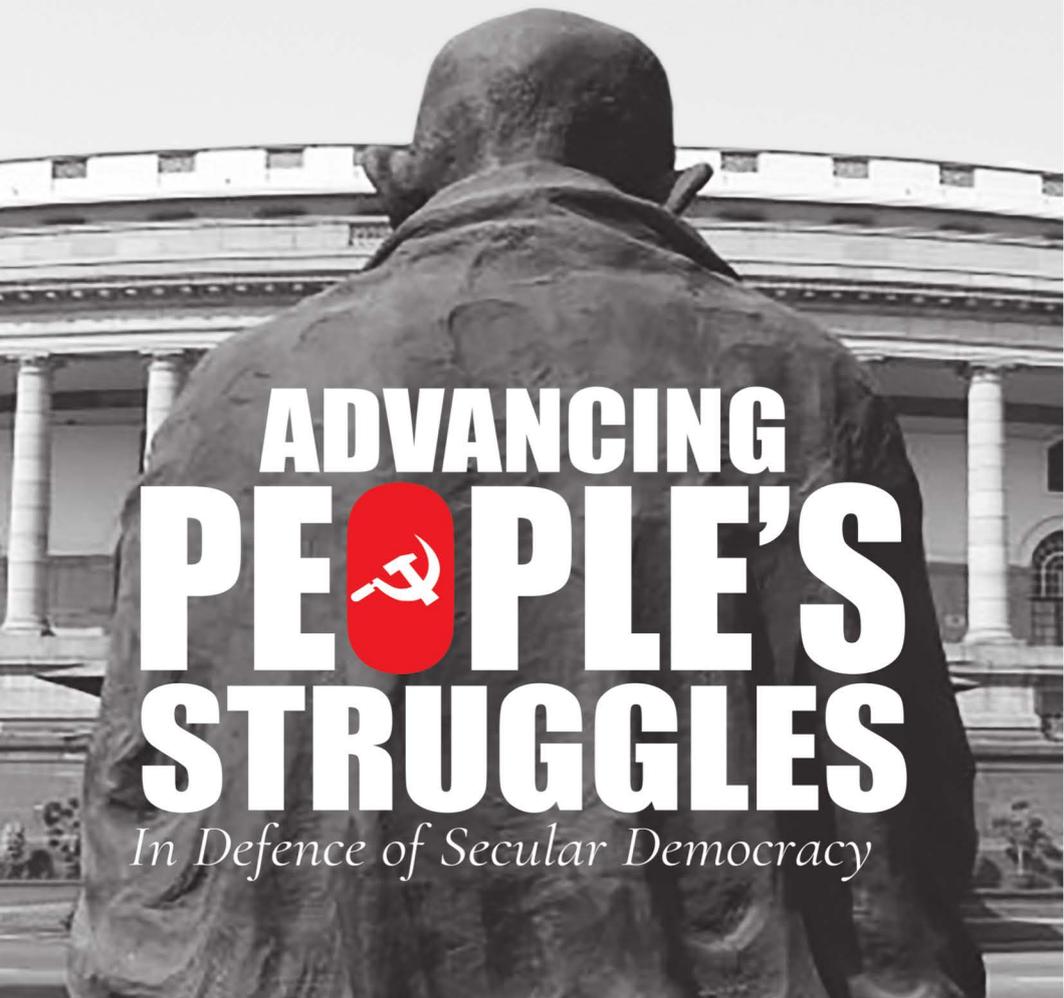


PARLIAMENTARY
SPEECHES OF
**SITARAM
YECHURY**



**ADVANCING
PEOPLE'S
STRUGGLES**

In Defence of Secular Democracy

VOLUME 1

Move Towards Multilateralism in External Relations

Sir, I would like to begin by actually thanking the Leader of the Opposition unfortunately, in his absence - and in the absence of most of them here - for raising many issues which will give us the opportunity also to clarify and to have an informed and enlightened debate in the House on Foreign Policy. I would also like to thank Prof. Kurian because I had a very difficult task to extract what he said about the foreign policy between Kerala, Gulf and China, I mean, what he actually was talking about our foreign policy. But, Sir, let me begin with the observation made by the Leader of the Opposition when he talked of idealistic and realistic schools of thought regarding foreign policy and that he rather be a realist than be an idealist. And, he implied, imputed that the Left is trying to be an obstacle in the pursuit of a good foreign policy which the Government is pursuing. That the Left allies are crippling what he says is the pursuit of this policy. Let me begin with this thing, sir, idealistic and realistic are terms that are

