

Liberation

DECEMBER 2021

CENTRAL ORGAN OF CPI(ML)

Rs. 25

Farmers' Victory



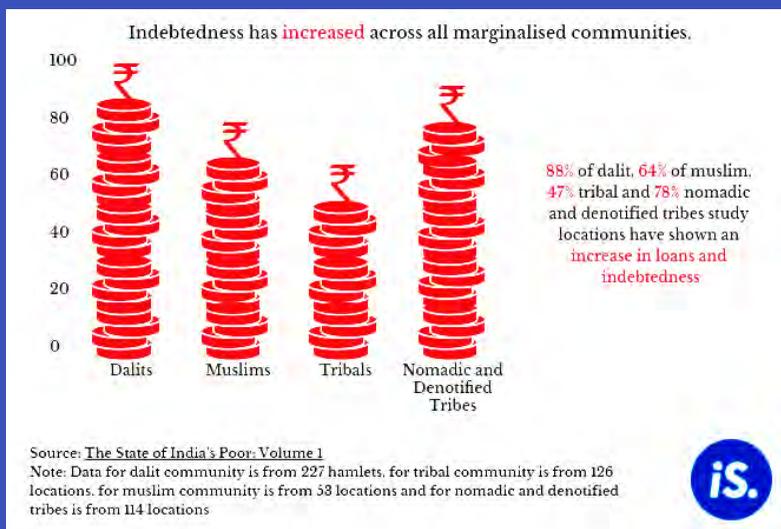
Data Notes

Debt Trap Tightens On India's Poor

Covid-19 has intensified the indebtedness crisis that plagued Indian households even before the pandemic. An analysis by Dvara Research, a policy research organisation, found that even before the pandemic, debts had risen steeply by 84% in rural India and 42% in urban India. Household debt to GDP rate rose sharply to 37.3 per cent in 2020-21 from 32.5 per cent in 2019-20.

60% of domestic workers were not paid during the lockdown; and six months after the lockdown, 31% of domestic workers had not found employment and even fewer had received support from their employers. This forced them deeper into debt to feed their families.

The National Alliance Group of Denotified and Nomadic Tribes along with other civil society organisations surveyed 98,000 Dalit, Muslim, Adivasi and DNT (denotified tribe) families in 476 rural hamlets and urban mohallas. The survey found that 3 in 4 Dalit and DNT households were pushed further into debt. Stripped of employment, they were forced to take loans from moneylenders at steep interest rates. ■



The Rich Quit India During Modi Rule

Modi boasts that his is the first government to have brought any “development” to India in 70 years. “Ease of doing business” is a mantra of this regime. Why, then, are entrepreneurs leaving this Modi-made paradise in droves, during Modi rule?

The numbers do not lie. 35,000 high net-worth Indian entrepreneurs have left the country between 2014-2020. Studies by the Morgan Stanley group and the Global Wealth Migration Report 2020 show that thousands of rich Indians leave India for wealthier shores.

Even as Indians become poorer and are facing record levels of unemployment and indebtedness, we are seeing an exodus of the rich (ironically the section most vocal in praise of the Modi regime.) Clearly even the section most likely to praise Modi is not impressed by his economic policies and his model of governance. ■

Liberation

New Series Vol. 27 No. 08
DECEMBER 2021

CONTENTS

★ Bypoll Pointers	5
★ COP26 Ends in Disappointment	6
★ Human Rights Under Fire In India	7
COVER FEATURE	
★ Freedom 75: People's Campaign	9
SPECIAL REPORT	
★ Adivasi Rights Convention	17
ARTICLE	
★ Hundred Years of CPC: Part IV	21
★ Bihar Covid-19 Deaths	27
★ Assam Evictions	28
★ Asansol Convention	29
★ Caste Atrocities Against Dalits	31
★ REVIEW: Jai Bhim (2021)	33

Editor-in-chief

Dipankar Bhattacharya

Editor

Arindam Sen

Editorial Board

Kavita Krishnan

V. Shankar

Sanjay Sharma

Editors' e-mail:

liberation@cpiml.org

Art: V Arun Kumar

Manager

Prabhat Kumar

Phone: 7042877713

Website: liberation.org.in

E-mail: manager.liberation@gmail.com

36 pages including covers

Annual Subscription Rates

India Rs. 300

Abroad US\$ 60

Pay By Bank transfer:

Account Name: Liberation Publications

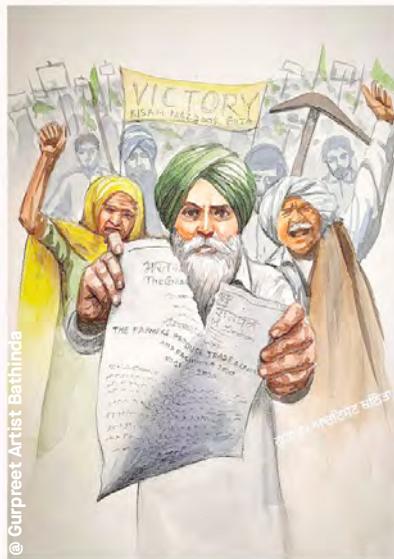
Account No.: 90502010091855

IFSC Code: CNRB0019050

MICR Code.: 110015388

Bank: Canara Bank

India's Farmers and 'Andolanjeevis' Win a Historic Victory over the Arrogant Modi Regime



Fourteen months after the Modi government had bulldozed its way in Parliament to convert the widely resented farm ordinances-turned-bills into laws, the Prime Minister had to bow down to the unprecedented farmers' resistance to announce a repeal of all the three contentious laws. It will be remembered as a historic instance when a courageous and tireless movement of the people brought a tyrannical regime to its knees and people's power prevailed over the arrogance and brutalities of state power and the ruling elite. Narendra Modi chose the Guru Purab, the birth anniversary of Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, to announce this U-turn, obviously with an eye on placating

the enraged Sikh community and cutting the much feared losses in the forthcoming Assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Punjab.

The Godi (pet) media anchors and commentators, having played cheerleader for the farm laws all this time, for once appear utterly confused and demoralised. Some of them are wondering if the government would now bend on other issues like CAA and Article 370 too, some are calling the move the sagacity of a statesman, some are calling it driven by national interests, and some have already discovered an electoral masterstroke in this much belated announcement! One Godi media manager has also compared this 'retreat' with a lion taking two steps back, not to run away but only to spring on its prey!

Time will tell if and how far Modi's 'masterstroke' will reduce the BJP's losses, and how exactly the regime will try to spring on the farmers. What is clear as daylight at the moment is the fact that the government has failed in spite of trying all possible tricks to discredit, demoralise, and demonise the farmers and divide and crush their movement. It is actually a desperate, diffident, and fearful government which has announced the repeal of the laws. The protesting farmers and all other forces who are fighting for justice, democracy, and people's rights must seize this moment and push for bigger victories.

What has made this great victory possible? It has proved once again that it is not possible for the Indian state and powerful governments to ignore and antagonise India's farmers beyond a point. India's freedom movement was



punctuated by major peasant agitations and revolts, it was the energetic participation of India's peasantry which sustained the freedom movement and eventually ended colonial rule. Every major social and political upheaval after 1947 has had India's farmers and youth at the forefront. Even in the last three decades when the politics of Hindutva and economics of market domination and globalisation have generally been on the ascendant, the farmers' movement has managed to break the shackles at several junctures.

The anti-SEZ movement ended the 1894 Land Acquisition Act, and farmers and adivasis also successfully thwarted Modi's bid to subvert the 2013 Land Acquisition and Compensation Act in the interest of corporates. This is the second time in Modi's seven years that farmers have managed to push the government back. The farmers' movement has achieved this victory by forging and maintaining a broad-based and disciplined functional unity involving hundreds of farmers' organisations across the country and by consciously

★ *The more the regime and the Sangh brigade sought to demonise the protesting farmers and crush the movement by unleashing repression and plotting conspiracies, the more it steeled the determination and unity of the farmers.*

rejecting the divisive communal propaganda of the Sangh brigade. When Punjab farmers were sought to be targeted and isolated by dubbing them Khalistanis, Haryana stood with them and together they pitched their protesting tents at the Delhi border on November 26. After the 26 January misleading media campaign and repression, farmers from western UP lent fresh energy and strength to the movement. After the Lakhimpur Kheri massacre of farmers, the whole country rose in unison.

The more the regime and the Sangh brigade sought to demonise the protesting farmers and crush the movement by unleashing repression and plotting conspiracies, the more it steeled the determination and unity of the farmers. And the tireless determined protests of the

farmers evoked growing sympathies of other sections of working people. The by-election results announced on November 2 made it abundantly clear that the anger of the people had started spilling over into the electoral arena. At a time when the opposition parties are still divided and weak, the united movement of the farmers emerged

as a growing dynamic opposition on the ground. While remaining independent of opposition political parties, the united forum of farmers took a bold stand against the BJP, appealing to the people everywhere to ensure the BJP's electoral defeat. It is this combination of the broad unity and bold political voice of the farmers' movement which left the Modi government with no other option but to repeal the laws lock, stock and barrel.

Modi did not apologise to the farmers for the seven hundred odd lives that were lost in the course of the agitation, some of them directly due to the violence and repression inflicted by his party and its governments and others because of the harsh conditions of outdoor life which the farmers

were compelled to endure. He did not express any regret for the abuses hurled at the farmers and their movement by his ministers and senior leaders of his party, or for his own infamous 'andolanjeevi' remark in Parliament targetting activists supporting the farmers' movement. He rather apologised to 'the people' for not being able to 'convince a section of farmers' about the supposed benefits of the farm laws. He said nothing about reducing the escalating cost of cultivation, fuelled especially by the

relentless rise in the prices of diesel and fertilisers, on the contrary he talked about promoting zero budget farming and forming a new committee for framing new laws.

Farmers have rightly decided to carry on with the protests till the laws are actually repealed and other demands of the movement, including legal guarantee for MSP for all crops, withdrawal of the new electricity bill, are conceded by the government. Let the Modi media try to spread myths about

Modi's new masterstroke and magnanimity, India will salute the farmers for what they have already accomplished, building and sustaining a powerful movement in the middle of a pandemic and leading it to victory in the face of the arrogance and aggression of a fascist regime. It is time for every ongoing people's movement to draw inspiration and courage from the farmers and mount a powerful counter-offensive to foil the fascist design of the Modi-Shah-Yogi regime. ■



Bypoll Pointers:

Anger Grows Against the Modi Regime

Results of the October 30 bypolls held in three Lok Sabha seats and twenty nine Assembly constituencies spread over thirteen states and the Union Territory of Dadra and Nagar Haveli give us a glimpse of the changing political climate of India ahead of the crucial Assembly elections early next year. Usually bypolls tend to favour the governments in power, but the bypolls sprang several surprises, the most stunning being the results in BJP-ruled Himachal Pradesh where the Congress bagged all the three Assembly seats and the lone Lok Sabha seat for which bypolls were held. For the BJP, perhaps the most significant gain came from Telangana, where the BJP has managed to increase its strength by fielding a TRS defector as candidate.

The other state where the BJP gained immensely is Assam where the party and its ally UPPL won all the five seats that had bypolls. Four of these seats had been won by the Congress and its allies, AIUDF and BPF, during the general elections held earlier this year. The continuing growth and consolidation of the BJP and its allies in Assam and other states

of the North-East poses a major threat to peace, social harmony and human rights in this region with great demographic and cultural diversity. In complete contrast to Assam, the BJP lost all four seats in West Bengal by massive margins, including the two seats it had won in the Assembly elections. Even though the BJP finished second, Left votes improved marginally in two constituencies in Nadia (Shantipur) and North 24 Parganas (Khardaha).

While mainstream media analysis tends to explain the BJP defeats, and narrow victories won by its ally JDU in Bihar, in terms of 'sympathy' for deceased leaders, the anger against the Modi government and the BJP's disastrous policies and divisive politics was quite palpable and contributed hugely to its defeats in Himachal, Haryana and Rajasthan. Even in Karnataka, the party lost a seat in the current chief minister's home turf. The lethal combination of skyrocketing prices of essential goods and services, vanishing jobs and falling income has perhaps been the biggest popular concern in the bypolls. The way the Modi-Yogi-Khattar regimes have sought

to crush the farmers' movement and demonise the protesting farmers, has only added to the people's anger.

This general message of growing popular anger against the BJP and the determination to defeat it in the elections is the most important takeaway from the bypolls. To channelize this anger into powerful mass struggles and convert it into effective opposition in the electoral arena remains the most important task ahead of the crucial Assembly elections in early 2022. In Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Punjab, the elections will be a great opportunity for the ongoing farmers' movement to secure its political objective of punishing the anti-farmer Modi regime and thwarting the divisive, disastrous politics of the Sangh-BJP brigade. Effective opposition unity remains an added challenge in this regard. The split in the Bihar alliance with the Congress and RJD both fielding candidates in the two constituencies was an unfortunate development. Even though the Congress polled less votes than the eventual winning margin of the JDU over RJD, the split clearly sent out a wrong message. ■

COP26 Ends in Disappointment as Global Leaders Ignore the Climate Emergency

▲ AISHIK

The COP26 summit held in Glasgow had hoped to limit the rise in global temperatures to 1.5 degrees Celsius, but failed as nations failed to balance developmental goals with the effects of climate catastrophe.

The 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference, more commonly referred to as COP26, was held between 31st October and 12th November in Glasgow. The key objective of the summit was to ensure that the rise of global temperatures was limited to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. The scientific consensus is that any rise beyond this temperature would result in cataclysmic climate change that would devastate the world. Thus COP26 was branded the 'Last and Best Hope for Humanity', as we are quickly approaching the point of no return on climate change. By the time the curtains came down on the conference, it became clear that world leaders who had assembled on the stage had failed to live up to the expectations from them.

While the world faces an energy crisis with the approaching winter in the northern hemisphere, participating nations were required to demonstrate real commitment to long term goals over short term inconveniences. China's trade war with Australia has resulted in a coal crisis, while the UK is also facing the possibility of a power shortage in the aftermath of Brexit. The shortage meant that coal prices surged globally and even India faced the prospect of power outages as coal reserves in power plants in India ran low. While fossil fuel interests have seized the opportunity to push for its greater use, the crisis actually demonstrates the fundamental unreliability of coal as a sustainable



About 100,000 people marched in Glasgow to demand more action on the climate crisis during COP26. (Photo:PA MEDIA)

and reliable source of our energy needs.

