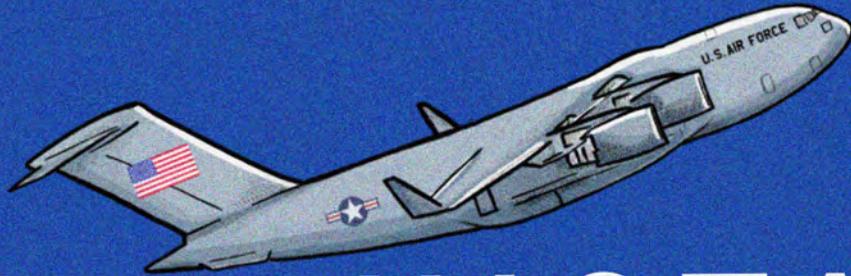


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SEPTEMBER 2021

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On Indian Independence day, members of the diaspora and friends of India in the UK dropped a huge banner reading 'Resign Modi' from Westminster Bridge, London. (Photo: South Asian Solidarity)



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Stand with the People of Afghanistan

The exit of American forces from Afghanistan, the concomitant collapse of the US-backed regime headed by Ashraf Ghani and takeover by the Taliban, which should really be called a negotiated transfer of power by the US, have dramatically changed the situation in Afghanistan. With the Taliban attacking a wide spectrum of Afghan people, large numbers of people are desperately trying to flee Afghanistan. Scenes of hundreds of people crammed into cargo planes and clinging to the doors of aircrafts as if they were overcrowded buses and trains, with at least two persons, a doctor and a footballer, falling off a plane to their horrific death, testify to an utterly chaotic, uncertain and fearful transition now underway in Afghanistan. The Taliban has made clear its intention to exercise total control over the lives of the people, rolling back women's rights, terrorising women, religious and ethnic minorities and protesters and even refusing to hold elections in Afghanistan.

The current mess in Afghanistan is in the first place an American creation. America's argument that it cannot go on looking after Afghanistan and has now exited to respect Afghanistan's right to shape its own future is as blatant a lie as was its previous claim of restoring peace and democracy in Afghanistan. Not only has the US occupation itself left behind a terrible toll of suffering, we should also remember that the pull-out of US forces has happened according to a plan negotiated between the US and the Taliban. While much of it must have been in the realm of back-channel negotiations, part of it has been in the public domain as the US-Taliban pact since early 2020. The pact is a classic example of American chicanery and hypocrisy.

The pact signed in Doha on February 29, 2020 was titled "Agreement for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan between the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan which is not recognized by the United States as a state and is known as the Taliban and the United States of America". The pact and the negotiations that preceded it kept the US-backed Afghanistan government and the allies of the US all excluded from the process. It spelt out a roadmap for withdrawal of US troops and release of Taliban prisoners, which explains how the Taliban had already been ready to capture power as soon as the Americans left Afghanistan. The current situation in Afghanistan can thus only be described as a negotiated transfer of power where the US chose the Taliban as its trusted successor to protect its interests.

The pact only got the Taliban to 'commit' not to let the Afghan soil to be used for any terrorist activity against the US and its allies. So the American concern over terrorism is explicitly limited to protecting only the security of the US and its allies. The Taliban regime between 1996 and 2001 was also notorious for its reign of domestic terror, ruthless attacks on women and religious and ethnic minorities and systematic violation of basic human rights and democracy. The US and its allies habitually describe human rights and democracy as 'western standards'

(even as they blatantly undermine them), the military invasion and occupation of Afghanistan by the US and its allies was in fact named 'Operation Enduring Freedom', but any mention of these so-called western standards or values is conspicuously missing in the pact.

The Modi government too has to answer for the present situation in Afghanistan. All these years we were told that India was playing a major role in the reconstruction of Afghanistan and was gaining recognition internationally for its contribution to the strengthening of peace and stability in Afghanistan. And now the Modi government has gone totally silent about the developments in Afghanistan, and has even closed down the Indian embassy in Kabul, even as BJP leaders have found a new destination for dissenters in India: 'Go to Afghanistan!' Yogi Adityanath, whose own regime has earned the worst kind of notoriety in India for the treatment meted out to women, children, Muslims, Dalits and common law-abiding peace-loving citizens, sheds crocodile tears in the UP Assembly for Afghan women and children, using the Taliban as a code word to unleash a virulent campaign of hate and humiliation against Indian Muslims.

