, particularly in the public sector, in different States and in new areas. While some progress in this direction has been made, the fact remains that several States and several regions in some States have remained relatively neglected and backward. This has been particularly true of the North Eastern Region of India, comprising of Assam, Meghalaya, Arunachal, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura.

Although a few public sector projects like Refineries, Fertilizer plants and oil production units have been set up in Assam, the region as a whole lags behind the rest of the country. And this region is rich in forest wealth, plantations as well as mineral oil.

The North Eastern Region has a long border with Bangla Desh in the South and West and Burma and China in the East and North. This makes it a very strategic region, vulnerable to various types of anti-Indian activities from the neighbouring countries. The partition of the country in 1947 and the development in the East Wing of Pakistan (present day Bangla Desh) have brought a large number of refugees to this region from time to time. Some of them have come and settled down legally in the wake of partition and later the creation of Bangla Desh. Many, however, have also infiltrated into various States of India in a clandestine way in search of livelihood. The large influx of outsiders into North-Eastern States combined with their economic backwardness has created a complex problem in this region.

It may be mentioned here that a very large number of refugees came from West Pakistan and settled into the various States like Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, but they were more or less successfully rehabilitated and did not create any serious problem for the States concerned.

In the North-Eastern Region, however, the outsiders in some cases have become a perilous problem. In Tripura, for example, the number of people, who have migrated from Bangla Desh even exceeds the number of original tribal population of the State.

The isolation of the people of these States from the rest of the country has been increased by the difficulties of transport and communication. Not many people from these States are able to visit the rest of India, nor do many Indians from other States visit these North Eastern States for tourism, pilgrimage etc. In this situation of relative isolation, various types of anti-national forces have been active in these States under various political, cultural, linguistic, religious and educational sign boards.

In this region there have been long standing cessationist movements by tribes in Nagaland or Mizoram. But even well-known leaders of Naga and Mizo tribes have been coming round and getting reconciled to their future development within the Indian Union and as an integral part of India.

Events during the last one year, however, have created a dangerous situation in the whole region. It has taken the form of a movement for expulsion of all outsiders from this region.

The movement for the expulsion of "foreign nationals" was launched at a time when the economic situation in Assam had been aggravated by growing unemployment and rising prices. This led to mounting mass discontent and growing struggle of the working class and toiling people against the ever increasing prices and deteriorating living and working conditions. The left movement and the trade union movement in Assam was spear-heading this movement of the toiling people against the growing economic crisis in the State.

A number of united rallies and conventions were held by the left parties and trade unions during latter part of 1979 on urgent people's issues. These rallies and conventions received wide mass response throughout the State. This unnerved the vested interests and the reactionary elements, and the right wing political parties began to conspire to divert people's attention towards communal, linguistic and regional chauvinist issues.

As early as 15th August, 1979 the Assam State Committee of the AITUC had warned against this danger. Following the fall of Janata Ministry at the Centre in August, 1979, the Janata Ministry in Assam also fell in September, 1979. A new Ministry was formed in the State. Due to the death of a Janata M.P. a bye-election was announced to the Lok Sabha. The Janata Party wanted to delete the names of many Muslim voters on the plea that they were foreign infiltrators.

When the mid-term Lok Sabha Poll was announced, a movement was launched to postpone the elections in Assam till the names of the "foreign nationals" were deleted from the electoral rolls. The movement gathered momentum and eventually the election could not be held in the State except in two constituencies in the District of Cachar which has a Bengali speaking majority. The law and order situation deteriorated and

President's rule was imposed with effect from 12th December, 1979.

The movement swept the whole of Assam and gradually spread to states of Manipur and Meghalaya also. In Tripura the tribal youth took up the slogan of expelling the outsiders and a situation of civil war developed in Tripura where there is a left front government in office.

The movement in Assam has been spearheaded by students and youth but it received a very wide support of other sections of the people. Gradually, the leadership of the movement passed in the hands of cessationist, communal and reactionary elements, who diverted it against the minorities and in particular the Bengali speaking people.

The movement has taken a heavy toll of human lives and has led to destruction and burning of thousands of houses. It has freely resorted to violent and terroristic methods. It has created wide-spread fear not only among the Bengali speaking citizens but among all other linguistic minorities. It has crippled the economy of the State and caused a heavy loss to the entire Indian economy by resorting to blockade of supplies of crude oil and oil products, jute, timber, bamboo etc., to the rest of the country. For the past several months not only the Oil Refineries in the State of Assam have been affected but also the Oil Refinery in Barauni in the State of Bihar has been idle for lack of crude oil supplies. The fertilizer factory at Barauni has also been forced to stop production for a long time. Thus the movement has caused a heavy drain of foreign exchange because the country had to import crude oil, oil products and fertilizers to make up the short-fall in production caused by the Assam blockade.