Despite overwhelming scientific evidence, a growing trend in capitalist circles has been increasingly skeptical of 'anthropogenic climate change'. Donald Trump emerged as a champion in these circles as he branded any effort to cut down on carbon emissions as a 'globalist' conspiracy and withdrawing from the Paris Accord. It is true that some communities in the US (as everywhere else) that have traditionally had coal mining as their principal economic lifeline, and will be disproportionately affected by the shift to Green Energy, it is the responsibility of the respective governments to ensure that the transition to renewables is as smooth as possible. Conservatives and Radical Right groups around the world have increasingly spoken out against cutting down on carbon emissions, which has in turn made any global understanding on climate change increasingly reliant on partisan political pressures, subject to sudden and unforeseen reversals. A leak of documents in

October 2021 showed that wealthy countries like Australia, Japan and Saudi Arabia had lobbied the UN to play down the need for a rapid shift away from fossil fuels.

India's Diplomatic Failure

India faces an existential peril in the form of climate change as we have already been impacted by what have been called Extreme Climate Events in the form of cyclones, cloudbursts, landslides, severe droughts etc. Yet the Indian government (along with China) intervened at the last moment to water down the resolution on ending coal power and fossil fuel subsidies, in an act that can only be described as a form of self-sabotage. This was the result of the failure to get wealthier nations in the Global North to commit to investments of \$1 trillion into developing economies.

The Modi government has often claimed that India's profile on the global stage has been improved by Narendra Modi's numerous foreign trips since he came to power in 2014. Reality however shows a different

picture as India's interests were largely ignored and we instead emerged as the villains on the global stage for torpedoing an essential agreement. The Indian government has since protested the 'negative' coverage of itself, suggesting that the particular phase emphasizing 'phase down' of coal, as opposed to the suggested 'phase out' of coal, was taken from the US-China statement. Even so, one must ponder upon the naivete of the Indian officials, who apparently read out a statement on the international stage to which it had not agreed! It must also be noted that while India's national interests are in preventing climate change, one of Modi's closest backers is the Adani group, which has invested heavily in coal mining in Australia.

The Last Hope for Humanity

The Swedish environmental activist Greta Thunberg joined a protest of more than one lakh people in Glasgow stating "It is not a secret that COP26 is a failure. It should be obvious that

we cannot solve a crisis with the same methods that got us into it in the first place". Any attempt to address the climate crisis in a manner that doesn't entail an enormous cut down of emissions is simply a delusion. Yet global leaders have maintained a 'business as usual' attitude, which will clearly not suffice.

The Glasgow Climate Pact, which is the new deal reached at the end of the summit, agreed to revisit the emission reduction plans in 2022 in order to try to keep the 1.5 °C Paris Agreement target achievable. It also focused on the 'phase down' of the use of coal and climate finance for developing countries. While Chile, Poland, Indonesia, Vietnam, South Africa and South Korea made commitments to phase out coal between the 2030s and 2040s, the largest economies of the world i.e. India, China and the US failed to make any such commitments. India set its target for net-zero carbon emissions by 2070, which is even further behind the net-zero by 2060 target set by China. India, China and

other countries also failed to sign up for limiting methane emissions.

45 countries, including India, pledged to invest \$4 billion for transition to sustainable agriculture. Given Narendra Modi's reluctance to engage with farmers on even the most minute of issues, one must remain skeptical of the Indian government's ability to deliver on its pledge. The focus of the conference on electric cars as a means of sustainable transportation rather than an emphasis on public transportation and cycling was also criticised.

The last and best hope for humanity is clearly the youth all around the world, who have mobilised against entrenched corporate interests to fight for the continued existence of humanity on the planet. We need to build coalitions that can engage in granular levels of struggle from national, state and municipal legislatures to mohallas to factory floors, to keep the collective interests of humanity above the profit margins. ■



Human Rights Under Fire In India

(December 10 marks International Human Rights Day. People all over India will mark International Human Rights Day 2021 to highlight the Modi regime's open war on human rights and civil liberties. Liberation brings you the latest on this war front.)

From the platform of an event marking the 28th Foundation Day of India's National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) in October, Prime Minister Modi launched a characteristic attack on human rights activists - accusing them of "selectively" raising human rights concerns to "tarnish the nation's image." While BJP regimes flout human rights with abandon, Modi's minions like their master, seek to rewrite human rights theory itself.

As Siddharth Varadarajan observes, "What do you do when the practice of government is not in sync with the theory of constitutional governance? You make up a new theory."

Doval Doctrine

Addressing a new batch of police officers, National Security Advisor Ajit Doval advised that "The new frontiers of war is the civil society which can be manipulated to hurt a nation's interests." This is nothing but the "urban Naxal" insinuation coined by the regime's pet media propagandists, rendered profound. Translated, this means: Anyone seeking to keep the regime accountable to human rights principles is a threat to the nation's interests. Human rights offenders are the only humans whose lives have

value, the ones they torture or kill are "terrorists" who have no human rights. Human rights defenders thus violate the rights of the only humans deserving of rights. Perpetrators of human rights violations are thus victims of "civil society"; victims of human rights violations are terrorists, and those raising human rights concerns and objections are thus "urban terrorists."

Rawat Redefines Rights

Not to be left behind, Chief of Defense Staff General Bipin Rawat said to an admiring Times Now anchor Rahul Shivshankar, "Kashmiri locals are saying that we will lynch terrorists, they say they will make arrangements so that terrorists get

lynched. This is a positive sign. How can killing a terrorist be a human rights violation? If a terrorist is operating in your area, why won't you kill him?" Lynching has of course long ago been established as proof of Hindu-supremacist patriotism (when the body of the Dadri lynching perpetrator was draped in the national tricolour by a Union Minister at his funeral). But now we have the chief of defence staff advocating "arranged" lynchings, where the victims are declared terrorists!

Civilian Killings Disguised As "Encounters" In Kashmir

What does it mean when Rawat says local Kashmiris "arrange" lynchings - does it mean the actual lynchings are carried out by the police or armed forces? In fact, local Kashmiris are assaulted by forces merely for demanding that the bodies of their kin slain in so-called "encounters", be handed over to them. At Hyderpora, police claimed to have killed "two terrorists and two terror associates". Villagers protested, asserting that at least three of those killed were in fact a local businessman, a dental surgeon, and a peon, murdered in a staged "encounter" and posthumously declared to be "terrorists" and "associates"! The Hyderpora incident is only the latest instance of the Doval-Rawat theory in action. Civilians are killed, and allegations of cold-blooded murder by the police are answered by assigning the identities of "terrorist" and civil society "terrorist associate" to those killed! Forced by protests, the J&K administration ordered a magisterial enquiry into the "encounter" and handed over the bodies of the businessman and the dental surgeon. However, in a reminder that the Hathras-type atrocity of forcible secret midnight burial/cremation is common in Kashmir, the family members were



Protest in Srinagar by family members of Altaf Ahmad Bhat and Dr Mudassir Gul, who were killed during the encounter demand a probe and return of the dead bodies on November 17, 2021. (Photo: S Irfan)

forced to conduct the burial of their loved ones in the darkness of night.

Custodial Killing And Cover-UP

In Kasganj of Uttar Pradesh, a young Muslim man Altaf was accused of abducting a minor Hindu girl. The next morning the Kasganj Police claimed improbably that the Altaf (some 6 feet tall) hung himself from a two-foot high tap in the police station's washroom, using the "drawstrings of his jacket hood". It later came out that the woman in question is not a 16-year-old minor but an adult. In India, some 40 per cent of cases of "abduction" and "rape" of girls and women are actually consensual inter-caste or inter-faith elopements which the parents of the girl or woman seek to criminalise as rape. The UP police take their cue in such cases from the Chief Minister himself who terms all inter-faith love to be "love jihad"

and calls for the "perpetrators" to be killed.

UAPA For Reporting Communal Violence

Tripura witnessed a spate of anti-Muslim violence, including burning of mosques. Tripura police filed UAPA charges against journalists and others tweeting about such violence, especially targeting Muslims for such tweets or posts. Even more outrageously, Tripura police pursued two women journalists across state borders into Assam to arrest them for reporting on the vandalism and arson targeting mosques and Muslim properties. ■



75 Years of Independence: People's Campaign

The people's campaign called by historians, intellectuals, cultural activists and civil society to mark 75 years of the country's independence began at the Bharatiya Nritya Kala Mandir in Patna on 18 November 2021 on the birth anniversary of Batukeshwar Dutt, great revolutionary and comrade of Bhagat Singh. Earlier, a meeting was organized at Batukeshwar Dutt Lane in Jakkampur and the great revolutionary's statue at the Vidhan Sabha main gate was garlanded.

The people's convention on the topic '75 Years of Independence: Dreams and Challenges' was addressed by renowned historian Prof OP Jaiswal, CPIML General Secretary Dipankar Bhattacharya, poet Arun Kamal, former HoD History at Patna University Prof Bharti S Kumar, Prof Vidyarthi Vikas from AN Sinha Institute, Pasmanda Mahaj leader and former MP Ali Anwar and others. The convention, conducted by Kumar Parvez, was attended by a large number of prominent Patna citizens including Prof Santosh Kumar, Ghalib, Ranjiv, PS Maharaj, Dr PNP Pal, Tanveer Akhtar and Party leaders and legislators including Comrades Kunal, Dharendra Jha, Mahboob Alam, Santosh Sahar, Meena Tiwari, Sandeep Saurabh and others. The Hirawal group presented Azimullah Khan's 'Hum Hain Malik Hindostan Hamara' at the start of the people's convention.

Addressing the convention, Prof OP Jaiswal said that the history of Sangh and Hindutva brigade in the independence movement was one of treachery. They were also against the Constitution, as they consider Manusmriti to be the constitution. RSS leaders had even opposed the right to vote for all. Today these people are twisting and falsifying history. It is our collective responsibility to

forge an extensive unity against this and carry forward the fundamental values of the independence struggle.

CPIML General Secretary Dipankar Bhattacharya said that the names of Batukeshwar Dutt and Savarkar cannot be taken in the same breath. Savarkar's history in the Andaman jail is one of apologizing to the British, while Batukeshwar Dutt fought ceaselessly in jail. Our fight today is against the lies and falsification of history by BJP. We take inspiration from the freedom struggle and remember various aspects including the 1857 freedom struggle, the 1942 Quit India upheaval and the participation of Muslims, dalits, backward sections and women in the freedom movement. Their struggle is our inheritance, and it is our responsibility to cherish this legacy and also learn from history.

Arun Kamal remembered the struggles of Bhagat Singh and his comrades and said we must cherish and protect the values of the freedom fighters. Vidyarthi

Vikas spoke in detail of the heroic actions of Batakh Miyan who saved Gandhiji's life. Ali Anwar said we must bring to light the history of those who are in the margins of the freedom movement. He pointed out that BJP and RSS are spreading poison and encouraging the likes of Pragya Thakur and Kangana Ranaut who insulted all the martyrs and called the country's cherished independence 'alms'.

The people's campaign to mark 75 years of independence will be continued for the next two years.

Resolutions Passed at the People's Convention

The following resolutions were passed at the people's convention organized in Patna on 18 November:

1. The campaign '75 Years of Independence: People's Campaign' to spread the values and vision of the freedom movement among the people will be continued for the next two years till August 2023.





2. This convention demands that the Secretariat Halt railway station and Gardanibagh Gate library should be named after the great revolutionary Batukeshwar Dutt, and Batukeshwar Dutt Gate should be constructed with public participation at Gorla Math.
3. This convention calls for this campaign to be turned into a widespread people's campaign and for the completion of the following tasks:

People's Campaign Schedule

1857: First Freedom Struggle

- To bring out the untold aspects of the freedom struggle in Bihar prior to 1857; to throw light on Kunwar Singh as well as Bhojpur's Nishan Singh, Harkishan Singh, and especially the role played by women, to document them and organize programs on them.
- To build a park in Arwal dedicated to the memory of the great 1857 freedom fighter Jeevdhar Singh.
- To renovate the Shaheed Peer Ali Memorial at Gulzarbagh in Patna.
- To document the Rajwar Revolt that continued in Nawada District for about 10 years even after 1857 and to organize programs on this.
- Champaran Satyagraha

To bring out the history of the

activists in Gandhiji's Satyagraha Movement, especially Shekh Gulab, Batakh Miyan and others, and to document the peasants' movement against the zamindars that continued even after Gandhi left.

1942 Movement

To make a list of the martyrs (about 500 martyrs) who were killed in the 1942 movement and build a memorial to them, and to bring out the history of the parallel government (Badh-Badahia) formed in Bihar.

Adivasi Movement

The spirited adivasi movement in undivided Bihar is a golden page in our history. It is our aim to bring to light the history, especially the hitherto untouched aspects, of the adivasi movements in the Bhagalpur-Purnea regions.

Farmers' In The Freedom Movement

To document the historic peasants' movements that took place in Shahabad, Magadh, Saran and Mithila and to reconstruct the Yadunandan Sharma Ashram in Gaya.

Freedom Fighters

To bring to light the life and work of freedom fighters from Bihar who were incarcerated in the Andaman Jail and to make efforts to safeguard their memory.

Nachhathar Malakar (Araria)

Bismil Azimabadi (Patna)
Badri Aheer (Bhojpur)
Taqi Rahim (Patna)
Prithviraj Singh (Jehanabad)
Ramakant Dwivedi Ramta (Bhojpur)
Jubba Sahni (Muzaffarpur)
Taramuni Devi (Saran)
Shaikh Gulab (Champaran)
Batakh Miyan (Champaran)
and others.