Can the Taliban be expected to behave any differently from its previous term? The scenes we see in Afghanistan do not inspire any confidence or hope about a reformed and restrained Taliban rule. The fear and desperation writ large on the faces of Afghan women, children and workers and employees tells us very clearly about the mood in Afghanistan as the prospect of an uncertain and fearful future looms large. The least the international community must ensure is an inclusive

interim arrangement where non-Taliban forces also have due space and the holding of early elections under the monitoring of the United Nations to enable the Afghan people to determine their future. With the US having thrown its weight behind the Taliban which also owed its initial rise to American patronage, other political forces and trends in Afghanistan are of course at a disadvantage; yet we can see protests growing in Afghanistan against the terror and tyranny of the Taliban. The people of Afghanistan deserve full support and solidarity of freedom-loving people across the world in their quest for a just peace guaranteeing safety, dignity and rights for all, in particular Afghan women and religious and ethnic minorities.

What can we in India do immediately in support of the people of Afghanistan? Afghan citizens currently studying or working in India should be given an extended visa and not forced to return to Afghanistan till peace and stability are restored there. Students will need an extension of their fellowship programme and/or conversion of their visas to work visas so they can find jobs and some steady income to manage their expenses. Afghan citizens seeking refuge in India must be welcomed and granted asylum without any discrimination. This situation once again exposes the absurd and divisive nature of the CAA where non-Muslim applicants from Afghanistan are prioritised for the granting of Indian citizenship, and the same discrimination is now being applied in the granting of visa to applicants from Afghanistan. There are even reports of social media users being booked under UAPA in Assam for welcoming the

return of the Taliban to power in Afghanistan. Persecuting Indians or Afghans residing in India for their opinions on the political situation in Afghanistan will be a negation of justice and human rights in India – all the more outrageous because it is being done in the name of the tyranny and violation of human rights by the Taliban.

With elections to UP and several other State Assemblies round the corner, the Sangh-BJP brigade is trying its best to use the Afghanistan crisis to intensify its campaign of Islamophobic hate and violence. Already we have seen the government's attempt to utilise the 74th anniversary of India's independence to reopen the wound of Partition in the name of remembering its horrors, the Afghan crisis is being used as an add-on to reinforce the notion of Hindus and India being in danger. The Sangh brigade's own attitude to the freedom and rights of Indian women is as regressive as the Taliban model; and its paradigm of governance combining draconian laws and extra-judicial terror is no less tyrannical. The Sangh campaign against the Taliban is driven by not any respect for women, children or human rights, it is just another opportunity for the Sangh to demonise the Muslim community. While extending support to the Afghan people's quest for peace, justice and democracy we must boldly expose the complicity and contribution of the US and its allies, including India, to the current mess in Afghanistan and combat every attempt to foment Islamophobia by shedding crocodile tears for Afghan women and children. □

Afganistan Weeps

The US ended its two decade long occupation with what amounts to a transfer of power to the Taliban. What are the implications of these developments, and what are our obligations as Indian citizens towards the Afghan people in this time of crisis and transition?

In this feature we will closely analyse the agreement between the US and the Taliban – a document which is being wilfully ignored by many analysts at this juncture because it contradicts the narrative being pushed by the US, the Taliban, the mainstream media and many commentators on the global left. We will also highlight Afghan women's voices which demand to be heard, and which the above-mentioned forces are erasing from the discourse surrounding Afghanistan.



Images of women is defaced with spray paint after Taliban forces takeover Kabul. (Photo:AFP)

US-Taliban 2020 Agreement A Transfer of Power

The agreement signed between the USA and Taliban in February 2020 is worth a close look. It is titled ‘Agreement for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan between the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan which is not recognized by the United States as a state and is known as the Taliban and the United States of America’.

This puzzling phrase (why is the USA signing an agreement with an entity calling itself a state,

which it does not recognise as a state?) is repeated in every section of the agreement.

An editorial in *The Hindu* last year summed up the implications of the agreement:

“The fundamental issue with the U.S.’s Taliban engagement is that it deliberately excluded the Afghan government because the insurgents do not see the government as legitimate rulers. By giving in to the Taliban’s demand, the U.S. has

practically called into question the legitimacy of the government it backs. Second, the U.S. has made several concessions to the Taliban in the agreement. The Taliban was not pressed enough to declare a ceasefire. Both sides settled for a seven-day “reduction of violence” period before signing the deal. The U.S., with some 14,000 troops in Afghanistan, has committed to pull them out in a phased manner in return for the Taliban’s assurances that it would sever ties with other

terrorist groups and start talks with the Kabul government. But the Taliban, whose rule is known for strict religious laws, banishing women from public life, shutting down schools and unleashing systemic discrimination on religious and ethnic minorities, has not made any promises on whether it would respect civil liberties or accept the Afghan Constitution. The Taliban got what it wanted — the withdrawal of foreign troops — without making any major concession. Lastly, the U.S. withdrawal will invariably weaken the Kabul government, altering the balance of power

both on the battlefield and at the negotiating table. A weakened government will have to talk with a resurgent Taliban. The U.S., in a desperate bid to exit the Afghan war, has practically abandoned the Kabul government and millions of Afghans who do not support the Taliban's violent, tribal Islamism, to the mercy of insurgents.”