often used when you want to disagree with the position of somebody else, you say he is an idealist, he is not real. Therefore, he is unreal, therefore his view is wrong. And a realist is somebody, who we are told, adapts to existing realities and, therefore, he takes forward the momentum of the existing world. But sir, taking forward the momentum of existing world or being a realist also has an objective where you want to take this world to. You cannot be a realist unless you are an idealist and unless you want to know where you want to take this world to, otherwise, realism that we are opposed to and, therefore, we say, 'yes, we are idealist'. We want this world to go in this direction and we want to take the world to go in that direction. Therefore, we engage with the existing realities in order to change them. That is the way in which we want the foreign policy to move, not to succumb to the existing realities of the single power domination of the empire that the Leader of the Opposition talked of and not to succumb to that is the element of idealism, I think, which is the quintessential path of India's enlightened nationalism and it is that essential path of India's enlightened nationalism that we are today upholding as against the effort in the name of realism to surrender that enlightened nationalism. Therefore, sir, the debate is not really between idealism and realism. The debate is definitely, in terms of national interest, in terms of national security, in terms of economic security, in terms of energy security; and energy and economic security constitute for foundational pillars for India's foreign policy and future as well. Definitely, on that, there is absolutely no dispute. But, where I want to draw this distinction about realism with which the Leader of the Opposition began is that your realism cannot change depending on which side of the House you are sitting on. When you are on the Treasury Benches your realism is something. When you are on the Opposition Benches your realism is something else. And, here, he mentioned five points. I think, I would, actually agree with him on all these five points. That is why I wish that he did not very tentatively end himself without taking, actually, a position on what

Architecture of Inclusive Growth : Need of the Hour

Sir, I rise here to extend my outside support to the Motion of Thanks that has been presented here. ...(Interruptions)...
Sir, I am deliberately using this phrase because there are a large number of issues on which we have very serious caveats, and, I think, there have been a large number of omissions in the Honourable President's first Address to the joint Session of Parliament, and, we think that these omissions are an indicator of the things to come in the country, which we don't think will augur well for our country's future and the people. So, I would like to touch upon those issues, and, therefore, I have deliberately used this phrase 'outside support'.

Secondly, Sir, this is the last year of this UPA Government. We are supporting this Government on the explicit understanding of wishing to keep the communal forces and combinations away from power but also on the basis of a Common Minimum

Programme. This Common Minimum Programme contains a large number of issues, which, we think, are very important for the future of both the country and the people. And, this is the only year left for this Government to implement this Common Minimum Programme. I think, in that, there have been a large number of omissions and a large number of weaknesses that need to be overcome, and, in this year, we hope, the Government will be able to overcome to implement this. And what needs to be done for that is precisely what I would like to concentrate on. I would like to begin with the preamble of the Honourable President's Speech, which says, "The measures taken by my Government for creating the necessary architecture of inclusive growth". The architecture of inclusive growth is a noble idea. But what has been the reality and what is the reality in our country today? If there is any architecture that I can see today or the people can see today, there is the architecture of an economic bipolarity in India. It is this economic bipolarity in India where, on the one hand, you see what the international magazine, *Forbes*, today is saying, that there are 36 billionaires in our country. According to our own statistics, there are 48 billionaires in our country. They are all the U.S. dollar billionaires and not on the basis of Indian rupees. I have nothing against them. But, while that is happening, this 36, according to *Forbes*, have a net estimated asset value of 25 per cent of India's GDP. Just 36 individuals!

On the other hand, my esteemed colleague, Shri Arjun Sengupta, I do not think he is here now, the Committee headed by him, has given the statistics that 77 per cent of India is living on an income of less than Rs. 20 a day! 36 individuals with 25 per cent of GDP and 77 per cent of India, nearly 800 million, or 80 crores, living on less than Rs. 20 a day! This is the economic bipolarity that we are seeing in our country.

If you have the 'shining India' on the one side, there is a 'suffering India' on the other side. It is this gap between shining India and suffering India that is widening. This is not the architecture

Don't Compromise Our Foreign Policy Positions

Sir, at the outset, I am very glad that the Government and the Honnourable Minister of External Affairs have accepted my suggestion, and what some others have also said, and this discussion is taking place, following the *suo moto* statement made by the Minister. This is a very important discussion because the foreign policy of any country, what it is and how it is conducted, actually defines the character of that country. And, to that extent, I think, in what the Honourable Minister has said in the concluding paragraph of his statement, there are two objectives that he has outlined. One, to develop close political, social and economic relations with the countries of our region and the major powers of the world; second, to pursue our independent foreign policy, as dictated by our national interest. On the basis of these two objectives, there are certain concerns that I would like to place before the august House, and that is, with reference to the pressures