4. Padma Shree awardee and BJP supporter Kangana Rabaut has declared that the independence of 1947 was 'alms' given to beggars, and the country got its true independence in 2014. Her statement is in keeping with the feelings expressed by the RSS immediately after Independence and is an insult to the martyrs of the freedom struggle. We strongly condemn this statement by Ms Ranaut and demand that the Padma Shree awarded to her should be revoked.
5. This convention condemns the BJP/RSS conspiracies to twist and falsify the history of the freedom movement and pledges to re-establish and carry forward the values of the freedom movement such as democracy, secularism, fraternity, social justice and socialism. ■

Remembering Batukeshwar Dutt

"I am leaving behind a part of myself in Batukeshwar Dutt": Bhagat Singh

▲ KUMAR PARVEZ

On 16 July 1930 the atmosphere in Lahore Central Jail was gloomy. On that day Batukeshwar Dutt was to be sent from Lahore Central Jail to Multan Jail and thus he was going to be separated from his dear comrade Bhagat Singh. The British had realized that there were only two main revolutionary leaders - Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt. So they had made the plan to separate the two and weaken the coordination between revolutionaries. As Batukeshwar was getting ready to leave Lahore Central Jail, the faces of all the revolutionaries were sorrowful but their eyes were full of dreams for the future. Bhagat Singh took out his diary and took Batukeshwar's signature in it. After the verdict on the Lahore conspiracy case, Bhagat Singh wrote a very moving letter to Batukeshwar Dutt--"I will die on the gallows and show the world that we have to sacrifice ourselves willingly for the fulfillment of revolutionary ideals. I will die, but you will remain alive to bear the punishment of life imprisonment, and it is my firm belief that you will prove that a revolutionary can gladly suffer lifelong torture for the sake of his objectives. You have escaped death sentence and through the tortures you will suffer you will be able to show that the noose, to embrace which I am ready and waiting, is not a means of escaping from torture. Revolutionaries have the strength of will to remain alive and bear lifelong torture and suffering".

In a letter to his mother Bhagat Singh wrote, "I am going, but in Batukeshwar Dutt I am leaving behind a part of myself". And in truth, Batukeshwar Dutt kept alive and carried forward the dreams of the revolutionary

group throughout his life despite innumerable hardships. The jails of Lahore, Multan, Salem, Andaman and Bankipur Jail in Patna are replete with the history of his struggles. Until the time of Independence his life was spent in incarceration. His body was broken by the series of brutal tortures in jails and he became prey to bone cancer but not for a second was his revolutionary fervour dimmed.

Early Days in Batukeshwar Dutt's Life

Batukeshwar Dutt's family was from Oadi village in Khandaghosh Thana, Burdwan District, West Bengal. He was born on 18 November 1911. He had his early schooling in Kanpur. Even as a student he was imbued with a feeling of patriotism. In those days Kanpur City was an important centre for the revolutionary movement. He came into contact with revolutionaries and read books on patriotism by Garibaldi and Mezzini. In 1924 Sacindra Nath Sanyal formed a revolutionary party in Kanpur, the Hindustan

Prajatantrik Sangh. Dutt came into contact with him and, along with Vijay Kumar Sinha, Ajay Ghosh and Surendra Nath Pandey, formed the Kanpur Gymnastic Club and also started a handwritten magazine, Kranti. He left his studies half-way because of his involvement in the revolutionary movement. He soon became very popular in the revolutionary group.

How Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt Met

Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt met for the first time in Kanpur and they became a very popular duo. Both were extremely bright and studious. Dutt started reciting to Bhagat Singh revolutionary poems written by the celebrated Bengali poet Nazrul Islam. These had a deep impact on Bhagat Singh. Bhagat Singh learned Bengali from Dutt and with his help began reading Karl Marx. He also joined the Hindustan Prajatantrik Sangh. In those days the 'Pratap' office was the centre of the revolutionary movement and Bhagat Singh wrote



many excellent reports as the representative of the newspaper.

Dutt's Journey from Kanpur to Calcutta

Batukeshwar Dutt's mother used to live in Banaras. He travelled to Banaras to meet her, but after her death he went to Calcutta instead of returning to Kanpur. At that time Calcutta was an important hub for revolutionary activities. The workers' and peasants' movements were also in full spate. In Calcutta Dutt met communist movement leader Muzaffar Ahmed. As he was born and brought up in Kanpur, Dutt's hold over Hindi was good. Muzaffar Ahmed entrusted him with the work of organizing Hindi speaking workers. He became a member of the Bengal Workers and Peasants Party and worked there for a time.

Formation of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association

The nationalist movement which had abated for a while resurged with renewed vigour after the coming of the Simon Commission. Huge protest meetings were organized across the country. There was a new energy in revolutionary groups also. There was no dearth of revolutionary groups, but most were regional organizations. There was no all India organization. It was in this light that the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association was formed in 1928 amid the historic ruins of the Ferozshah Tughlaq Fort in Delhi. The word 'Socialist' was added to the name of the Association in response to Bhagat Singh's proposal. The ultimate aim of this Association was to gain Independence and establish a socialist state.

The Killing of Sanders and Bhagat Singh's Journey to Calcutta

The revolutionaries protested the murder of Lala Lajpat Rai by killing Sanders. This killing shook the entire British machinery and an intense

★ Batukeshwar Dutt's daughter Bharti Bagchi's message to the People's Convention

Today is the birth anniversary of the great revolutionary Batukeshwar Dutt. On this occasion, to all of you who are inspired to walk on the path of secularism, equality and fraternity shown by Batukeshwar Dutt and Shaheed-e-Azam Bhagat Singh and to work for the upliftment of the poor, I, Batukeshwar Dutt's only daughter, extend all best wishes. Inquilab Zindabad!

I am sorry that due to physical incapacity I am unable to send this message through voice message. I wish great success to the people's convention being organized on the birth anniversary of my father the revolutionary Batukeshwar Dutt.

repression drive was launched for arresting the revolutionaries. As a result, all the revolutionaries were forced to move out. Bhagat Singh shed his Sardar look and reached Calcutta in a long coat and hat. There he once again met Batukeshwar Dutt. Dutt took him to his ancestral village Oadi where both stayed for some time, but the police got wind of their whereabouts and they went underground. The tunnel in which they hid is present to this day in the village.

Assembly Bomb Blast

On Bhagat Singh's suggestion the HSRA made a plan to throw a bomb in the Assembly and court arrest against the Trade Dispute Bill and the Public Safety Bill. The plan was to take their ideas to the people through this. The names of Bhagat Singh and Sukhdev were suggested for this job. The usually calm Batukeshwar erupted in anger at this. He demanded to be included in this as one of the oldest comrades in the Association. After a lot of debate, it was decided that Bhagat Singh and Dutt would be the two revolutionaries to throw the bomb while Azad and two other comrades would try to rescue them. Bhagat Singh came forward in support of Dutt's name and this made the latter very happy.

Bhagat Singh and Dutt jointly inspected the Assembly building on 3 April and 6 April 1929 and prepared a comprehensive strategy. They had their photos taken by photographer Ramnath at Kashmiri Gate in Delhi. These were the photos that were later used at all places. The Assembly session started on 8 April 1929 at 11 am. As soon as Assembly Speaker Vithal Bhai Patel rose from his seat, Bhagat Singh and Dutt removed the bombs wrapped in newspaper and threw them on the seat right behind Finance Minister Sir George Schuster. The House reverberated with slogans of Inquilab Zindbad, Down with Imperialism, and Workers of the World Unite. Meanwhile Dutt also threw several pink coloured pamphlets into the Assembly. The pamphlets were a Notice from HSRA and began with the words, 'Raised voices are necessary for the deaf to hear'. After throwing the bomb both remained in their seats. Inspectors Johnson and Terry arrested both of them. As the two young men were arrested and led away the entire House resonated with the slogan Inquilab Zindabad (Long Live Revolution).

Writing about this incident in his autobiography, Jawaharlal Nehru said--when the Trade Dispute Bill was passed in the Assembly on 8 April, two bombs and red leaflets were thrown into the House from the spectators' gallery. According

to the statement given by the accused persons later, the objective of throwing the bombs was to create a noise and draw attention, and not to injure anyone.

Countrywide Reactions

This incident stunned the British government. Their governance came in for sharp criticism from all sides. This incident became the epitome of a forceful medium of protest against repressive policies across the world. There were sharp reactions in Bihar also. Copies of notices with photos of Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt were sold in Bihar. Two notices were pasted: 1) Stand in solidarity with those on hunger strike, donate to the defence fund; 2) Every country has the right to protest against repression and atrocity.

The Public Safety Bill could not be passed due to the bomb explosion. A dispute ensued between Vithal Bhai Patel and the government. Patel refused permission for the Bill to be presented a second time in the House.

Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt were detained at the Chandni Chowk Kotwali and Raisina Hill Kotwali respectively. Both revolutionaries were sent to judicial custody on 22 April.

Pretense of Legal Proceedings and Life Imprisonment

The legal proceedings began in the Delhi Jail. On the first day Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt reached the court raising slogans of Inquilab Zindabad and Down with the Bureaucracy. The British government wanted to wrap up the case as quickly as possible. On 4 June the Sessions Court hearing of the case started inside the jail. After the Prosecution laid out its case, Bhagat Singh and Dutt began reading out their statements through which the revolutionaries started conveying their aims and objectives to the world. On 12 June the court announced its verdict. Both Bhagat Singh and Dutt were sentenced to life imprisonment.

The Sessions judge declined to accept any of the arguments put forward by the accused.

After being sentenced Bhagat Singh was taken to Miyanwali and Dutt to Lahore Central Jail. Bhagat Singh reached Miyanwali Jail on 15 June. The Gadar movement leaders were also incarcerated there. In jail Bhagat Singh came to know that the Sanders killing case was due to be heard from 26 June 1929. The other accused persons in that case were imprisoned in Lahore's Borstal Jail. Bhagat Singh demanded that all the accused persons in the Lahore case should be transferred to the same jail so that they could fight the case. Finally, Bhagat Singh was transferred to Lahore Central Jail.

Jinnah Erupts in Anger at Injustice to Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt
Mohammed Ali Jinnah wanted to fight the case for both of them in the Additional District Magistrate's Court but both the revolutionaries wanted to fight their own case. But finally the renowned lawyer Asaf Ali argued in this case for them.

Jinnah was very unhappy with the sentence given to Bhagat Singh and Dutt after their hearing was completed within just one month. Citing the letter written by the two revolutionaries in the Central Assembly he strongly condemned the repression unleashed by the government on citizens and said that it would be better if the government tried to understand the root of the problem. Jinnah questioned, are the two being tried or are they being tortured? He also said that Punjab seems to have turned into a fearful place under the British Raj.

Hunger Strike in Jail

Within a few days Bhagat Singh and Dutt went on a hunger strike to demand the status of political prisoners. The other accused persons in the Lahore conspiracy case said they would also go on strike if Bhagat Singh and Dutt's demand was not met. On 15 June 1929 both the young men started their hunger strike

against ill-treatment in jail. In their support, 30 June was observed across the country as Bhagat Singh-Dutt day. Both became very weak due to the hunger strike. Dutt was brutally beaten, making his health deteriorate further. The jail authorities tried various kinds of torture to break the hunger strike. Meanwhile at the Lahore Borstal Jail Yatindranath Das was forcibly made to drink milk. The milk went into his lungs and his condition became serious. Upon this, Bhagat Singh sent a message to all the revolutionary comrades that only he and Dutt would be on hunger strike; all the others should end the strike. But none obeyed him in this. The strike was ended after the formation of a sub-committee called the Punjab Jail Enquiry Committee, but Jatindranath still continued his hunger strike. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru visited the jail to meet the revolutionaries and gave statements to newspapers. As Jatindranath was still on strike, Bhagat Singh also resumed his hunger strike. Jatindranath Das died after 63 days of hunger strike on 13 September 1929.

Lahore Conspiracy Case Hearing and Bhagat Singh and Dutt Separated Forever

As the accused persons in the Lahore conspiracy case stood in the dock at the Special Magistrate's court, a representative picture of the future and a new nation was seen to be emerging, with people from all regions--Bhagat Singh, Batukeshwar Dutt, Sukhdev, Rajguru, Vijay Kumar Sinha, Jitendra Sanyal, Jaidev Kapoor, Agyaram, Mahavir Singh, Ajay Ghosh, Kamalnath Tiwari, Kishori Lal, Shiv Verma, Gaya Prasad, Surendra Pandey, Kundan Lal, Deshraj and Prem Dutt.

Dutt was acquitted in the Lahore conspiracy case on the grounds of insufficient evidence; whereas Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru were sentenced to death by hanging. Thus Dutt's aspiration to mount the gallows along with Bhagat Singh remained unfulfilled. Both Bhagat Singh and Dutt had been sentenced to life

imprisonment in the Delhi Assembly bomb blast case. That sentence stood in the case of Dutt. He was sent first to the Multan Jail and then to the Salem Jail in Madras Presidency where he was given Grade C status, whereas as per law he should have been placed in Grade B. Incomplete without Bhagat Singh, Dutt remained in Salem Jail for about two years. After some days Kamalnath Tiwari and Kundan Lal were also transferred to Salem Jail. Soon Batukeshwar Dutt became friends with the Satyagrahi prisoners.

Kala Pani for Dutt and the Historic Struggle by Andaman Prisoners

After two years of stormy struggles the HSRA movement started losing its edge slightly. Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru were hanged to death. Chandrashekhar Azad, Jatindranath Das and Bhagwaticharan Vohra were martyred and all the other revolutionaries were arrested.

But the light of hope was not snuffed out. The sentenced revolutionaries were on their way to Kala Pani, but they were together. On 23 January 1933 Batukeshwar Dutt, Vijay Kumar Sinha, Kamalnath Tiwari, Mahavir Singh, Kundan Lal and Dr Gaya Prasad reached Andaman. Not for nothing was Andaman known as Kala Pani. It was, in its own way, a torture chamber. Dutt could not bear to see the dire condition of the prisoners and with a firm will he once again took charge of the fight against inhuman treatment of the prisoners. This was the only work he could do in prison, and he turned this work into a synonym for freedom. He emerged as the hero of the Andaman struggle. In February 1933 he began a hunger strike along with other revolutionaries. All 56 Grade C prisoners joined in support of the hunger strike.

On the fifth day of the strike the jail authorities came down like a ton of bricks on the prisoners. 10-12 people flung Mahavir Singh down on the ground, thrust a pipe down his nose and forcibly poured milk into it. The milk entered his lungs and he died in

the night. This was a normal incident for the Andaman administration but the prisoners stood their ground and continued the hunger strike. They were relentlessly and brutally beaten but their faces showed no fear. Two prisoners from Patna, Mohit Mitra and Mohan Kishore, were martyred during the hunger strike. After 46 days the demands of the prisoners were met and the hunger strike was ended.

After this struggle the revolutionaries fought for and secured relaxation in the organization of intellectual-cultural programs. The jail started getting magazines and papers at government expense. The authorities acceded to demands for improvement in meals, better lighting, facility to send and receive letters, and medical facilities. Control of the kitchen also came into the prisoners' hands.