Though there have been disputes in the past between neighbouring States on various issues, the weapon of economic blockade has been used for the first time by the Assam agitation only. It has dealt a severe blow to the concept of an integrated economic development of India. The crude oil, tea, jute, etc., produced by Assam belongs as much to the whole country as the coal produced by Bengal or Bihar or the cotton produced by Maharashtra or the tobacco produced by Andhra Pradesh.

Politically, the movement has been widely used to attack the left parties and in particular the CPI and CPM whose members have been harassed, assaulted and even murdered. In fact the Assam Students' Union and the Assam Ganasangram Parishad have repeatedly denounced all India political parties and dubbed them as irrelevant to the situation in Assam. But their main attack is diverted against the left parties as well as the Congress(I) and Congress(U). The various groups of Janata Party have been lending direct or indirect support to the move-

ment. Even many people belonging to the Congress(I) and Congress(U) have also been giving their support to the agitators at the district and local levels. The RSS has been not only supporting the movement in Assam, but has been campaigning in support of the slogans of the Assam agitation in other States of the country as well.

Many intellectuals, who have criticised the movement and pointed out the danger involved in such a separatist movement have been harassed, persecuted and even been beaten. More and more the movement has assumed the character of an anti-Indian movement attacking national unity and integrity of the country, its economy and its secular and democratic set up.

A dangerous aspect of the Assam movement has been a virulent attack on the organised trade unions in Assam both in the private and public sectors and Associations of Central Government and State Government employees. The trade unions of oil workers, bank and insurance workers, railwaymen and P & T employees have all been subjected to attacks by this movement. The agitators have set up parallel organisations against the existing trade unions in the name of Karmachari Parishads.

III

Although a lot of material has been published in the newspapers and journals about the cessationist and anti-national character of the Assam movement, it would be instructive to quote the following secret circular of All Assam Students' Union giving out their plans and programmes for their activities against the minorities and the national unity and integrity of India.

SECRET

ALL ASSAM STUDENTS UNION GUIDELINE FOR THE TOTAL REVOLUTION IN ASSAM

1. Formation of secret society in different levels with underground Headquarters under single leadership with strict discipline, code and conduct.
2. Collection of funds.
3. Selection of those Assamese Politicians, Dalals, Govt. Servants, exploiters etc. who acted against the interest of the society.
4. Select those non-Assamese politicians, Dalals, Govt. servants, exploiters etc., who acted against the interest of the society.
5. Fix up a date for local trial.
6. Develop cordial relationship with the Nagas, Mizos, Manipuries, Meghalayans, Arunachalies, Tripuries and all other indigenous people of this region and march up hand to hand.
7. Settle up border disputes with the Nagaland, Meghalaya,

Arunachal etc. with mutual understanding and cooperation.

8. Cut off train communication from Badarpur to Lumding and connect North-Cachar district with road communication.

9. Cut off Cachar district from the map of Assam and arrange to accommodate there Bengali population in Assam by exchange of population.

10. Isolate Lumding from all sides.

11. Assamese muslims should cut off relationship with Bangladeshi muslims in the name of religion.

12. Bangladesh muslims should give up the idea to make Assam muslim state. They should not forget the recent disturbances in Aligarh, Jamshedpur, Nadia etc. and the activities of RSS against them.

13. Bengali Hindus should give up the idea of making Assam "BRIHATTAR BANGLA."

14. Bengalee politicians (Hindu and Muslims) should not be allowed to contest any election.

15. Bengalee recruitment in state Govt. offices should be stopped.

16. Bengalee recruitment in Railway, Bank, Insurance, P & T, Tea industry, O.N.G.C., A.G.; private undertaking etc.; should be disturbed.

17. Bengalee students studying in university, college and all educational institutions should be disturbed.

18. Stop purchasing of articles from Bengalee shops and selling essential commodities to Bengalees.

19. Religious and cultural life should be disturbed.

20. Old settlers should not be disturbed.

21. They should be disturbed in shopping centres, Cinema Halls, Bus stand, Railway platform, in games and sports.

22. Calcutta based newspapers should not be allowed to circulate in Assam.

23. Bengali films should not be allowed to screen in Assam Cinema Halls.

24. Assamese Police personnel should be posted in Bengalee pockets, Industrial belts, town, Bangladesh, Nagaland, Meghalaya and Arunachal pradesh border.