The agreement makes it clear that it is now the Taliban which is the agent and enforcer of US interests in Afghanistan. It ends with these two promises of US support to the Taliban:

“1. The United States and the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan

which is not recognized by the United States as a state and is known as the Taliban seek positive relations with each other and expect that the relations between the United States and the new post-settlement Afghan Islamic government as determined by the intra-Afghan dialogue and negotiations will be positive.

2. The United States will seek economic cooperation for reconstruction with the new post-settlement Afghan Islamic government as determined by the intra-Afghan dialogue and negotiations, and will not intervene in its internal affairs.” □

CPIML Statement on Taliban Takeover of Afghanistan

16 August 2021

We are deeply concerned over ongoing developments in Afghanistan. The dramatic capture of state power by the Taliban has plunged the country into tremendous chaos and uncertainty amidst reports of violent crimes against civilians, oppression of women and systematic assault on human rights and liberties.

American foreign policy is squarely responsible for the current mess. From the days of facilitating the rise of the Taliban in the 1980 and 1990s through the post-9/11 invasion and occupation of Afghanistan to the current juncture of unplanned exit of American forces, it is the American design of military intervention and occupation which has brought Afghanistan to this sorry pass.

The past experience of Taliban rule in Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001 and the extremely regressive and regimented nature of its ideology and politics are making the whole world and especially for all of us in South Asia deeply disturbed about the future of Afghanistan and South Asia. We hope global public opinion and the international community can have some restraining influence on the upcoming Taliban

regime in Afghanistan and the people of Afghanistan will be able to fight their way to peace, progress and democracy in the trouble-torn country.

We call upon the Indian government to ensure safe evacuation of Indians from Afghanistan and safe stay and protection for Afghan citizens currently residing in India for education, jobs or other purposes. The Afghan crisis is bound to force many Afghan citizens seek refuge and asylum abroad till restoration of peace and stability in Afghanistan. The absurdity of India's discriminatory Citizenship Amendment Act which places Muslim immigrants from Afghanistan to India at a grave disadvantage can be easily felt in the present juncture.

While standing with the Afghan and world people in the quest for peace, stability and democracy in Afghanistan we must be alert to rebuff any attempt to use the Afghan developments to instigate Islamophobic hate and violence within India. The rise of the forces of bigotry in Afghanistan should encourage us to reject bigotry in India and strengthen our own resolve for communal harmony, social progress and democratic rights.

- CPIML Central Committee

Stand With Afghan People In Their Struggle for Freedom and Democracy

Against Imperialist Interference and Oppressive Taliban Rule

(A statement and call for solidarity actions signed by democratic groups across India)

The end of a twenty year old US occupation has brought no relief for the people of Afghanistan. The takeover of the country by the Taliban has created a situation of chaos, crisis, uncertainty, and fear. The last time the Taliban was in power, it had unleashed a reign of terror, arbitrary and brutal diktats and punishments, and complete loss of personal freedom. Desperate to escape such a fate and fearful for their freedom, rights, and lives, thousands of Afghan people are fleeing the country.

Inside Afghanistan, every day brings news of new Taliban atrocities. The Taliban has massacred people of the Hazara minority community, killed the kin of a Deutsche Welle journalist, forced a woman TV anchor to be replaced by a man, is conducting a door-to-door witch-hunt and abduction of dissidents; is violently attacking journalists, killing at least one, and has shot dead protestors in the streets. The Taliban has declared that it is their authorities who will decide how far women can study, what subjects they can study, what jobs they can hold; and what they must wear. Already reports are coming in of Taliban attacks on women. Displaying incredible courage, women are protesting with handmade posters on the streets of Kabul; and Afghan men and women all over the country are protesting the Taliban takeover with

Afghan flags in their hands, facing Taliban bullets in the process. It is these fighting democratic people of Afghanistan who need us to extend solidarity and amplify their voice.

Many international actors bear responsibility for Afghanistan's tragic fate today. The Soviet military intervention in 1979 at the behest of the then Afghan Government, made Afghanistan the scene for Cold War competition between the Soviet Union and the USA. The US pumped money and arms to back the mujahideen forces against the Soviet-backed army. It was in this backdrop that the Taliban could emerge. In 2001, the US and its allies again led a military invasion and occupation of Afghanistan, in the name of liberating Afghanistan's people and especially its women from Taliban rule and destroying the Taliban and other terrorist outfits based in the country.