After that Batukeshwar Dutt along with his comrades started publication of a handwritten magazine and organization of debates and political discussions dedicated to the country's independence. About 35 prisoners together founded the Communist Consolidation. Batukeshwar Dutt, Vijay Kumar Sinha, Shiv Verma, Dr Narayan Rai, Jaidev Kapoor and other revolutionaries were at the centre of these political discussions.

In 1937 183 prisoners in Andaman once again went on strike. The rights the prisoners had managed to maintain for three years were being snatched away. Meanwhile as per the 1935 Act, the country now had a national government. Questions regarding the Andaman hunger strike were raised in the Bihar Assembly. At the time prisoners in Andaman included 339 from Bengal, 19 from Bihar, 11 from UP, 5 from Assam, 3 from Punjab, 2 from Delhi and 2 from Madras. The then Prime Minister of Bihar Shrikrishna Singh wrote a letter in this regard to the Central government and the Port Blair government. The effect of the Andaman hunger strike was felt in other jails of the country also and people started coming out in support. The release of the prisoners started

becoming a widespread issue. The jail authorities wanted to end the strike by force-feeding milk. Meanwhile several big national leaders wrote to the government calling for an end to the hunger strike. The jail authorities had to bow down to the prisoners. The government finally gave the assurance that prisoners in the Andaman Jail would be transferred to jails in India. Thus by 18 January 1938 all the Andaman prisoners were transferred to jails on the mainland.

Batukeshwar Dutt Arrives in Bankipur Jail, Bihar

Dutt was first brought to the Delhi Jail as he was a prisoner in the Delhi bomb case. But by then his condition had become very bad. Dr Rajendra Prasad went to the jail to visit him and apprised Jawaharlal Nehru of his condition. At that time there were about 40 prisoners in the Bankipur Jail in Bihar associated with HSRA, most of whom were from Andaman Jail. The Political Prisoners Relief Committee had been formed under the chairmanship of Dr Rajendra Prasad. Rajendra Prasad felt that if Batukeshwar were in the company of other prisoners from the Andaman Jail his condition would improve. At his suggestion Dutt was transferred to Bankipur Jail in Bihar. However, his condition continued to deteriorate.

On 28 July 1938 Dr Rajendra Kumar wrote to the Prime Minister of Bihar Shrikrishna Singh requesting that Dutt be released on health grounds. On 1 September 1938 Mahatma Gandhi sent a telegram to the Bengal Governor and the Executive Viceroy requesting Dutt's release on medical grounds. On 3 September 1938 Central Assembly member Mohan Lal Saxena visited Dutt in jail to enquire after his health. On 4 September the newspaper Searchlight demanded Dutt's release. After all these calls for release, Batukeshwar Dutt was finally released on 8 September 1938 from Bankipur Jail and started living with his brother Vishveshwar Dutt at his house in Jakkampur.

Active Participation in the Quit India Movement and Imprisonment

Dutt's health was steadily worsening, but the surge for freedom was on the rise. In April 1939 Dutt was present at the Kanpur Kisan Sangh district political conference. In 1939-40 he also attended the Congress conference.

He once again played an active role in the 1942 Quit India movement. He was again incarcerated in the Motihari and Muzaffarpur Jails and tortured badly, causing him to go on a hunger strike once again. His lungs were severely affected by the bad atmosphere in the jail. In 1945 he was placed under house arrest in Patna as a home intern. For some days he was also under house arrest in Devghar. He could be released only after India became independent.

The Post-Independence Period

Dutt's life was one of struggle even in the days after Independence. He had to do 'low' jobs for livelihood but he never felt ashamed of this. Some relief was obtained when his wife became a government school teacher. In 1963 he was nominated to the Bihar Legislative Council for one year but he never availed himself of any benefits, so much so that he did not even use government housing.

Dutt was very much hurt when the Indian Parliament published a document in 1963-64 declaring Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt

to be terrorists, and he met Prime Minister Nehru in this regard and conveyed his strong opposition to this. Nehru realized his mistake and said that it was his privilege to meet a great person like Dutt. He also said that all of them shared the same objective. When Nehru died after some days, Dutt was very sad and termed his death the end of an era. Communist leader Muzaffar Ahmed writes in his memoirs that Dutt was not a member of the Communist Party but always remained close to us. Many people had been made Communist Party members on Dutt's request.

When Dutt Arrived in Khatkal Kalan

In 1963 Batukeshwar Dutt went to Bhagat Singh's village Khatkal Kalan. As soon as he arrived, a thrill of happiness went through the village. The villagers felt as if after 33 years it was Bhagat Singh who was returning to them in the form of Batukeshwar Dutt. Mother Vidyavati Devi embraced Dutt and kept crying as though she was meeting Bhagat Singh himself. Vidyavati Devi adopted Batukeshwar Dutt's family as her own and took up full responsibility for his daughter's marriage.

Mother Vidyavati Devi keeps Vigil over Batukeshwar in Hospital

In the early months of 1965 Batukeshwar Dutt's health deteriorated further. He was suffering

from bone cancer. When Bhagat Singh's mother Vidyavati Devi came to know of this she was very sad. During his treatment she spent most of her time in Delhi, though she herself was 85 years old. She spent whatever money she had on Dutt's treatment. On 13 July 1965 his condition suddenly became critical. On hearing this Vidyavati Devi reached Delhi by car. As soon as she reached the hospital she laid Dutt's head on her lap. At that time she was remembering Bhagat Singh's last words to her before going to the gallows--I am going now but I am leaving behind a part of myself in the form of Batukeshwar Dutt. In the night of 20 July 1965 Dutt passed away. As per his wishes his last rites were performed on 21 July at Hussainiwala not far from the Indo-Pak border where the samadhis of Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru were already located. Thus after a gap of 34 years Batukeshwar Dutt once again joined his inseparable revolutionary comrades.

Batukeshwar Dutt always remembered Bhagat Singh's final words and bore torture and oppression all his life in order to carry forward revolutionary objectives and the struggle for freedom.

The oppressors tried to erase in a myriad ways

But the memory, the picture remained etched in every heart. ■

HSRA Wali Azaadi: What Freedom Meant For HSRA

The Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HRA in an earlier avatar) and its youth organisation the Naujawan Bharat Sabha (NBS) are uniquely inspiring elements in India's freedom movement. Its activists traveled in a very short time from a focus on revolutionary violence to a comprehensive socialist vision of freedom, achieved through the

organised assertion of India's workers and peasants. Today, the HSRA's legacy is especially relevant - of courage; of robust resistance to communal hate and violence and the graded inequality of caste; of the supreme sacrifice of their lives - and of a clear vision of a Marxist, socialist party that would achieve a socialist India.

Ram Prasad Bismil led a group

of young activists to form the Hindustan Republican Army in the wake of Gandhi's move to call off the Civil Disobedience movement after Chauri Chaura. Other prominent founders included Anushilan Samiti leaders Sachindra Nath Sanyal and Jogesh Chandra Chatterjee. The HRA Manifesto written by Sanyal called for the overthrow of British colonial rule



and its replacement with a "Federal Republic of the United States of India" which would have universal suffrage and the socialist-oriented aim of the abolition of "all systems which make any kind of exploitation of man by man possible".

Ashfaqullah Khan, Ram Prasad Bismil, Roshan Singh and Rajendra Lahiri were convicted in the Kakori conspiracy case and hanged in December 1927, while 16 other comrades served long prison sentences. Bismil and Ashfaq devoted their last messages to fellow countrymen and women, to fervent appeals to reject the communal politics that pitted Hindus against Muslims.

Bismil's final appeal read:

"If a devout Muslim like Ashfaq could be right hand man of an Arya Samajist like Ram Prasad in revolutionary movement, then why can't other Hindus and Muslims unite forgetting their petty interests? Now my only request to countrymen is that if they have even an iota of sorrow at our death, then, with whatever means, they must establish Hindu-Muslim unity; that was our last wish and this only can be our memorial."

Ashfaq's final message asserted that for him freedom must be nothing less than socialism:

"I consider the alien rule an evil and at the same time, I hate any democratic Indian rule where the weak are denied their rights, or if it is the creation of the rich and landlords, or there is no equal participation of the farmers and workers, or if the laws of the Government are made on the basis of inequality and disparity. If India becomes free and our brother countrymen take the reins of Government from the white masters and if the inequality persists between the rich and the poor and the landlord

and the tenant, I pray to God not to give me such freedom till equality is established in His Creation. Let me be dubbed a Communist for these ideas, I damn care." (To Make The Deaf Hear: Ideology And Programme Of Bhagat Singh And His Comrades, S Irfan Habib, p 28)

The Draft Revolutionary Programme prepared by Bhagat Singh and Bhagwati Charan Vohra were in effect the first draft of a revolutionary communist programme and tactics in the history of Indian communist movement. This programme explicitly drew on Lenin to argue for the need of a revolutionary party:

"The present situation demands of us a clear and responsible programme of revolution. Just before the revolution of October 1917, Lenin mentioned three necessary conditions of a successful revolution:

Political and economic situation. The spirit of rebellion among the masses. A revolutionary party, fully trained to lead the masses at the decisive hour.

In India the first condition has already been fulfilled while the other two are waiting for complete realisation. To work for their fulfilment is the first task of every fighter for freedom and the programme should be worked out with this end in view. An outline is given below:

- Abolition of feudalism.
- Waiver of farmers' loans.
- Nationalisation of land by the revolutionary state, so that improved and collective farming can be introduced.
- Guaranteed houses for all.
- All levies on peasants to be stopped, only a unified land tax to be collected.

- Nationalisation of factories and setting up of new factories.
- Universal education.
- The working day to be shortened as needed."

In the manifesto of the NBS, Bhagwati Charan and Bhagat Singh included two points specifically aimed frontally against communal politics: a) *"to have nothing to do with communal bodies or other parties which disseminate communal ideas"* and b) *"to create the spirit of general toleration among the public considering religion as a matter of personal belief of man and to act upon the same fully."* Aspiring members were made to sign a pledge that they would place interests of their country above those of their community.

Here is what the NBS further said:

"...a branch of peepal tree is cut and religious feelings of the Hindus are injured. A corner of a paper idol, tazia, of the idol-breaker Mohammedans is broken, and 'Allah' gets enraged, who cannot be satisfied with anything less than the blood of the infidel Hindus. Man ought to be attached more importance that the animals and, yet, here in India, they break each other's heads in the name of 'sacred animals'."

What would India be like today if these words from the NBS Manifesto had been taught to every child in India?

Comrade Durga, also Vohra's wife, is known for her role in creating and maintaining disguises for the comrades, helping to transport bombs in the folds of her sari, and especially in planning Bhagat Singh's escape with him as an anglicized gentleman and herself disguised as his wife.

The lives, sacrifices and martyrdom of the HSRA comrades and their unfinished dream of a socialist India free from every inequality and exploitation still call out to us as a challenge. ■

Corporate Aggression and State Repression Cannot Be Camouflaged as ‘Tribal Pride’

The Narendra Modi government has declared November 15, the birth anniversary of Birsa Jayanti, as Janjatiya Gaurav Divas or Tribal Pride Day. 15 November is also the foundation day of Jharkhand. It is to be noted that the Indian state, especially under the RSS-backed Modi government, prefers not to use the popular word Adivasis for India’s indigenous people. The RSS favourite word for Adivasis is vanvasi or forest-dwellers and the Sangh-BJP leadership tried its best to christen the new state of Jharkhand as Vananchal. After decades of protracted struggle for the formation of the Jharkhand state, activists of Jharkhand movement had to fight hard to ensure that the new state got its cherished name.

Had the BJP been in power in Jharkhand, Modi would have surely chosen Jharkhand as the launching pad for this new day with a lot of fanfare. Mercifully enough, the people of Jharkhand, especially the Adivasis of Jharkhand, successfully voted the BJP out of power in the 2019 Assembly elections. Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan and Maharashtra too are not currently under BJP rule and Modi had to choose Madhya Pradesh for his November 15 rally. The display banners and rally publicity and decoration made it abundantly clear that the rally was more for to promote Narendra Modi and Shivraj Singh Chauhan than honour Birsa Munda and India’s glorious history of anti-colonial Adivasi resistance.

The real irony of the occasion however lay not so much in the name of the day or the choice of venue, but in the stark reality that Adivasis today were faced with the biggest onslaught in post-1947 India

on their identity and rights. The policies of the government today are all aimed at facilitating corporate control over India’s resources. Land, water, forests, mines and assets built over decades through public investment and people’s sacrifice are all being systematically handed over to a handful of corporate houses and the people of India are absolutely right when they call this new order ‘Adani-Ambani Company Raj’.

The Adivasis of India are paying the biggest price for this corporate loot, they are among the most immediate and worst victims of this state-backed corporate aggression. This massive and systematic dispossession of Adivasis is being sought to be glossed over and legitimised as ‘economic development’, and any Adivasi resistance to this dispossession is being dubbed an anti-development anti-national act and crushed through severe repression and systematic persecution.

In Jharkhand, adivasis invoking their constitutional rights for their Gram Sabhas under the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution were charged by the Raghubar Das government with sedition and put indiscriminately in jails. Father Stan Swamy was framed under UAPA and eventually driven to death in Maharashtra jail for challenging these sedition cases and demanding the release of Adivasi prisoners. In Sukma district of Chhattisgarh, Adivasis opposing the setting up of police camps were gunned down in Silger village. And the announcement of the Janjatiya Gaurav Divas coincided with the news of the killing of at least 27 alleged Maoists, most of them

presumably Adivasis, in Gadchiroli district of Maharashtra.

Alongside this economic dispossession and state repression, Adivasis are also facing an intensified cultural onslaught. The RSS is working overtime to divide Adivasis on religious lines, force many families to return to Hinduism under the ‘ghar wapsi’ campaign and repackage the militant anti-colonial history of Adivasi resistance as a crusade against conversion by Christian missionaries. The Santhal Hool of the 1850s, led by the legendary Murmu brothers and sisters Sidhu, Kanhu, Chand, Bhairav, Phulo and Jhano or the Ulgulan spearheaded by Birsa Munda were essentially mass upsurges against the colonial rule and its twin feudal props of landlordism and usury. The Ulgulan battle-cry of ‘Abua Disum, Abua Raj’ (our rule in our land) - quite akin to the 1857 anthem penned by Azimullah Khan ‘Hum Hain Iske Malik, Hindostan Hamara’ (this country belongs to us, we are its owners) - was a bold articulation of popular sovereignty twenty-nine years before the Congress adopted the Purna Swaraj resolution. The Sangh brigade tries to subvert and appropriate this glorious history and turn it into an appendage of its Hindu Rashtra project.