that are there on India to change from this course. I would like to concentrate, within the available time that I have, on those issues because I agree with most of the other things that the hon. Minister has said in other paragraphs of his statement. But, are we cognisant of such pressures? And, how are we facing up to them? In that context, the first point that I would like to make is concerning paragraph 12 of the Honourable Minister's statement, where he refers to the deep concern that we have over the recent events in Gaza and West Bank in Palestine. Now, the concern has been expressed, the hardship and the misery caused have been bemoaned; and we have said that we will render all assistance. But why have these hardships been caused? Who is responsible for this misery? Who is responsible for these events? Why is there not a single statement that says that the root cause of the problem in Palestine is the occupation of Palestinian land by Israel? Why has that acceptance not come? That is where my first apprehension comes: Are we succumbing to pressures to shift the direction of our foreign policy? As far as Israel is concerned, I am glad that the Congress Spokesman, Mr. Raashid Alvi, has also made these observations. In fact, I was in a lighter vein thinking that these observations would be more credible speaking from here, rather than there. But the point is, I am repeating this, we have said this earlier, why is it that our defence ties with Israel are growing to such an extent when everybody knows that it is Israel, which through its occupation, is preventing the Palestinians from getting their genuine demand of a homeland. Today, India is the largest defence goods purchaser from Israel. In fact, what we buy from Israel is more than what Israel spends on its Armed Forces. Annually what Israel spends on its Armed Forces, we are buying arms of a value more than that. I have got these figures here. I can give them to you, if you are so interested. (Interruptions).

Legislate Communal Violence Bill Immediately

Madam Chairperson, I rise today to speak on the Motion of Thanks for the Address of the Honourable President of India, which in this calendar year has happened for the second time, but, we fully understand that this has come after the 15th general elections, therefore, I will speak keeping in mind the mandate given by the people of India. Respecting that mandate as well as working for what role the people have given us to play, the role of a constructive Opposition to the Government, in that spirit, I would like to take up various issues that the Honourable President has raised in her Address. I take it up with an approach that, often, we have seen in the past that once elections are over, many of the promises that are made are not followed through or implemented. So, in the interest of the people of India, particularly, in the interest of the toiling people of India, to defend their rights and to improve their livelihood, this is the approach that we will

adopt towards this Government, and it is in that spirit that I would like to respond to some of these issues.

At the outset, Madam Chairperson, I would like to join the President of India as well as the rest of the country in hailing the election of the first woman Speaker in the other House and that is a gesture which has been widely welcomed and I hope that in the same spirit, the first point illustrated on behalf of this Government by the President of India, is the implementation of the reservation for women in Parliament and in the Legislatures, in the first hundred days.

* * *

I only wish that the Government does not delay this any further and immediately brings this Bill for adoption in both the Houses...(Interruptions)... We will fully support that measure which this Government will take. Secondly, the President of India referred in para 4 to the devastating cyclone, Aila, that has inflicted tremendous degree of damage to both life and property in West Bengal. The President of India, I quote, has said, "My Government will extend all possible succour to the cyclone-affected people of West Bengal." I wish to point out here that as on 4th June, the total number of affected persons has reached 67.5 lakhs and the total death toll has risen to 137; the number of fully and partially damaged houses crossed nine lakhs; the affected crop area exceeded 2.8 lakh hectares and the length of embankment destroyed is more than 500 kilometres. This is truly a national-level disaster and as of now, 4.38 lakh people are staying in 782 relief camps and 409 gruel kitchens are in operation. Considering the scale of damage and the suddenness with which this happened, I would only urge upon the government to declare this as a national calamity. While the state government has sought the assistance of the Central Government for relief and rehabilitation work, I would also request the Government the normal practice has been that whenever Defence planes or ships or boats are used, the State Governments

Terror of All Shades is Anti-National

Thank you, sir, for calling me to speak on the Motion of Thanks to the President's Address and I am participating in that. The President's Address is the customary annual Address. That is a balance-sheet of the Government's work in the past year and what it intends to do in the future. Before I come to the main thrust of it, there are certain issues, which the Honourable President raised, on which there can't be any dispute. In para 2 she talks about the consensus on terrorism and that is of extreme concern for all of us and, I think, in this House I must reiterate that the fight against terror is non-negotiable and there can be no compromise on it. But it should be a fight against all manifestations of terror. Terror can not be bracketed with any one religion or any one region or any one area. We have all these expressions of terror from various angles in our country and all of them will have to be fought, and I would like the Government to make sure that there is