The latest developments have thoroughly exposed the lies that served as pretexts for the invasion and occupation. Under the US occupation, Afghan people were subject to bombings, drone strikes, and arbitrary raids and killings by the occupying armies and their hired private mercenaries. The US occupation actually enabled the Taliban to consolidate itself. The US, having decided to exit Afghanistan, set up unilateral negotiations with the Taliban, excluding its allies as well as the Afghan Government. This culminated in a US-Taliban pact which made it clear that for all purposes the US was transferring

power to the Taliban. With the mask of "war on terror", "war for democracy" and "war to protect Afghan women" having come off, the occupation stands exposed as a cynical and violent imperialist exercise intended to subjugate Afghanistan and serve US interests.

Today, the liberties and lives of Afghanistan's feminists, human rights activists, care workers, welfare workers are all in especial danger from the Taliban. Refugees fleeing the Taliban are risking their lives in conditions that display their desperation. Among refugees hanging onto the wings of a plane leaving Kabul, two men – a 20-year-old football player and a 25-year-old doctor – fell to their deaths. Refugees face apathy, as well as hostility and violence in countries where they are seeking refuge.

The Government of India is yet to make its stand on the Taliban clear. Meanwhile leaders of the ruling BJP and the Hindu-supremacist RSS have unleashed a hate campaign against India's Muslims, equating all Muslims and Islam itself with the regressive and oppressive Taliban. The Government has also shamefully referenced the CAA which goes against the Indian constitution's assurance of equal citizenship to all irrespective of faith or other factors, and announced that it will "prioritise" Hindu and Sikh refugees from Afghanistan.

We in India who resist the BJP-RSS agenda of imposing regressive and oppressive bans on what we can eat, think, write, sing, and

speak; and whom we can love, and the violent lynch mobs who enforce these bans, stand with the people of Afghanistan in their struggle to assert their right to live and take decisions freely. We who defend India's Constitution and flag against the RSS and BJP's attacks, stand with Afghan people as they defend their country's Constitution and flag and demand that only a constitutionally elected parliament be allowed to pass or amend laws or national symbols.

We demand that:

1. *Afghans must get the opportunity to elect a new government and the Taliban, which has started rolling back women's existing freedom and rights in Afghanistan, must not be allowed to impose itself as the new regime. An inclusive interim arrangement must be ushered in to hold early elections under UN supervision.*
2. *An international tribunal be set up to ensure justice for the war crimes committed by the US and NATO in the course of the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan.*
3. *The UN Human Rights Council must initiate a fact-finding mission to identify and bring to justice all perpetrators of atrocities and violence against Afghan civilians – including the occupying armed forces as well as the Taliban and other armed groups. Taliban leaders must also be brought to justice for every atrocity they inflicted on women and minorities in the past.*
4. *United Nations Security Council, the UN Human Rights Council, international human rights organizations and the international community must act to ensure that Afghan women's rights groups are the centre of any negotiations and other processes to ensure a just peace and secure the rights of all Afghan people.*
5. *The Government of India cease any attempt to distinguish between Afghan refugees on the basis of faith or identity, and instead open the country's doors to offer safe refuge to any Afghan refugees in need.*
6. *The Government of India waste no time in bringing back all Indian citizens from Afghanistan (while the embassy staff have been brought back, hundreds of others still remain stranded without any clear exit plan, support, or guidance). The Government of India must also make every effort to bring Afghan students enrolled in Indian educational institutions to Indian soil.*
7. *The Government of India must ensure the safety of all Afghan nationals residing in India*
8. *The Election Commission of India must ensure that Afghanistan and the Taliban are not used as pretexts for hate speech during campaigns for state elections in Uttar Pradesh and Punjab that are due soon.*
9. *That UNHCR expedite refugee status registration for Afghan refugees arriving in India, so that they can secure employment or education as needed.*
10. *Single Window System for applying for fellowships, scholarships, visa issues and any other issue Afghan students are facing.*
11. *We also appeal to the Indian people and people's movement groups to*
 1. *On 23 August, organise solidarity actions (demonstrations, sit-ins, vigils) in all states with Afghan people's struggle for freedom, peace, and justice*
 2. *Extend help, cooperation and a warm welcome to Afghan refugees*
 3. *Reject and resist all attempts to stoke Islamophobia in India using the Taliban as a pretext.*

Endorsed by:

Aawaaz-E-Niswaan, AIPWA, AISA, All India Dalit Mahila Adhikar Manch (AIDMAM), All India, Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development, Tanzeem e Insaaf, ANHAD, Bebaak Collective, Bharatiya Muslim Mahila Andolan, Campaign for Peace & Democracy (Manipur), Communalism Combat, Community For Human Development, FAOW, Federation of Indian Rationalist Associations (FIRA), Haryana Gyan Vigyan Samiti, HRF, INSAF, Khwaja Ahmed Abbas Memorial Trust, Khudai Khidmtgar, Muslim Women's Forum, NAPM, NFIW, North East Network, OBR India, PUCL, SabrangIndia, SAHELI, South Asia Solidarity Group, UAH and many others. □

Solidarity With Afghan Students

AISA STATEMENT

AISA- Karnataka in coordination with Afghan students studying in Bangalore held a dialogue to understand the situation and

problems that students are facing after the humanitarian crisis erupting in Afghanistan post the Taliban takeover of the country.

AISA's Lucknow unit too has had meetings with Afghan students, extended support and amplified their concerns.

The following are the concerns students expressed, and wished Government of India would address them with a sense of urgency. They also sought a hand of friendship and solidarity from students, academicians, civil society and the people of India at large, in this troubled hour.

1) The Taliban taken over of Afghanistan post exit of USA after two decades of imperialism has created a wave of humanitarian crisis. Students who have got admission in Indian Universities are stuck in Afghanistan. Similarly, Afghan students in India are worried about their families.

2) International bank transfer is frozen because of the political impasse, meaning Afghan students are unable to receive money from their families to sustain themselves in India. Afghan students are facing

deep financial difficulties and wish that the Government of India extend fellowship to all students who wish to study in India and who are residing in India.

3) Many Afghan students are facing visa issues as their students visas are about to expire as they near their graduation from India Universities. They want the Indian government to extend their education visas so that they can pursue their higher education and that Employment Visas be issued to students who have found jobs or seeking jobs, so as to support themselves financially.

5) Students want Single Window System for applying for fellowships, scholarships, visa issues and any other issue Afghan students are facing.

6) Afghan students are facing issues with landlords as many are

asking them to vacate their houses, hostels, PGs, etc., and students are distressed about this. On the other hand, landlords are also extorting more rent or deposits to allow them to stay in their houses.

7) Students wish Indian govt to arrange special flights for Aghan students who have Indian visa and who want to come to India to study considering the political uncertainty in Afghanistan.

Afghan students are worried about their family members safety and security back home due to the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan after two decades of US imperialism and the consequent political impasse.

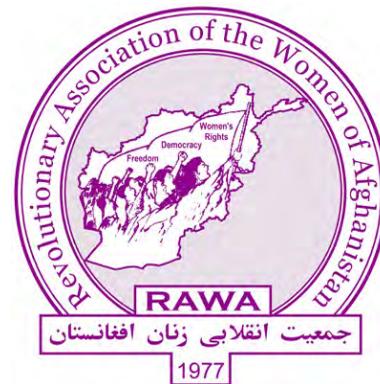
AISA is committed to standing by all Afghan students in India, every step of the way, in this time of hardship and anxiety. □

RAWA Responds to the Taliban Takeover

(Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan - RAWA - is one of the oldest Afghan feminist organisations, which has consistently resisted US occupation as well as feudal and fanatic forces in Afghan society including the Taliban. We share excerpts from a recent interview conducted by Sonali Kolhatkar of the US-based Afghan Women's Mission with a representative of RAWA.)

Sonali Kolhatkar: For years RAWA spoke out against the U.S. occupation and now that it has ended, the Taliban are back. Could President Biden have withdrawn U.S. forces in a manner that would have left Afghanistan in a safer situation than currently? Could he have done more to ensure the Taliban were not so quickly able to take over?

RAWA: In the past 20 years, one of our demands was an end to the US/NATO occupation and even better if they take their Islamic fundamentalists and technocrats with them and let our people decide their own fate. This occupation only resulted in bloodshed, destruction



and chaos. They turned our country into the most corrupt, insecure, drug-mafia and dangerous place especially for women.

From the very beginning we could predict such an outcome. On the first days of the US occupation

of Afghanistan, RAWA declared on October 11, 2001:

“The continuation of US attacks and the increase in the number of innocent civilian victims not only gives an excuse to the Taliban, but also will cause the empowerment of the fundamentalist forces in the region and even in the world.”

The main reason we were against this occupation was their backing of terrorism under the nice banner of “war on terror”. From the very first days when the Northern Alliance looters and killers were installed back into power in 2002 to the last so-called peace talks, deals and agreements in Doha and release of 5000 terrorists from

prisons in 2020/21, it was very obvious that even the withdrawal won't have a good end.