This real threat of dispossession, repression and cultural subjugation cannot be sugar-coated by paying lip service to Janjatiya Gaurav or tribal pride. Adivasi activists, who are the rightful heirs to their glorious legacy and who are waging a determined battle today against the ongoing corporate and communal aggression to secure their cultural identity and constitutional rights, will have to forge a strong and vibrant countrywide unity to foil the BJP’s

clever design and develop close ties of cooperation and solidarity with farmers, workers, youth, women and all oppressed social forces to resist corporate aggression and defeat fascist offensive. The Convention for Adivasi Rights held

at Bageecha, the centre developed by Father Stan Swamy in Ranchi, on 14-15 November which culminated in the formation of an all India Adivasi Sangharsh Morcha, marks an encouraging step forward in this direction. ■

All-India Adivasi Rights Convention At Ranchi



Adivasi Sangharsh Morcha

An Adivasi Rights National Convention was held on 14 and 15 November at Bagaicha in Ranchi. Delegates from Adivasi organizations across the country participated in the convention held on the occasion of the Birsa Munda anniversary. The Adivasi Sangharsh Morcha was formed for coordinating the Adivasi struggles ongoing in various parts of the country. More than 150 adivasi delegates from various states including Jharkhand, Odisha, Assam, Karnataka, Gujarat, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and West Bengal participated in the convention.

The convention began with the garlanding of the Birsa Munda statue and an Ulgulan song presented by Jan Sanskriti Manch. Addressing the convention, CPIML General Secretary Dipankar Bhattacharya said that the Company Raj against which Birsa Munda fought and raised Ulgulan is being repeated by Modi Ji who is handing over Adivasis' jal-jangal-jameen, minerals and natural resources to Adani-Ambani's corporate companies. Adivasis are being targeted for corporate loot of water, forests and minerals. Birsa Munda's glorious anti-colonial anti-feudal legacy is being sought to be distorted and hijacked by the

RSS. Live coordination of various struggles and initiatives is the need of the hour. CPIML will stand with the Adivasi movement to facilitate this coordination within the Adivasi movement as well as with other streams of people's struggles for democracy and comprehensive justice and social transformation.

The convention was also addressed by Adivasi leaders including Dayamani Barla, Premchand Murmu and Devki Nandan Bedia. A resolution on Adivasi issues was proposed which was discussed by many delegates including Walter Kandulana, Jerome Gerald, Gautam Singh Munda and delegates representing various states. A 30-point charter of issues for a nationwide adivasi movement was passed by the convention and a road map for the movement was decided. The convention was conducted by a Presidium comprising Pratima Enghipi and Ravi Kumar Phangcho (Karbi Anglong, Assam), Tirupati Gomango (Odisha), Sumanti Tigga Ekka (Darjeeling), Devki Nandan Bedia and Xavier Kujur (both from Jharkhand).

The convention elected a 13-member National Convening Committee, a National Council with representatives from all States, a National Advisory Council, and a Solidarity Council. Earlier, on 14 November the Jharkhand Jan Sanskriti Manch and Anjom Santali teams presented Adivasi people's songs and dances. A documentary film on Mahendra Singh directed by renowned film-maker Shriprakash was also screened.

The Adivasi Sangharsh Morcha (Adivasi Struggle Front) adopted a charter of struggle, as below.

Charter of Struggle

1. Assert that the Adivasis are the original inhabitants of India. Reject all characterisation that seeks to denude Adivasi communities of their basic identity. Reject all efforts to deny the right and freedom to

- maintain their identity, culture and autonomous institutions of self-governance.
2. Assert the right and freedom to practise and conserve their faith, customs and ceremonies.
 3. Assert the right to celebrate and preserve their culture, language and histories.
 4. Stop the plunder of natural resources, and dispossession of Adivasis from their forests and lands, under the garb of development and forest conservation.
 5. Fight the poverty, insecure livelihoods, dismal living conditions, denial of education and health services, resulting in the chronic impoverishment and destitution of Adivasi communities.
 6. Fight oppressive moneylenders, indebtedness, slave and bonded labour as also landlordism and land alienation.
 7. Extend Scheduled Tribes recognition to all Adivasi communities excluded till now.
 8. Ensure the proper implementation of the Fifth and Sixth Schedules in letter and spirit, and granting of status of autonomous state to Assam hill districts as promised in Article 244A.
 9. Pursue the declaration of areas with sizeable Adivasi populations in the states of West Bengal, Bihar, Uttarakhand, Goa, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, among others, as “scheduled areas”.
 10. Ensure the implementation of the Provisions of Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 (PESA Act), towards realisation of “hamare gaon mein hamara raj”. (Our Rule in Our Village)
 11. Ensure restitution/payment of compensation and rehabilitation, for all Adivasis who have been displaced by all developmental/conservational projects since Independence.
 12. Address the rampant migration of Adivasis to other parts of the country including protecting their livelihoods in their home States, as also their rights as migrant workers.
 13. Ensure justice to the de-notified, nomadic and semi-nomadic Adivasi communities who continue to face discrimination and brutal violence at the hands of society and state.
 14. Address the survival crisis faced by the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs), by countering their high mortality rates, chronic poverty, malnutrition, starvation and lack of access to adequate health facilities as well as the serious lack of protection of their livelihoods.
 15. Strict implementation of Chhotanagpur Tenancy Act, 1908, the Santal Pargana Tenancy Act 1949, and all other state and central enactments prohibiting transfer of lands from Adivasis to non-Adivasis.
 16. Strict implementation of the Forest Rights Act 2006 (FRA) including amending all other laws to bring them into compliance with the FRA. Specifically launch agitations for:
 - a. A special session of Parliament to discuss ways to fully implement the FRA in all forests areas in India.
 - b. Expedite approval of community land claims under FRA and other laws by Adivasis, Other Traditional Forest Dwellers and forest workers.
 - c. Make the process of approval and rejection of individual and community land claims under FRA completely transparent, so that rejections can easily be appealed.
 - d. Ensure accountability of officers who review Forest Rights Act claims
 - e. Launch a National Mission for Forest Rights Act with the following objectives:
 - Coverage of all potential Forest Rights Act eligible villages
 - Recognize all Community Forest Resource rights, ownership rights over minor forest produces, rights of PVTGs, nomadic and pastoral communities, rights of other traditional forest dwellers, women’s rights, rights of displaced communities and conversion of all forest, surveyed villages.
 - All rejected and pending claims be reviewed to secure rights of Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers.
 - Empowerment of Gram Sabhas for governance and management of Community Forest Rights (CFRs).
 - Allocation of forest development funds available under compensatory afforestation, MGNREGA etc directly to Gram Sabhas.
 - Integration and convergence of all relevant government schemes, such as MGNREGA, Public Distribution System and others, with the FRA.
 - Allocation of additional funds and provision of adequate human resources for implementation of the FRA.
 - All forest and landscape restoration programs for meeting climate change commitments are directly supported through Gram Sabhas.
 17. Oppose and ensure withdrawal of various laws, including the recent pro-corporate 3 Farm laws, anti-workers 4 Labour Codes, as also the anti-people CAA/NRC, which will hit Adivasis equally if not worst of all.

18. Ensure profitable prices for Minor Forest Produce (MFP).
19. Ensure stern action against police and armed forces for custodial torture, rape and fake encounter killings against Adivasis, especially children and women.
20. Ensure unconditional release of Adivasis, Dalits and persons from forest dwelling communities, rural and urban poor communities currently in prison as under-trials.
21. Judicial Commission be instituted in every state to conduct a time-bound review of all pending criminal cases against Adivasis and other forest dwelling communities, to ensure that false cases are quashed; innocents freed and compensated; and police personnel responsible for such malicious prosecution be identified and punished.
22. End the brutal state violence being perpetrated on Adivasis while sanctioning corporate loot and plunder. Stop the weaponization of criminal law and police killings against Adivasis struggling for their rights, and withdraw all criminal cases.
23. End the everyday tyranny in the lives of Adivasis, in the form of entrenched

insidious violence including atrocities, discriminations and humiliations at the hands of the dominant sections of society, police, forest and other officials. This includes the strengthening of the implementation of the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989.

24. Ensure the full and complete demilitarisation and police rule of Adivasi areas.
25. Ensure the withdrawal of Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 where it has been made applicable. All cases of extra-judicial killings, rapes and harassment by armed forces reported in these States shall be dealt with strictly and punishment will be ensured to the guilty.
26. Ensure special focus on ensuring that Adivasi communities receive the Constitutional benefits of reservation including provision of educational infrastructure and education in Adivasi languages.
27. Tackle the large scale destruction of forests and pollution caused by climate change and environmental crises due to landslides, earthquakes, heavy rains and floods, the loss of life and property has put thousands of people in danger.

28. Fight against the criminal nexus of elected representatives, officials and others occupying Adivasi lands and forests in the name of tourism industry.
29. Fight against the horrific exploitation of Adivasis employed in various industries by the non-implementation of labour laws.
30. Fight against the exploitation of Adivasis in tea and coffee gardens and all forms of bonded and slave labour forced on Adivasis.

The participants stated: “We are holding this Convention on the occasion of the 75th year of Independence. This freedom, which we celebrate, was the culmination of the struggle by various sections of society against colonial oppression. Leading this charge were the Adivasi struggles from the Halba rebellion in 1774-79 to Birsa Munda’s revolt in the late 1890s and many more. Yet, today the Adivasi communities languish without even their basic needs provided, the majority living in poverty and being dispossessed from their forests and lands by the ruling forces which are facilitating corporate loot and plunder of natural resources. These very same forces are also making a mockery of the freedom struggle and insulting the glorious contributions of farmers, workers, Dalits and Adivasis to the freedom struggle. In the same way, the Modi government is dispossessing Adivasis of Jangal-Jameen and denying them their rights, and yet wants to celebrate Birsa Munda Jayanthi as “Janjatiya Gaurav Divas” (Tribal Pride Day). Is it not an insult to the martyrs like Sindhu-Kanu, Fulo-Jhano, Birsa Munda and Maki Munda to dispossess Adivasis and then to talk of Pride Day? To protect our identity and fully realise their rights in free and modern India, we have to heighten our struggles against fascism, corporate loot and political repression, and advance the glorious legacy of Adivasi resistance.” ■



Hundred Years of CPC: Great Legacy, Grave Concerns

▲ ARINDAM SEN

In Parts II and III of this article we have briefly narrated the major developments in the reform process in China, as dictated more by changes in the *objective national-international situations and the contradictions generated by the process itself*, than by personal leanings of this or that leader. This we believe is the only scientific, that is dialectical-materialist, method of investigation that can help an unbiased, open-minded observer arrive at a correct understanding of the apparent riddle that is China. Here we carry the discussion beyond the reforms to focus the spotlight on certain other trends and features of Chinese polity before wrapping up with brief concluding remarks.

The Expanding Commercial and Financial Clout

The story began at the turn of the 21st century. With the IMF and the World Bank -- where the US holds a veto in decision making and appointing the heads of institutions -- refusing to adapt to the changing balance of power, many developing countries sought to tread a new path. And China was quick to avail of the opportunity. By funding development projects, the financial behemoth was able to rapidly increase its soft power in the immediate neighbourhood, thus attacking the US' "Pivot to Asia strategy"¹ as well.

Today, China runs a current account surplus economy and the government is looking for greenfield areas to use the foreign exchange stockpile more profitably. The setting up of a number



of development banks -- most notably Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and New Development Bank (constituted mainly by the BRICS countries) -- as well as other aid and soft loan initiatives like China's recent commitment to contribute to the African Development Bank as part of "Africa Growing Together" scheme and most importantly, the Belt & Road Initiative (BRI) are part of this larger aim.

The BRI is a very long term, multi-nation project focussed on mining and oil exploration and infrastructure constructions. It is intended to reach mines, ports and markets in Central Asia, Southeast Asia and Africa, connecting South America as well and Europe through western and southern Chinese provinces. As many as 140 countries including China -- up from 125 in April 2019 -- have already signed up. The basic, pragmatic reason is obvious: China is filling a funding gap that exists for many countries, particularly underdeveloped countries and

emerging economies. A few countries, however, worry that Beijing is forcing them into a debt trap or a covert form of neocolonialism and therefore prefer to stay away.

From China's viewpoint, the development banks and the BRI are necessary countermeasures to break through the US-led aggressive containment by means of trade related sanctions, diplomatic manoeuvres, even military bullying. The BRI, for example, is expected to counter the US-Japan maritime dominance in the regions covered. In the context of international politics or power-game, the so-called 'China Rising' is -- objectively and irrespective of its various controversial moves -- a powerful bulwark against the sole surviving superpower's persistent efforts for unilaterally dominating the world. Reluctance to recognise this reality means opposing the idea and endeavour of building the broadest possible united front against the world people's Enemy Number One.

[1] The Pivot to Asia strategy was originally put forward by the Obama administration. With the American military's focus on the Asia Pacific, tensions heightened among the states in this region (between US allies and other countries), and China responded with enhanced military, economic and diplomatic activities here. The recent reassertion of this strategy by the Biden administration signals its eagerness to face the Chinese "threat" with escalated military and economic activism.

But no less one-sided and politically naive is the opposite trend of ignoring or downplaying the risks involved with China's expanding networks of soft power (not to ignore the growing 'hard' or military power and domineering tendencies). A country's foreign policy is always an extension or reflection of its domestic policy. And what sort of policies and political approaches do we see today in China? We see an increasingly authoritarian governance characterised by denial of people's freedom of expression, right to protest, ask tough questions and speak truth to power. The GS-President in his keynote address at the Party centenary celebration lays unseemly stress on nationalist pride and power to the exclusion of socialist internationalism, even as oppression on some of the religious/ethnic/national minorities continues to escalate. With all these warning signs, how could one be very confident that one is not witnessing the rise of a national chauvinist power with regional -- and in due course global -- hegemonic ambitions?

Political and Socio-cultural Reforms (and Lack of them)

The government has recently announced stricter rules for online gaming and for-profit tutorials. New tutorials will not be approved and existing ones must get themselves registered as non-profits. The rules also limit children aged below eighteen years to three hours of online games a week and that too only on weekends and Friday nights.