25. Assamese Police personnel should be posted in Govt. Railway Police posts and in Railway Protection Force posts.

26. All the Assamese employees serving in Cachar district should be replaced immediately by Bengalees serving in Brahmaputra Valley.

27. Bengalee recruitment in Assam Police Force and other Govt. servants be stopped forthwith.

28. Evict and demolish all unauthorised personal construction.

29. Management of tea, coal, plywood, oil, crude oil, jute

and other resources should be taken by the state Govt. and market should be controlled from here.

30. Deportation of foreigner Hindus should be pushed back through Meaki Police Post (Meghalaya) and Muslims should be pushed back through Golakganj Police Post.

31. Local men should come forward to run business contract, and to work as labourers in factory, mills industries.

32. All the cottage industries should be developed.

33. Ladies and gents should wear their traditional dresses.

34. We should develop friendship with Thai-Buddhist cultural society.

35. We shall tell Calcutta and New Delhi that we require from you only salt for our bare necessity of life and your requirement from us tea, coal, crude oil, plywood; jute etc. We should make them understand that "Assamese are not alone in the world". "JAI AAI ASOM".

IV

The above quoted secret circular of the All Assam Students' Union gives a clear picture of the reactionary communal and chauvinistic character of the current Assam movement.

The main slogan of the Assamese chauvinists is: "The existence of Assamese Nationality is in danger". They are creating widespread fear amongst the Assamese people in general and the youth in particular that the Assamese will be swamped by the 'foreigners' and Assamese culture and language would be destroyed.

The facts and statistics do not support the existence of any such threat to the Assamese nationality and its culture and language. In fact, various census figures clearly show that the slogan of Assamese nationality its culture or language being in danger is a myth invented by the chauvinists to camouflage their attack against the linguistic and religious minorities in Assam.

The census reports reveal the following picture about Assamese and Bengali speaking population in the State:

(Percentage-wise population of Assamese and Bengalis)

	1911	1921	1931	1951	1961	1971
Assamese	35.31%	33.43%	32.32%	56.29%	57.14%	60.89%
Bengali	26.90%	27.60%	27.56%	19.64%	17.60%	19.71%

If we take the Brahmaputra valley, census report presents the following picture:

	1931	1951	1961	1971
Assamese	42.0%	73.1%	73.3%	71.8%
Bengali	23.0%	13.0%	9.8%	11.5%
Hindi	7.7%	3.0%	3.9%	4.9%

As the edge of the movement is also directed against the

Muslim minority, it is necessary to examine the factual position about the percentage of Muslim population also. According to the census of India the Muslim population in the Brahmaputra Valley has been as follows:—

1951	1961	1971
24.68%	25.30%	24.56%

(Source: Census of India 1971 Series 3, Assam page 94)

While the infiltration of Bangla Desh citizens into North Eastern parts of India cannot be denied, the fact remains that between 1952 and 1979, 3,71,861 foreign infiltrators were detected by the Government of Assam. Out of these 3,10,810 were deported after proper scrutiny and trial. These figures of detection and deportation of foreign nationals have been published in the Assame Tribune dated May 23, 1980.

As far as the demand for deletion of names of foreigners from the electoral rolls is concerned, it is quite legitimate and all the political parties have supported it. The foreigners have no right to stay illegally in our country and in any case, they have no right to vote in the election of our legislatures. At the same time it is equally necessary to ensure that no name of any Indian citizen should be left out of the voters' list. It has been reported that objections have been raised against 3.5 lakhs of persons in the draft voters' list on the ground of their being foreign nationals. The question has to be decided according to the Indian Law and the Constitution. As regards the expulsion on the foreigners from the State of Assam or any other State in the North Eastern Region, the same should be done taking into account our international agreements and commitments and the provisions of our Constitution and Laws. There are many reports that many persons who have been residents of the State for several generations are also being attacked as foreigners and their houses and property have also been attacked. These attacks against persons who are legitimately Indian citizens have got to be stopped.