The Pentagon proves that none of the theory invasion or meddling ended up in safe condition. All imperialist powers invade countries for their own strategic, political and financial interests but through lies and the powerful corporate media try to hide their real motive and agenda.

It is a joke to say values like "women's rights", "democracy", "nation-building" etc. were part of the US/NATO aims in Afghanistan! US was in Afghanistan to turn region into instability and terrorism to encircling the rival powers especially China and Russia and undermining their economies via regional wars. But of course the US government did not want such a disastrous, disgraceful and embarrassing exit that left behind such a commotion that they were forced to send troops again in 48 hours to control the airport and safely evacuate its diplomats and staff.

We believe the US left Afghanistan out of its own weaknesses not defeated by its creatures (Taliban). There are two significant reasons for this withdrawal.

The main reason is the multifold internal crisis in the US. The signs of the US system decline was seen in the weak response to Covid-19 pandemic, attack on Capitol Hill and the great protests of the US public in the past few years. The policy-makers were forced to withdraw troops to focus on internal burning issues.

The second reason is that the Afghan war was an exceptionally expensive war whose cost has gone into trillions, all taken from taxpayer money. This put such a heavy dent on the US financially that it had to leave Afghanistan.

The war-mongering policies prove that their aim was never to make

Afghanistan safer, let alone now when they are leaving. Furthermore, they also knew that the withdrawal would be chaotic yet they still went ahead and did it. Now Afghanistan is in the limelight again due to the Taliban being in power but this has been the situation for the past 20 years and everyday hundreds of our people were killed and our country destroyed, it just was rarely reported in the media.

Sonali Kolhatkar: The Taliban leadership are saying they will respect women's rights as long as it complies with Islamic law. Some Western media are painting this in a positive light. Didn't the Taliban say the same thing 20 years ago? Do you think there is any change in their attitude toward human rights and women's rights?

RAWA: The corporate media is only trying to put salt on our devastated people's wounds; they should be ashamed of themselves the way they try to sugarcoat brutal Taliban. The Taliban spokesperson declared that there is no difference between their ideology of 1996 and today. And what they say about women's rights is the exact phrases used during their previous dark rule: implementing Sharia law.

These days the Taliban have declared an amnesty in all parts of Afghanistan and their slogan is 'what the joy of amnesty can bring, revenge cannot'. But in reality they are killing people every day. Just yesterday a boy was shot dead in Nangarhar only for carrying the tricolored Afghan national flag instead of the white flag of Taliban. They executed four former army officials in Kandahar, arrested a young Afghan poet Mehran Popal in Herat province for writing anti-Taliban posts on Facebook and his whereabouts is unknown to his family. These are just a few examples of their violent actions despite the "nice" and polished words of their

spokespersons.

But we believe their claims may be one of the dramas being played by the Taliban and they are just trying to buy more time till they can organize themselves. Things happened so fast and they are trying to build-up their government structure, create their intelligence and make the Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice, which is responsible for controlling the little details of people's daily lives like the length of the beard, the dress code and having a Mahram (male companion, only father, brother or husband) for a woman. Taliban claim that we are not against women's rights but then it should be within the framework Islamic/Sharia laws.

Islamic/Sharia law is vague and construed in different ways by Islamic regimes to benefit their own political agendas and rules. Furthermore, the Taliban would also like the West to acknowledge them and take them seriously, and all these claims are part of painting a whitewashed image for themselves. Maybe after a few months they would say that we will hold elections since we believe in justice and democracy! These pretences will never change their true nature, and will still be Islamic fundamentalists: misogynist, inhuman, barbaric, reactionary, anti-democracy and anti-progressive. In a word, the Taliban mentality has not changed and will never change!

Sonali Kolhatkar: Why did the Afghan National Army and the U.S. backed Afghan government fall apart so quickly?

RAWA: Some major reasons out of many are:

1) Everything was done according to a deal to handover Afghanistan to Taliban. The US govt. negotiating with Pakistan and other regional players had agreement to form a govt. mainly composed of Taliban. So the soldiers were not ready to be

killed in a war that they knew there was no benefit of the Afghan people in it because finally it is set behind closed doors to bring Taliban to power. Zalmay Khalilzad is highly hated among Afghan people due to his treacherous role in bringing the Taliban back to power.

2) Most Afghans understand well that the war going on in Afghanistan is not the war of Afghans and for the benefit of the country, but waged by foreign powers for their own strategic interests and Afghans are just fuels of the war. Majority of the young people are joining the forces because of severe poverty and unemployment so they have no commitment and morals to fight. It is worth mentioning that the United States and the West have tried for 20 years to keep Afghanistan a consumer country and have hindered the growth of industry. This situation created a wave of unemployment and poverty, paving the way for the recruitments of the puppet government, the Taliban and growth of opium production.