The new rules are certainly a harsh blow to the country's multi-billion-dollar private education industry, while parents, teachers and others have generally welcomed them. At the same time, the apprehension that this is just a gateway to more widespread attacks on everyone's right to privacy -- the right to

choose how one uses the net and when, for example -- is quite strong.

The surveil-and-control mechanisms are employed more harshly -- often brutally -- in ethnic and national minority regions like Xinjiang and Tibet. We have dealt with some of these problems in previous issues of Liberation², so let us move ahead with some recent and less reported developments.

In late September this year, China announced a new plan to introduce the world's first comprehensive, nationwide regulatory system for algorithms. Some of these new regulations aim to protect citizens from cyber crimes and embezzlements. Gig workers of delivery firms have long been overworked by algorithms that dictate their work schedules with ruthless efficiency; this has now been brought under control. But at the same time, these regulations augment the Party-State's censorship arsenal. By limiting algorithms to only those that "orient towards mainstream values" and "actively transmit positive energy" (the Indian government's tireless harping on 'positive thinking' immediately comes to mind) could in practice mean pre-censoring those that allow or encourage values/views unacceptable to the CPC.

The authority's penchant for building a culturally and ideologically regimented society manifests itself in another policy decision: the newly imposed compulsory study of "Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics" on students from school to university levels. And why not? Did not the General Secretary, in his speech celebrating the party foundation centenary, already lay down the rule that "follow(ing) the leadership core" -- that is himself -- will now be construed as "the defining feature of socialism with Chinese characteristics"? And has

not the unsavoury personality cult been endorsed in the communique issued after the recent 6th plenum of the 11th Central Committee which urges upon the Party ranks to "resolutely uphold Comrade Xi Jinping's core position on the central committee as a whole"?

In the midst of all such measures that can hardly be called reforms, what remains more elusive than ever before is a positive response to the people's justified and growing democratic aspiration that manifests itself through small, sporadic protests as well as big events like the Tienanmen massacre of 1989 and the popular upsurge in Hong Kong in 2019.

The Authoritarian Surveillance State

"Party, government, military, civilian, and academic; east, west, south, north, and center, the Party leads everything" -- the CPC proudly asserted at the end of its 19th National Congress in October 2017. The cockiness apart, ideally this is how things should be. But when an overarching 'leadership' is sought to be exercised in a 'managerial style' (to borrow a term Lenin used to criticise some leaders during the early years of Soviet Union) it becomes bureaucratic and, of late, technocratic; it ceases to be *leadership* in the communist sense. It gets metamorphosed into authoritarianism -- a collective or partisan authoritarianism, if one may say so; it may be efficient in administration, even benevolent in terms of delivering *material benefits*, but authoritarianism all the same. Citizens have no say in policy making. The *right to freedom of expression*, enshrined in the Constitution of the PRC, is severely curtailed. People are denied the right to protest, and in some cases even basic human rights. In the absence of a relatively independent judiciary, authoritarianism

[2] See for example *Mao Zedong Thought and Ethnic cleansing in Xinjiang* by Arindam Sen (Liberation, August 2009) and *China's Concentration Camps For Uyghurs: In China's Own Words* by Kavita Krishnan (Liberation, September 2020)

becomes absolute, with hardly any checks and balances.

The 21st Century Panopticon

Since authoritarianism cannot exist without spying on the citizenry, gross intrusions into citizens' private spaces and arbitrary curbs on political as well as cultural/religious freedoms becomes a norm. To ensure this, a modern high-tech Panopticon³ -- armed with 360 surveillance, CC cameras (the number of which far exceeds those installed in the US) and other advanced technologies like AI and facial recognition supplied by government agencies as well as Chinese corporates like Tencent, Dahua Technology, ZTE (certainly not without adequate *quid pro quo*) has been developed. The most plausible pretexts are the most common ones: fight against terror and conspiracy, national security and lately, tracking COVID-19 patients.

While showcasing these valid purposes, the deep State is always busy tracking and cracking down on 'social unrest' -- the official *nom de guerre* for public protests. The technologies used in hundreds of 'smart cities' in China, while doing a very good job in monitoring and fixing problems in air quality, traffic flow etc., are also very smart when it comes to identifying dissidents and preempting potential unrest through detentions (which in many cases are kept secret or semi-secret) and other methods. There are scores of surveillance mechanisms such as the police cloud system (which aims to create a central pool of data and information about citizens from all available sources), Sharp Eyes Programme (which claims to have the potential capacity to surveil 100% of public spaces), the Social Credit System, and so on. Most *popular* (yes, you got it right, popular) is the last-mentioned, which

rates the *trustworthiness of citizens* by analysing, with the technologies mentioned above, both their social behaviours (such as observing COVID protocols) and their financial records (e.g., spending patterns, tax payments). The individualized "social credit scores" are used to reward or punish citizens according to their political and financial virtues or vices. The benefits are both financial (for example, access to mortgage loans) and social (permission to buy a ticket on one of the new high-speed trains). Those with low social-credit scores may find themselves prevented from buying an airline ticket or getting a date on an app.

Mao's Vision of Socialist Democracy

The present model of 'efficient and stable' governance is the exact opposite of what Mao Zedong proposed and practised. In *On the Ten Major Relationships* (1956) he welcomed criticism from democratic parties and personages, adding that even the "abusive types" should be allowed "to rail at us, while refuting their nonsense and accepting what makes sense in their rebukes. This is better for the Party, for the people and for socialism."

The same year, in his Speech at the *Second Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee*, he said, "You are afraid of the masses taking to the streets, I am not, not even if hundreds of thousands should do so." He cited a Singur-like incident and spoke in favour of peasants who not only objected to, but physically resisted, the government's plan to acquire land for building an airport: "... the local people set up three lines of defence: the first line was composed of children, the second of women, and the third of able-bodied young men. All who went there to do the surveying were driven away and the

peasants won out in the end. Later, when satisfactory explanations were given and arrangements made, they agreed to move and the airfield was built. There are quite a few similar cases.

"Now there are people who seem to think that, as state power has been won, they can ... play the tyrant at will. The masses will oppose such persons, throw stones at them and strike at them with their hoes, which will, I think, serve them right and will please me immensely." He saw this as a general guideline, and added: "Whenever students and workers take to the streets, you comrades should regard it as a good thing."

In "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People" (1957) -- one of his most valuable writings on the topic we are concerned with at this point -- Mao writes,

"People may ask, since Marxism is accepted as the guiding ideology by the majority of the people in our country, can it be criticized? Certainly it can. Marxism is scientific truth and fears no criticism. If it did, and if it could be overthrown by criticism, it would be worthless. ... Marxists should not be afraid of criticism from any quarter. Quite the contrary, they need to temper and develop themselves and win new positions in the teeth of criticism and in the storm and stress of struggle."

Coming to the question of "incorrect ideas among the people", he writes, "Will it do to ban such ideas and deny them any opportunity for expression? Certainly not. It is not only futile but very harmful to use *crude methods in dealing with ideological questions among the people, with questions about man's mental world*. You may ban the expression of wrong ideas, but the ideas will still be there. ... it is only by employing the method of discussion, criticism and reasoning

[3] *The panopticon is a type of institutional building and a system of control designed by Jeremy Bentham, which allows a watchman to observe occupants without the occupants knowing whether or not they are being watched. So the inmates police themselves for fear of punishment. Michel Foucault in his 1975 book Discipline and Punish used the this idea as a way to illustrate the proclivity of disciplinary societies subjugate its citizens. He described the prisoner of a panopticon as being at the receiving end of asymmetrical surveillance: "He is seen, but he does not see; he is an object of information, never a subject in communication."*



that we can really foster correct ideas and overcome wrong ones, and that we can really settle issues.” [Emphasis ours]

Based not only on the rich experience gained at home, but also on lessons drawn from the grave mistakes made in the Soviet Union, these insights or guidelines could, if sincerely adopted (sans the excesses that came later) and further developed in keeping with changing conditions, perhaps we could see a very different China today.

That was not to be, but the huge dark clouds over China do have some thin silver linings.

People of China Fighting for their Rights and Justice

Going by whatever little information we get from Chinese and other trustworthy sources, the people and activists out there are braving all difficulties to continue the tradition of struggle. They are small in numbers, the struggles are in most cases sporadic and disconnected from one another, yet in the given conditions keeping the fire of independent activism simmering is by itself extremely important for the

present and future of the PRC.

Workers Fight Back

At the forefront of the popular struggles, of course, is the working class.⁴ Labour laws in China are not so bad, but enforcement is. Local governments, especially in smaller, less economically-developed regions and cities, have generally been more concerned with boosting the local economy and creating a business-friendly environment, rather than with protecting workers’ rights. So workers have to fight even to get just what is their due under law.

The right to strike was removed from the Constitution of China in 1982, but there is no legal prohibition on strikes. The vast majority of strikes or other forms of collective protests (around 80 percent) are related to the non-payment of wages. The construction industry, which accounts for more than a third of all workers’ protests in China, is notorious for systematic wage arrears.

Many strikes have led to ad hoc or spontaneous collective bargaining, in which workers elected their own representatives and devised strategies to force management to come to the negotiating table. Local

government and trade union officials typically pressure both sides to make concessions and resume production as quickly as possible. Sometimes the police is dispatched, usually to ensure that the protesters do not leave the workplace or in any other way disrupt public order. In case workers are detained, they are usually released within a few hours, or a few days at most. On the few occasions that strike leaders have been charged, it is with a public order offence such as “gathering a crowd to disturb social order;” rather than with taking part in a strike *per se*.

Workers in China have the right to form or join a trade union. But they cannot organise independently on their own because all enterprise-level unions are legally mandated to be affiliated with the official All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU), in which officials are not elected by workers, but appointed from above by the Party. When the Beijing Workers’ Autonomous Federation took shape and mobilised citizens in protests in the spring of 1989, it was declared an illegal organization and disbanded in the wake of the military crackdown in Beijing on 4 June 1989.

In November 2015, Xi Jinping formally launched a trade union

[4] Our brief depiction of workers’ struggles is based almost entirely on the article “Workers’ Rights and Labour Relations”, *China Labour Bulletin* (a non-profit NGO, founded in 1994 and based in Hong Kong. It provides legal advice to workers, arranges for mainland Chinese lawyers to handle their cases and publishes well-researched reports on labour issues in Chinese and English languages), 30 June 2020.

reform initiative with two main objectives: 1. “eliminate four impediments” to the ACFTU’s work: regimentation, bureaucratisation, elitism, and frivolousness; and 2. “increase three positive attributes” of the organization: political consciousness, progressiveness, and popular legitimacy. The ACFTU leadership readily and obediently pledged to do so, but there was little change on ground.

As opposed to this bureaucratic passivity, civil society labour groups in southern China have often played the role of real trade unions, helping workers formulate their demands, elect bargaining representatives, develop a bargaining strategy, and maintain solidarity among the workforce. They also helped workers utilize the increasingly powerful tools of social media to put pressure on local trade union officials to support workers’ legitimate demands.

In the 2015 Lide Shoe Factory case, for example, workers forced the company to pay several million yuan in overdue social insurance contributions. However, the Lide case was the last major success for civil society labour organizations in Guangdong. A few months later, the authorities launched a massive crackdown that led to the closure of many influential labour organizations such as the Panyu Workers Service Centre. However, workers continued to organize, and strikes and protests remained a regular feature of working life in southern China. The situation changed for the worse in 2018, when workers at the Jasic Technology factory in Shenzhen attempted to organize a trade union and were joined in their protests by student and Maoist groups from across the country. This led to an even larger government crackdown in which more than 50 activists were detained. The following year, at least a dozen other activists were detained in a sweeping campaign seemingly designed to eradicate the last vestiges of civil society labour groups in Guangdong, the hot bed of this trend. Nearly all of these activists were

eventually released but they have been effectively disabled to provide workers with the valuable help and advice that in the past helped workers to defend their rights.

Still, workers across the country continue to stage many demonstrations and thousands of strikes each year in various regions and industries. In most cases they carefully refrain from political attacks and focus on economic grievances and unsafe working conditions. As a rule, the government responds with low-key but effective crackdowns, dismantling independent trade unions and imprisoning activists of labour rights organisations. At the same time, it has also helped workers, putting pressure on businesses to settle disputes and making billions of dollars available for welfare payments and retraining programs. The messaging is loud and clear: Before the revolution, strikes and demonstrations were necessary, now they go against national rejuvenation. So trust and follow your own Party, government and the ACFTU -- they are doing whatever is possible for you. Don’t fall in the trap of ill-intentioned students, ‘independents’ or else...

Left Student Activism: Taboo For The Authorities

It is common knowledge how Feminist activists as well as Marxist/Maoist student activists in Chinese universities are snooped on, harassed, intimidated, jailed or otherwise punished. Often college and university students are forced to watch videotaped confessions in which detained activists say they spread false information and violated the law.

Unlike the Tiananmen protesters, however, China’s new leftist students are not calling for a change in government, which would immediately land them in jail. Rather than criticise leaders or the party, in their public writings they take care to criticise the particular police unit for wrongdoing. They

can thus claim to echo the Party slogan “Don’t forget your original intentions” that was prominently displayed at the start of Xi’s second term in 2017. But the authorities are not to be fooled: they can sense the fire behind the smoke and take steps to nip any campaign in the bud.

While some students describe themselves as “Maoist-Leninist-Marxists”, others simply say they prefer to be described by their aims: supporting workers. According to some reports, their numbers are rising. Not surprisingly, the government sends inspectors on a regular basis to discourage criticism of the Party on campus. “The students’ commitment to a purer form of Marxism only serves to highlight the CCP’s own drift from its roots,” says Jude Blanchette, author of *China’s New Red Guards: The of Radicalism and the Rebirth of Mao Zedong* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2019). “This, crucially, has been why the left in China has always presented more of a challenge to the [post-Mao -- A Sen] party leadership than the right.”

Conditions of Women and the Feminist Movement

Achievements of Chinese women in sports, corporate management and some other areas are well-known. In 2012 China became one of the first few nations to start sending women astronauts on space missions with indigenous technology and infrastructure. In 2001, China amended its marriage law, so that abuse was considered grounds for divorce. In 2005, new provisions were added to the Law on Women’s Right Protection to include sexual harassment.