no discrimination between the various terrorist activities that take place. Terror must be fought as terror. It is anti-national. As I have said, in para 2 itself the Honourable President has referred to a certain incident in West Bengal, an attack by the Maoists, and the need for the country, as a whole, to rise to fight this menace. It is very correct. I have heard the Honourable Member from the principal opposition also raising this concern and, I think, the House, on this aspect, appears to be completely united. The Prime Minister has, repeatedly, stated that Maoist violence is the single largest and gravest threat to internal security in our country. But, sir, what we now want to know from the Government and what has not been referred to by the Honourable President is the fact that there are members of the Union Cabinet themselves who have actually said that that incident which the Honourable President has referred to in her speech, was not committed by the Maoists. They have gone on record to state that. They have gone on record to state that stop this military operation, not military but the operations against the Maoists in our country and ask them to come for talks even without abjuring violence. Now this discordant voice coming from within the Cabinet itself does not augur well for the country. The Honourable Prime Minister is not present at the moment. But the Government will have to give an explanation to this country and to this House. How can this Government survive with such a major contradiction, where the Prime Minister who heads the Cabinet says that Maoist violence is the gravest threat to India's internal security and you have a member of the Cabinet who actually denies that the Maoists have perpetrated this attack that the Honourable President refers to in para 2? Now this contradiction cannot coexist. This has to be settled and we are waiting for the Government to answer how they are going to settle this contradiction and what is the explanation for this contradiction. That is something which the august House would like to know; otherwise, the sincerity of the Government in fighting this Maoist

Phone Tapping : Assault on Fundamental Rights

Sir, I am always left with this rather unenviable task of bringing back the gravity and seriousness to the debate.

The Vice-Chairman (Prof. P.J. Kurien) : You are capable of doing that. (Interruptions)...

Shri Sitaram Yechury : No, no, Sir, ... (Interruptions). because what we are discussing right now is an issue, I think, of very grave importance to very constitutional scheme of things and the parliamentary democracy in our country. Because, phone tapping is, essentially, something which, I believe, fundamentally undermines the foundational pillars of our parliamentary democracy and the Constitution. The Supreme Court itself in a 1997 judgement had very clearly stated that unless it is, that is, tapping, done in accordance to law and laid out procedure it is violative of both, Article 19, that is, freedom of expression and Article 21, that is,

the right to life and personal liberty. Therefore, what we are discussing is not, actually, some error committed by some person in office at a point of time permitting such tapping to be done. What we are discussing is that are we, today, exercising a restraint in the functioning of our parliamentary democracy by not misusing the provision of the Indian Telegraph Act of 1882, an antiquated Act, an Act which is an anachronism in today's modern world? But, unfortunately, we have not even decided to have a relook and redraft that Act in modern times. But, nevertheless, the provisions that are there in the Act to go into the issue of phone tapping or use phone tapping - that was, specifically, mentioned - are public emergency or in the interest of public safety.

On these two conditions alone, this can be resorted to. Now, even that, I believe, is being violated. And, it is that violation to which the Supreme Court drew the attention of the country in 1997. Then it laid down the conditions under which public emergency and interests of public safety can be interpreted. And, sir, this is important. The Honourable Leader of Opposition mentioned these two clauses that are there in the Act. The Supreme Court has qualified these two clauses and it gives you five circumstances under which this tapping can be resorted to; otherwise, it cannot be done. Sir, these two circumstances are not in the interests of sovereignty and integrity of India, that is, occurrence of a public emergency and interest of public safety are not in the interest of (1) sovereignty and integrity of India; (2) the security of the State; (3) friendly relations with foreign States; (4) public order; and (5) preventing incitement to the commission of an offence. The Central or state Government or the duly authorised officers cannot resort to phone tapping otherwise. Now, under these conditions that the Supreme Court has defined, there are reports that we are seeing now reports of phone tapping that have appeared in the media. If at all, they will fall under any category, it is number 5, that is, preventing incitement to the commission of an offence. That is at the most. If I am being very liberal then utmost I can extend it to say that this

Preserve the Inclusive Idea of India

Sir, thank you for giving me this opportunity. I rise to associate myself, as is the norm, as are our constitutional scheme of things, with the Motion of Thanks to the Hon'ble President's Address. But, this does not mean and is never meant that we agree with the content of that Address. While being deeply grateful, as the Motion suggests, to the President of India for delivering the Address, we would like to express our concerns which I consider are very, very important to understand actually the mandate and what the people of our country are expecting. Therefore, Sir, I must confess that I begin with a sense of confusion at the moment.

Having heard the Hon'ble Leader of the House just now, a dear friend and colleague with whom we have served when he was the Leader of Opposition and the Hon'ble Leader of the

End of Preview.

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