The separatist forces in Assam, which are quite active in the current agitation, have a political objective. This objective is to prepare the ground for the ultimate separation of Assam and other North Eastern States from the Indian Union and to declare them as an independent country in the name of "Swadhin Purbanchal". American Imperialists and Chinese expansionists are helping and supporting these separatist forces. The C.I.A. has prepared a plan known as "Project Brahmaputra" for this purpose. This game of the imperialists and their henchmen—the separatist elements, has got to be exposed and defeated.

The Government of India has been trying to find a solution to the problems of Assam with the help of all political parties and through the process of negotiations. It has taken a number of steps in this direction which have been supported by the left and democratic parties as well as the Trade Union movement.

The Government has accepted the year 1971 as the cut off year and has agreed for the detection and deportation of foreign nationals. This should have satisfied all those in Assam, who genuinely want to solve the problem of foreign nationals. But the separatists and chauvinist elements are insisting on taking the National Register of Citizens of 1951 as the basis for deciding the status of a citizen. This stand cannot be accepted because many persons who have migrated to Assam as displaced persons and who have been given shelter cannot be uprooted once again.

In relation to the detection and deportation of foreign nationals, the Government has taken the following stand as per the Press Statement dated 30th March, 1980:

"Government appreciates the genuine concern of the people about the inclusion of the names of a large number of foreign nationals in the Electoral Rolls which gives them an opportunity to play a role in the political governance of the State. Government also appreciates the legitimate anxiety of the people for effective action for detection and deportation of foreign nationals so that the socio-cultural identity of the Assamese people is protected and they are enabled to live with a sense of security as an integral part of India. With this object in view and taking into consideration the various international obligations and also in consultation with the All India Political Parties the Central Government have indicated that the year 1971 could be taken as the cut off point for detection of foreign nationals so that the people of Assam need have no fear of their identity being swamped by the unrestricted flow of foreign nationals so far as the period before 1971 is concerned. It is well known that vigorous action was taken during the 1960s with the help of Tribunals to detect and deport Pakistanis who had infiltrated into Assam and about 2 lakh foreign nationals were accordingly detected and deported. The number of detection which had reached the figure of 72,651 in 1964 and 72,713 in 1965 dropped to 24,667 in 1966 and then plunged to a mere 4746 in 1967. The bulk of infiltrators having been already detected, it was felt that there was no need to continue referring cases to the Tribunals after 1969 and the residuary problem could be handled conveniently through the police under the Foreigners Act. The Tribunals accordingly remained in existence only till disposal of old cases. Deportation of infiltrators

already detected also continued. It will thus be seen that during the 1960s a very intensive drive was successfully undertaken in the State and suspected foreign nationals have already undergone the process of screening. It is possible that some of those who had been deported have once again surreptitiously re-entered the State but there will be no difficulty in deporting such re-infiltrators.

"In view of the intensive operations undertaken during the 1960s and the declared policy to take 1971 as the cut off point for deportation of foreign nationals there will be no serious difficulty in identifying and deporting foreign nationals who have entered Assam after March 25, 1971 including the re-infiltrators who have once been deported earlier."

So far as the members of the minority community of erst-while East Pakistan who have migrated into Assam before 1971 is concerned, there are already policy decisions laid down right upto 1969 to register them as Indian citizens provided they fulfil the conditions laid down in Rule 9 of the Citizenship Rules. These refugees have been accepted for all practical purposes as citizens, not only have many of them been enrolled as Voters but many of them have been rehabilitated by the Government themselves in agriculture, trade, industries etc. They are therefore, foreign nationals only in the purely technical sense that they have not applied for and secured registration as citizens of India. Obviously, the policy to register them as citizens having been laid down more than a decade ago, there can be no genuine grievance if this situation is now rectified in a manner which will cause the least amount of hardship to them."

In order to find a solution of the foreign nationals issue in Assam, the Government of India held protracted negotiations with the leaders of the Assam agitation. The latest round of talks was held in Shillong on 18th August, but no progress could be made because the leaders of the agitation have been putting certain preconditions which the Government is unable to accept.

Seven political parties in Assam including the C.P.I., C.P.I. (M), RCPI, SUC, Congress (U) and Lok Dal issued a joint statement on August 2. They welcomed the initiative of the Government in trying to find an amicable settlement of the foreigners' issue but emphasised that the solution must be based on our constitution, relevant laws, international agreement and national commitments.

The trade union movement fully supports the efforts being made by the Government and the left and democratic political parties for finding a negotiated solution of the foreigners' issue in Assam and other states of the north eastern region.