But beneath these advertisable successes lurks a rather gloomy reality. For one, the apparently progressive legislations are, as in India, full of loopholes and often badly implemented. According to the 2020 Gender Gap Index prepared by the World Economic Forum, China



File Photo: A protest art in Beijing aimed at highlighting the problem of violence against women.

is ranked 106th, down from 69th in 2013. Women constitute only about a quarter of CPC members and also of the Chinese People's Congresses. No woman member has ever broken through the political glass ceiling to enter the Standing Committee of the Politbureau. In the last (2017) Party Congress, only 10 women were elected to the 204-member Central Committee and only one to the 25-member PB. Seventy years after Mao Zedong adopted a series of measures challenging traditional forms of gender inequality (the PRC abolished footbinding, promoted female education and participation in the workforce, and overturned traditional notions of marriage with the Marriage Law in 1950), Chinese women are being repressed and subjugated in all conceivable ways.

In a hostile, misogynist socio-political atmosphere like this, activists are trying their level best to organise protests on the streets and online and mobilise public opinion in support of gender justice. A few examples may be in order.

A group of five young feminists along with other activists planned a demonstration for the International Women's Day in 2015 against sexual harassment on public transportation. But on March 6, dozens of these activists were arrested in Beijing and other cities. Most of the arrested were released

within a few days, barring the five who were detained on the vacuous -- and the Chinese police's most favourite -- charge of "picking quarrels and provoking trouble".

Ironically, this happened just when President Xi Jinping was preparing to co-host a UN summit on women's rights in Beijing. A hashtag campaign #FreetheFive spread news about their arrest quickly and gained support of people from all around the world. After 37 days of detention, they -- by now famous as 'The Feminist Five' -- were released on bail, but they are reportedly still under the scanner, with restricted job opportunities, physical mobility etc.

In 2017, the Sina Weibo account of Feminist Voices, an important feminist organization in China, was suspended for thirty days after they posted an article about the planned women's strike in the United States on the International Women's Day. In March 2018 the account was deleted.

The very next year, the #MeToo movement started in China with a female student in Beihang University alleging sexual harassment by her former PhD professor. Many university students, both female and male, came together to sign petitions against similar incidents elsewhere.

Recent years have witnessed feminist activists, campaigning against domestic violence, sexual harassment on public transportation, inadequacy of toilet facilities for women -- issues that the government also claims to have embraced -- being arrested on charges of provoking social instability. Evidently, the authorities are alarmed by the young women's refusal to passively wait for the All-China Women's Federation⁵ to raise issues without ruffling government feathers, and their ability to take independent initiative, largely through skilful use of social media, to organize flash protests that often get positive coverage in the media and their links with the international feminist fraternity.

In a shocking recent development, China's top tennis star Peng Shuai has gone missing ever since she posted sexual assault allegations against former vice-premier Zhang Gaoli on her Weibo (China's version of Twitter) account. Not only was her post deleted by authorities, the internet in China is repeatedly being wiped clear of any references to Peng Shuai. Search engines in China are coming up empty in response to searches for the name of this extremely popular and prominent sports figure. The international Women's Tennis Association and prominent tennis stars the world over are raising concerns for Peng's wellbeing and demanding an independent probe into her allegations. China has refused to react officially to either queries about Peng or to the allegation against a former top government official. Instead, state media in China have released an email purported to be from Peng, claiming she is well and resting at home, and that the news of sexual assault is false. State media are also periodically releasing videos purportedly of the tennis star in a restaurant, at a tennis match and so on.

[5] Established in 1949, the ACWF is nominally a non-government organisation, but since the head positions are appointed by the CPC, in practice the organisation takes more care of the government's image and priorities than victimised women.

Even if Peng is, in fact, “resting at home” and no longer wants to speak publicly of the sexual assault allegation she posted, can we assume that all is well with her? For decades, Harvey Weinstein (the Hollywood mogul, allegations against whom sparked off the Me Too movement) successfully leveraged his political connections and wealth to intimidate his victims into backing down on complaints. Even if Peng is physically free and well (something which is by no means clear as of now), China cannot just be allowed to pretend she never made the allegation.

An Unsettled Question

So what are the major takeaways from our by no means comprehensive survey of the hundred-year journey of the world’s largest communist party in the most populous country?

The splendid saga of success in accomplishing the new democratic revolution in 1949 had its share of big mistakes leading to major setbacks. Similarly, the next nearly quarter century, marked as it was by a couple of blunders (the Great Leap Forward and

the Cultural Revolution), did lay the foundation for self-reliant socialist development powered by the creative energy of the masses who really felt the party and the government as their very own -- not a power standing above and lording it over them. That was the marvel of people’s/socialist democracy⁶ -- an integral and essential complement to proletarian dictatorship -- the absence or erosion of which turns the latter into authoritarianism of the ruling Communist Party.

This 27-year period (1949-76) will also be remembered for its robust militant Internationalism: recall, for example, the fledgling PRC’s war to resist US aggression and aid Korea (1950) and Mao’s 20 May 1970 call “People of the World Unite, Defeat US Aggressors and all their Running Dogs”.

The next chapter in the history of CPC was started with a one-sided evaluation of the Cultural Revolution. It was correctly criticized as a major ultra-left blunder, the “good intention behind it” was recognised by Deng, but the problem of right deviation and the danger of peaceful restoration of capitalism -- flagged by Mao

even if in an exaggerated manner -- was not addressed at all. The non-dialectical approach rendered the party myopic regarding risks associated with the otherwise necessary reforms.

Over the last four decades the CPC traversed a very long distance in implementing an extended Chinese version of Lenin’s NEP, granting huge concessions to imperialist finance capital and then to the emerging indigenous big bourgeoisie, at the cost of the working classes. What the country gained in return was laudable economic progress -- one of the basic prerequisites of building socialism. But in the process the basic ideological prerequisite -- proletarian internationalism -- was lost, revolutionary socialist politics no longer remained in command, and technocratic authoritarianism took over the place of vibrant people’s democracy. But the Party and the people of China are still on the move, and as Mao said long ago, between capitalism and socialism, which side will win out remains an unresolved question. ■

[6] To cite an early example, the Constitution of China was adopted after extensive discussions on the draft were held at town and provincial levels by more than 8000 people and nearly 6,000 suggestions were collected, from which a good many were accepted.



Bihar Covid-19 Deaths: HC Sends Notice to Health Secretary

During the hearing of the case filed in the Patna High Court by CPIML Bihar State Secretary Kunal regarding the demand for Rs 4 lakhs compensation to each of the families of persons who died during the Covid period, the High Court has sent a notice to the Bihar Health Secretary.

Advocate in the case Basant Chaudhury said that the government

has been given 2 months' time. We have submitted to the court the list of people who died in the Covid period, as collected by CPIML. Most of the deceased persons had symptoms of Covid, and those who did not have symptoms died untimely deaths due to lack of timely treatment as the health services had broken down; therefore, our argument is that all such people have a right to

compensation.

CPIML State Secretary Kunal said, we will confront the government on all fronts. The government cannot run away from its responsibility because it is due to governmental negligence that people lost their lives on such a large scale. These deaths could have been prevented if the health system had functioned properly and oxygen, beds etc had been provided on time.

Meanwhile, various organizations of rural doctors in Bihar held a meeting in the CPIML legislative office in Patna on 20 November 2021 under the banner of the Community Health Care Services Federation. The meeting was attended by CPIML Bihar State Secretary Kunal, Dumraon MLA Ajit Kushwaha and other representatives of rural medical organizations.

Speaking on the occasion State Secretary Kunal said that during Covid times it was rural doctors who saved people's lives, but it is extremely disappointing that the government's attitude towards this section is insensitive to the highest degree. Our governments have made it a policy

to extract work from people without giving them wages and dignity. Our party is with the protesters on all such issues. CPIML will fight inside the Assembly as well as outside for demands of rural doctors relating to health services appointments as well as other demands. Ajit Kushwaha said that about 21000 rural doctors have passed the community health eligibility course run jointly by the state health committee and NIOS. The government had also verbally promised these people that they would be appointed in the state health service system. But so far neither Regulatory nor Council has been set up. This is extremely insulting.

We shall forcefully raise the issue of this injustice to and betrayal of rural doctors in the Assembly.

It was decided at the meeting to gherao the Vidhan Sabha on these issues on 1 December 2021.

The meeting was attended by a large number of people including the chief whip of rural doctors' organizations Dr Arvind Pandit, Dr Sanjay Kumar, Dr Mithilesh Chaube, Dr Shamshad Alam, Dr Sachindra Dwivedi, Dr Ravi Prakash Yadav, Dr Arun Kumar Sharma, Dr SK Thakur, Dr Naseem Ahmed, Dr Sunil Kumar, Dr Mithilesh Kumar, Dr S Kaifi, Dr Nagendra Kushwaha, Dr Rajkumar Sharma and Dr Kundan Mathur. ■



Stop Ongoing Evictions From Forest Lands in Assam

On 7 November a large contingent of Assam police entered Lumding Reserve Forest led by DM and SP of Hojai district to evict the people belonging to Garo, Chakma and Bengali speaking Muslims who have been living in there to leave forthwith. Most of them are landless, victims of ethnic cleansing and river erosion. Sadou Asom Grameen Shramik Santha intervened and requested the district magistrate of Hojai through a memorandum to stop evictions without any proper rehabilitation done. The evictions were not stopped but the DM assured to rehabilitate the people in the same district. The people came out from the reserve forest and built makeshifts where they are living now waiting to be rehabilitated. This has brought a serious humanitarian crisis as evicted people are forced to live an inhuman life. This region is famous for ginger, turmeric and green chilly cultivation.

The total land area of Lumding



Protected Forest is 22,402 hectares out of which 1410 hectares of land has been evicted. Many of the evictees here came from the flood-hit areas of Morigaon and Nagaon after purchasing lands through brokers.

CPIML has called these evictions a direct deliberate targeting of

minorities under the BJP Govt.

The rehabilitation became a distant dream. A former MLA Shiladitya Deb come out spewing venom against innocent evicted people terming "doubtful Citizens, smugglers and anti-socials" on record in a PIL. The Sadou Asom Grameen Shramik Santha has

filed another PIL (37/2021) in the Guwahati High Court challenging the ill intentions of the said MLA making him a party to the case. It has also been decided to hold a convention on LAND AND SHELTER RIGHTS on 30 November at Nogaon .

Sonitpur District: On 6 November, a CPIML team comprising Madhab Chandra Bora, Ayefa Begum, Pari Kumari Barua, Mostafa Selim Ahmed, Abdul Ranjak Khandakar, along some peasant and Rights

activists including Sabed Ali, Rumi Sultana, Mohidul Rahman visited Sabed Char of Barchalla Lac in Sonitpur district where eviction notices have been served. They also visited Ranikhati Char Dhing LAC in Nagaon District and met the villagers who are apprehending the impending danger of eviction.

Shubhrajyoti Vardhan, President, Sadau Assam Gramin Sramik Santha and its General Secretary Arup Kumar Mahanta said that

as per Supreme Court's order regarding evictions the people are entitled for proper resettlement in the same area, but the ruling BJP, as its former MLA Shiladitya Dev, is spreading false narratives and venomous campaign against poor families living in Lamding forest terming them suspicious citizens, smugglers and criminals.

Such evictions must be stopped in Assam and the ruling party must desist itself from spreading lies and false propaganda. ■



Fascist Onslaught and the Role of Left: Convention on Great November Revolution Anniversary Communist group merges with the Party

“Bengal carries the legacy and spirit of left. Today, revolutionary lefts must reassert themselves through workers and farmers’ movement, dalit and adivasi struggles, student-youth upsurge and all other forms of mass resistance. Issues of climate justice, unemployment, human rights protection must be among the fundamental concerns”, Comrade Dipankar Bhattacharya said at the convention held in a packed auditorium at Rabindra Bhawan, Asansol, West Bengal on 7th November, the historic day of 104th anniversary of the Great November Revolution. From this Convention on 'Fascist Onslaught and the Role of Left', a Marxist-Leninist group named State Organising Committee (SOC) formally merged with CPI(ML) Liberation. The convention started after the hoisting of the red flag by CPIML General Secretary Dipankar Bhattacharya and paying of homage to the martyrs. After the opening song, Somnath Chatterjee, leader of erstwhile SOC

and a prominent trade union leader in the adjacent coal belt, declared merger of his organization with the Party by raising the Party flag and expressing their pledge of unity. Leaders including Com. Somnath Chatterjee, Com. Lebachand Tudu (adivasi leader from Jhargram Gopiballavpur Jungle Mahal area), Com Tapan Mukherjee (leader of Midnapur Sanitation workers union), Com. Badre Alam (peasant organizer of Aushgram -Galsi of East Bardhaman), Mojammel Haque alongwith hundreds of organizers and members joined the Party. Greeting all of them, the General Secretary said, "From this convention, several experienced comrades have united with our party. This process of unity is raising new hopes in all."

Intensive campaigning for this convention was run enthusiastically in Asansol and adjacent area for weeks which caught the attention of democratic and progressive sections and many of them joined the convention. Com. Atanu Chakravarty and

Com. Jayatu Deshmukh from party state committee gave introductory speeches in the beginning. Central leaders Com. Kartick Pal and Com. Salil Dutta were among the members in the Presidium. Com Surinder Kumar, Secretary West Bardhaman District Committee of CPIML conducted the proceedings of the convention. Com. Somnath Chatterjee, in his brief speech mentioned emphatically that the need of the hour is to build a strong resistance against the fascist onslaught and all the small left revolutionary forces should come forward and unite under the banner of CPIML Liberation. Com Lebachand Tudu said that the struggle to save jal-jungle-zameen from corporate plundering must be combined with the fight against fascism. CPIML Liberation is a true Communist party in India and to strengthen this united struggle we have joined this Party. He also criticized the state government and mentioned that though a welfare board has been formed but the wellbeing and interest of



innumerable adivasi communities has been neglected, and adivasis are pushed to the margins. Dalit activist Shaktipada Badyakar emphasized that awakening of the marginalized dalits and the radical transformation of the society can be taken forward combining the ideology of Ambedkar and Communism. Comrade P K Das, a prominent trade union leader of steel industry mentioned, during decades of 60s exemplary working class movement in this vast industrial area achieved significant victories and the left forces garnered good mass base among the industrial workers. But at present the reactionary forces have raised their head, parliamentary

cretinism of a section of lefts during the yesteryears weakened the left movement. We need to build a strong cadre force to organize campaigns against the false narrative spread by fascist forces. People are looking for alternatives and we must overcome our weaknesses and take the lead.