3) Afghan forces were not so weak to defeat in the course of a week, but they were receiving orders from the presidential palace not to fight back

Taliban and should surrender. Most provinces were peacefully handed over to the Taliban.

4) The puppet regime of Hamid Karzai and Ashraf Ghani were calling Taliban “dissatisfied brothers” for years, and released many of their most ruthless commanders and leaders from prisons. Asking Afghan soldiers to fight a force that is not called “enemy” but “brother”, emboldened the Taliban and hit the morale of the Afghan armed forces.

5) The armed forces were unprecedentedly plagued by corruption. The large number of generals (mostly former brutal warlords of the Northern Alliance) sitting in Kabul grabbed millions of \$, they cut even from food and salary of soldiers fighting in the frontlines. “Ghost soldiers” was a phenomenon exposed by SIGAR. High-ranking officials were busy filling their own pockets; they channelled salary and ration of tens of thousands of non-existing soldiers into their own bank accounts.

6) Whenever forces were besieged by Taliban in the hard fight, their call for help was ignored by Kabul. In numerous cases tens of

soldiers were massacred by Taliban when they were deserted without ammunition and food for weeks. Therefore the rate of casualties among armed forces was very high. In the World Economic Forum (Davos 2019), Ashraf Ghani confessed that since 2014 over 45,000 Afghan security personnel have been killed, while in the same period only 72 personnel of US/NATO were killed.

7) Overall in society growing corruption, injustice, unemployment, insecurity, uncertainty, fraud, vast poverty, drug and smuggling, etc. provided a ground for reemergence of Taliban.

We have seen that no amount of oppression, tyranny and violence can stop resistance. Women will not be shackled anymore! Just the next morning after the Taliban entered the capital, a group of our young brave women painted graffiti on the walls of Kabul with the slogan: Down with Taliban! Our women are now politically conscious and no longer want to live under the Burqa, something they easily did 20 years ago. We will continue our struggles while finding smart ways to stay safe. □

A Global Collective of Muslim Women On Taliban Takeover

(Excerpt from a statement dated 20 August 2021)

As a collective of Muslim women including academics, scholars, activists, researchers, creatives and analysts from various parts of the globe, we have observed the advance of the Taliban forces throughout Afghanistan, and the simultaneous withdrawal of foreign occupiers, with both interest and concern. We welcome the end of the illegal invasion and occupation

of Afghanistan by foreign forces. We sincerely hope that all Afghans will have the opportunity to build and contribute to their communities, upholding a society governed by a democratic, just and credible leadership rooted in mutual respect for the human rights of all citizens.

Our intention in presenting this statement is to offer a counter-narrative to the triumphalist responses of some fellow Muslims who appear determined to excuse the Taliban’s past records of abuse and

the abrogation of the rights of women, children and minorities. The dismissal of the historical record is based, to a large extent, on the assertion that the organization has “matured” in recent years. We draw attention to this dangerous erasure of the lived experiences of women and minorities in Afghanistan and express caution at the absence of a public narrative for restorative justice.

Simultaneously, we reject the alarmist and Islamophobic narratives of media outlets that

reproduce tired tropes suggesting that Muslim women everywhere are oppressed and require 'saviours'. Nonetheless, given the Taliban's history in Afghanistan, we are deeply concerned that advances made in the arena of gender and sexual rights, particularly in relation to bodily integrity, autonomy, education and work, will be eroded by the new regime. The struggle against narratives that serve the interests of imperialism cannot be used to deflect attention from legitimate concerns about the oppression of women and minorities. Given that these concerns are based on the Taliban's historical track record, they cannot be denied,

dismissed or excluded from any future narrative of Taliban rule.

As Muslim women, we strongly oppose any notion that abuses such as forced marriage, denial of education and suppression of voice and agency are congruent with Islam; nor do we accept that they represent the Prophetic example. The historical record shows that they arise instead from patriarchal cultural and economic practices rooted in chauvinistic interpretations of religious texts.