Com. Dipankar in his speech mentioned about the glorious history of November revolution and the lessons we must take from that. We should not forget that 104 years ago, Russian people fought for food, peace and democracy and established all those rights for which we are fighting now.

People across generations are coming forward to strengthen this struggle taking inspirations from our martyrs. We know Khudiram Bose sacrificed his life fighting against British rule at his tender age. Same was with Shaheed-e-Azam Bhagat Singh. While we are celebrating 75 years of

independence, forces which betrayed the freedom struggle and openly served the British are now trying to change the history. The followers of Hitler and Golwalkar are now ruling the country. To fight against this fascist regime, we need courageous resistance. We witnessed how valiantly Father Stan Swamy resisted the fascists at the age of 84. The ongoing farmers movement has put up a formidable challenge against the Modi rule. In Shaheen bagh, similar movement was built for right to equal citizenship. Adivasis are in the forefront of the struggle to protect natural resources from corporate grab. Working class is fighting hard to resist the rampant sell out public sectors and national assets. The real opposition to Modi's rule are all these movements of farmers-workers-students and the forces fighting for democracy and freedom. Our prime responsibility now is to combat fascism ideologically and courageously, by taking significant roles in all mass movements and creating broader unity.

On high notes of hope, courage and determination, the convention was concluded with the song International. ■



Caste Atrocities Against Dalits and Police repression at Thiruvaikavur, Thanjavur

▲ A SIMPSON AND KG DESIKAN

In recent times, particularly after the assumption of power by the DMK, we are witnessing scores of incidents of oppression of Dalits in various places of Thanjavur and nearby districts of delta region of Tamil Nadu. Several people are getting killed mainly from among Dalits, including some Left activists. Dominant backward caste forces are attacking Dalits with renewed vengeance.

The newly formed DMK government has constituted even a commission for SC/STs and also for 'social justice'. But, unfortunately, in DMK parlance, social justice is being limited only to reservation and BC related issues. We need to redefine such a restricted meaning of social justice to encompass all facets of life of all oppressed castes, particularly Dalits. Only justice in all spheres can mean any real social justice. Otherwise, the term social justice becomes meaningless. Whether the DMK government would ensure social justice to Dalits is an open question yet to be answered.

CPIML Protested the Police Repression on Dalits

Thanjavur district unit of the party, CPIML, organised a protest on 18th November 2021 at Kumbakonam amidst a heavy downpour because of cyclonic predictions. The protesters demanded action against the police Sub Inspector of Kabisthalam police station who was responsible for the antagonism of a minor nature snowballing into a police repression on Dalits and violation of human rights. Incidentally, Kabisthalam is also a native place of GK Moopanar. The protesters also demanded immediate end to the practices of untouchability and putting

common properties for the public use of Dalits. The police, despite filing cases on equal number of 26 people from each community, Dalits were framed under many gravest non-bailable charges including attempt to murder (IPC 307) and more than four cases each while the other side was framed only under prevention of atrocities act. Ironically, Dalits who were in hospital for grievous injuries, inflicted by dominant caste attack, were framed under the charges of attempt to murder. Hence, the protesters demanded immediate withdrawal of all false cases against Dalits. Vanniyars, being the overwhelming majority and wielding political and other powers, constitute the dominant caste in this particular village.

Police hand in glove with Dominant Caste Forces

The flash point of the antagonism was almost cooling down and was coming to an end with the peace committee meeting on 18th Oct 2021. But, on the same day, suddenly, one of the district vice presidents of Revolutionary Youth Association (RYA), Thiagarajan, an auto driver, on the way to pick up some passengers, was attacked grievously by the dominant caste forces in the presence of police force. Then, people from Dalit hamlet assembled in hundreds demanding justice to Thiagarajan. The dominant caste forces resorted to counter mobilisation and started pelting stones on Dalits. Perhaps, stone pelting was from both sides. In the melee, two of the police were hit by stones unintentionally and the police resorted to heavy lathi charge only on Dalits. It is alleged that the police played into the hands of dominant caste forces in attacking Dalits and

also for one-sidedly framing charges under non bailable sections against Dalits.

Inhuman and Brutal Way of Foisting Cases

More than 10 people including women, students and youth were admitted to hospital and more than 25, including those hospitalised, were lodged in different jails. More than 9 out of 25 are students and youths belonging to RYA and AISA. AISA activist Senkathir, who was not on the spot, also had false cases foisted on him, and is trying for anticipatory bail. One of the state secretaries of RYA, Senthamizh is already languishing in the jail for more than a month now. More than four Dalit women are in jail. In one family, four people, husband, wife and two daughters are in jail. Likewise, there are three such families. Police forced their way into their homes and arrested and imprisoned entire families. In one family, husband and wife are in jail while their child is lying crying at home without any caretaker. Two sons of our party's block secretary have false cases foisted on them. One young student Lenin who was ill for a few days died due to delay in medical treatment as a result of this situation.

Police Repression in Collusion with Dominant Forces

The antagonism between dominant caste forces and Dalits, despite simmering for several decades, never turned into any major incident as Dalits were working in the agricultural lands, houses and businesses of dominant caste forces. But, this time, it snowballed into a major incident because of police



repression against Dalits, hand in glove with dominant caste forces.

The Fact Finding Team

In view of atrocities on Dalits in Thiruvaikavur village of Thanjavur district, “the Peoples Movement for Justice” instituted a Fact Finding Team (FFT) comprising of Arasa Muruga Pandian of PUCL, Desikan of AICCTU and Ravikumar, advocate of AILAJ (All India Lawyers Association for Justice) led by its State convener, A Simpson. The team visited the affected villages, interviewed involved communities, the police officials and also the administration.

Untouchability Practices - Basis of the Conflict

The FFT came to the conclusion that the simmering antagonism between Dalits and dominant caste were mainly because of practices of untouchability that were prohibited by the prevention of atrocities act.

Another significant fact observed by the FFT was that none of the Dalits owned any land while all families of dominant castes owned land, although being not so big land lords. Dalit agricultural labourers were paid meagre coolie of only Rs 150 for women and Rs 200 for men. Some Dalit youths are educated now and their questioning of inhuman practice of untouchability is being retaliated by the dominant forces, fearing loosening of their grip over their Dalit labourers. This first major incident of caste oppression, in the opinion FFT, is fuelled by the motivated false charges and brutal repression by the police that displayed a mentality of domination against Dalits. In fact, most of the youth, students and women who were foisted with grievous cases were not really engaged in the incident. More than 12 two wheelers were seized from the houses of Dalits on the subsequent day (19th Oct) to reinforce the cases with

material evidence in an after thought which is clearly evident in the contradictory statements made by the Sub Inspector (SI) and the Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) before the FFT. All the happenings clearly point to the fabrication of false cases with definite ulterior motives by the police and the administration that is prejudiced against Dalits.

In the light of atrocities and in the course of investigation by the FFT, several instances of practices of untouchability have come to light. The FFT lists them as follows:

- Dalits were not able to admit their children in the school in their own village as it is at the centre of houses of dominant caste people. Dalits had to go to nearby villages to admit their children for education.
- Cutting hair is not allowed in the saloon located in the village.
- Dalits are forced to sit on floor

in tea shops while two tumbler system is also followed.

- Dalits are not allowed access to the community hall built under GK Vasan's MP Fund.
- No public toilets even for women in public bus stop
- The public bridge that divides Dalit and dominant caste hamlets and main route for transport is claimed by dominant forces while Dalits are forced to stay away.
- Electric crematorium despite being allotted to Dalit areas is diverted to areas of dominant forces and Dalits are not allowed to for cremation while burial ground is reserved exclusively for each community.
- No representation for Dalits in common temple trust.
- Dalits are prohibited from accessing 29 acres of land of common property of the temple.
- Even the pro-dominant caste, Dalit woman president of the panchayat is not allowed to function from panchayat office while she is using only the school for the purpose.

These practices of untouchability formed the basis for the simmering

antagonism between the Dalits and dominant caste forces, according to the FFT.

Immediately Withdraw False Cases

Following are the demands shared by the FFT and also the CPIML and AIARLA.

- The DMK led state government should immediately intervene and withdraw all false cases against Dalits.
- The practice of untouchability in provision stores, saloons and two glass system in tea stalls should be put an end.
- Dalits should be allowed to admit their children in the village school.
- Dalits should be given access to community hall built under GK Vasan MP Fund.
- Landless Dalits should be offered land for agriculture and also housing sites.
- Educated youth shall be provided jobs.
- The family of the youth, Lenin who died because of no access to hospital because of continuing trouble, must be given compensation.

- All liquor outlets in the village should be closed.
- As the one sided and approach of dominant caste mentality is the reason for the incident, the concerned police official shall be punished and till then, be transferred from the Kabistharam police station.
- The state government should appoint officials who have respect towards law and justice and play a role in bringing peace and put an end to continuing practices of untouchability.
- A special package for the upliftment of Dalits shall be attached priority by the state government.

The CPIML has decided to represent the case at all levels including bringing it to the notice of the Chief Minister Mr MK Stalin. The CPIML has also decided to continue with agitations and movement till the untouchability practices are put an end to. ■



Jai Bhim (2021)

▲ NITIN RAJ

“In order to uphold democracy, there will be times one must be authoritarian.”

These are the remarks of a police officer in T. J. Gnanavel's film *Jai Bhim*, not mine. It is not really a fictional remark - we hear such remarks from real life police officers, administrators, even journalists, fairly often. We live in a world where reality anticipates satire and kills its punchline.

Jai Bhim is an adaptation of a true 1993 legal case, where Justice Chandru, then an advocate-activist,

had filed a habeas corpus case on behalf of an adivasi woman whose husband had been wrongfully accused in a jewellery case and had gone “missing” in police custody.

Jai Bhim is both a courtroom drama and a mystery drama. It begins with a scene at the jail entrance and takes us on a journey through the horrors of custodial torture and sexual assault.

The 1993 case which inspired the film involved Parvathi from the Kurava tribe. The film version brings us Senggeni from the Irula tribe. In the real case, Parvathi's

husband Rajakannu, his brother, sister, and brother-in-law were arrested and brutally beaten by the Kammapuram (TN) police, forcing them under custodial torture to confess to a theft they did not commit. When Parvathi learnt about their arrest, she approached the police, and she too was tortured by the police, along with her son, who died a year later as a result of the trauma that the police inflicted on him. Later, with the help of a communist activist, she approached Justice Chandru, then a lawyer, who filed a habeas corpus case in court



on her behalf demanding that the police account for her husband who “went missing” from their custody. Habeas corpus (the Latin phrase means “produce the body”) cases demand that a missing person be produced in court.

The case exposed the actual nature of custody, abuse, as well as a slew of horrible truths about police violence that should have no place in any democracy. Despite the fact that the film does not depict all of the facts surrounding the case, it brings us face to face with state violence and custodial torture deriving from caste, and the psychological trauma and physical agony it inflicts not only on its direct victims but on their kin.

Many of the film's moments are heartbreaking. Scenes in which a vicious police officer tortures Senggeni's husband transport us to the real world. The film reminds us

that places like police stations can turn into places of torture if you are poor and socially or economically vulnerable; if you are a Kashmiri, a Muslim, a Dalit, a woman; or a person who challenges state policies. It gives us a sense of how the whole mechanism of the state can turn against you if you are from a marginalised community.

The film also shows how adivasi communities such as the Irula live. The camera shows us the beauty of the land they inhabit - and show how they are forced to make a living by working on other people's land. A song in the film describes Irulas as the defenders and keepers of forests and wildlife, threatened by the violence that calls itself “development”.

When questioned why he opted to change the Seggeni's tribe from Kurava to Irula, the director of Jai Bhim replied because they are

considerably more underprivileged than Kurava. The film tells us how denotified tribes like the Irula are dehumanised by profiling them as crooks and criminals. When such communities have been systematically barred from basic rights like voting, ration cards, and gaining land rights, we are forced to ask what will happen to the hundreds of people who like the Irula have no documentary proof of their existence or their possession of land, if regulations such as CAA-NPR-NRC are implemented.

Despite the presence of prominent actors such as Surya, Prakash Raj, Lijomol Jose, as well as a compelling story, the film falls short in persuading the viewer to feel Senggeni's anguish and fight alongside her. I also question the film's triumphant ending. Yes, in real life, Parvathi won the court case; but did that change the reality of the systemically violent nature of the state apparatus? Many Senggenis continue to face the same atrocities even today.

In the struggles waged by Senggeni and Chandru, in the educating, organising and agitating we see them do, we can, if we wish, locate Marx and Ambedkar. That is the strength of the film. ■



NYC Taxi Drivers’ Two-Week Hunger Strike

New York taxi drivers, most of whom are immigrants from the Asian and African continents, went on a hunger strike for two weeks to protest a system of predatory lending that had left drivers crippled by debt.

Bankers and broker had artificially inflated the prices of taxi driving permits (called “medallions”) which meant that drivers incurred big loans to get the permits. The New York Taxi Workers Alliance (NYTWA) launched a hunger strike to demand loan restructuring backed by the city administration. Finally the two-week long hunger strike was called off when the NYTWA announced that it had won a city administration-backed guarantee that taxi drivers’ medallion loans would be restructured to a maximum of \$170,000, lowering individual drivers’ payments to a maximum of \$1,122 per month.



POSTING DATE : 27-28 OF EVERY MONTH
PUBLISHED ON 26TH OF EVERY MONTH

R.N.I. NO. 55777/93
P. R. NO. DL(E)—11/5156/2021-23
POSTING AT NEW DELHI G.P.O.

VICTORY FOR FARMERS PROTEST

NOV 19, 2021



EDITORIAL OFFICE

CHARU BHAWAN, U-90, SHAKARPUR, DELHI - 110 092 PH.: 91-11-42785864

Email : liberation@cpiml.org ; Website : www.liberation.org.in

Facebook, Twitter, Instagram & YouTube: @cpimliberation

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY DIPANKAR BHATTACHARYA FOR THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE, CPIML FROM

CHARU BHAWAN, U-90, SHAKARPUR, DELHI - 110 092 AND

PRINTED AT DIVYA OFFSET, B-1422, NEW ASHOK NAGAR, DELHI - 110 096

EDITOR : ARINDAM SEN