It is our candid hope that any new legislative efforts will include a substantial number of women legal experts, and maintain universal

human rights principles based on equality and restorative justice for all who live in Afghanistan. We will continue to observe, closely, the unfolding situation in Afghanistan and to use our collective resources to demonstrate our support for and solidarity with our sisters and the minority communities of Afghanistan, including their rights to involvement in the drafting and framing of policies, laws and socio-political systems of governance. Should there be any attempts to suppress or oppress them, as a collective, we pledge that we will not stand idly by and allow their voices and their dreams to be silenced. □

Voices of Young Afghan Women

At the Afghan Solidarity demonstration organised in Delhi on August 23 (demonstrations were observed at Bangalore, Kolkata, Budge-Budge and Bishnupur in South 24 Parganas, Udaipur and Jaipur), several Afghan women students joined in. Holding a large Afghan flag and placards that said "Burqa is a cage" and "No to Taliban Rule", these women were eager to speak about their experiences. One young woman student recited a poem she had written in Farsi. Another young woman Sadaf addressed the Indian activists' gathering to say "Nobody chooses to be a refugee. We are being betrayed and we must do what we can to spread awareness and help them." One student Rukhsar Rahim spoke in Hindi and English, making a great impact on her audience with her clarity and courage. She said, "When the Taliban came to power in the 1990s, my mother had to give up her studies. Women have worked so hard in the past 20 years, and now all their work stands to be destroyed. In India we are asked why are you not



Members of Afghan diaspora in India joined Stand With The People of Afghanistan demonstration in New Delhi.

welcoming Taliban, you should be happy that Islam is victorious. What Taliban says is not Islam. We respect the hijab but where does Islam say women have to cover up from top to toe in burqa and be lashed if your ankle is visible? What kind of "Islam" is this? I challenge anyone to go over the Quran page by page and show me where it mandates this kind of bullying of women. Afghanistan already was an Islamic state, we have a Constitution, we do not need terrorists and thugs in power in the name of Islam. We

want an elected Government willing to respect human rights and women's rights. If Taliban is willing to do that then we will welcome then - but if not we do not accept Taliban rule. Taliban could capture power but they cannot capture people's support that easily. They will find that Afghan people are willing to fight. If there's democracy in Afghanistan we will waste no time in returning to work for our people, teach girls, help women. We will never stop fighting even if we die, we'll fight as long as we live." □

Hundred Years of CPC: Great Legacy, Grave Concerns

ARINDAM SEN

[In the year of the centenary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) we revisit the history of the CPC's birth and the inspiring legacy of the Chinese revolution. In the next instalment we will critically examine China and the CPC between the revolution and the present. In the previous issue of Liberation we had carried the statement issued by the CPIML Central Committee on the occasion of the CPC centenary.]



Mao proclaiming the foundation of PRC, flanked by Chou and other leaders, on 1 October 1949.

Part I

“A well-disciplined Party armed with the theory of Marxism-Leninism, using the method of self-criticism and linked with the masses of the people, an army under the leadership of such a Party; a united front of all revolutionary classes and all revolutionary groups under the leadership of such a Party -- these are the three main weapons with which we have defeated the enemy. They distinguish us from our predecessors. Relying on them, we have won basic victory. We have travelled a tortuous road. We have struggled against opportunist deviations in our Party, both Right and "Left". Whenever we made serious mistakes on these three matters, the revolution suffered setbacks. Taught by mistakes and setbacks, we have become wiser and handled our affairs better.”

*- On the People's Democratic Dictatorship,
In Commemoration of the Twenty-eighth Anniversary of the Communist Party of China
(Mao Zedong, June 30, 1949)*

Chinese Society Before the Revolution

In the more than two thousand years long feudal era, a self-sufficient natural economy predominated. The peasants produced for themselves not only agricultural products but most of

the handicraft articles they needed. Gradually, however, commodity production began to develop and penetration of foreign capital, particularly since the Opium War in 1840, accelerated the process. With the development of capitalism, sluggish and uneven though, China became a semi-feudal country. At

the same time, different imperialist powers worked hard to transform it into a semi-colonial country -- each with its own sphere of influence -- and, if possible, a colony. For this purpose they resorted to all kinds of military, political, economic and cultural means of oppression and exploitation. To take a few

examples, Japan occupied Taiwan and the Penghu Islands and “leased” the port of Lushun, Britain seized Hongkong and France “leased” Kwangchowwan. Moreover, they forced China to sign numerous unequal treaties by which they acquired the right to build land and naval bases and exercise consular jurisdiction in China. The imperialist powers monopolized China’s banking and finance by extending loans to the Chinese government and establishing banks in the country. Finally in September 1931 the large-scale invasion by Japan turned a big chunk of semi-colonial China into a Japanese colony. Thus China became a colonial, semi-colonial and semi-feudal country.

How should communists in a backward agrarian country like this go about accomplishing a socialist revolution? No ready-made answer to this question was available in the writings of Lenin and Stalin or resolutions of the Comintern. Chinese comrades had to chart out their own path by applying the universal principles of Marxism-Leninism in the concrete conditions of Chinese society. Mao Zedong wrote in December 1939:

“The contradiction between imperialism and the Chinese nation and the contradiction between feudalism and the great masses of the people are the basic contradictions in modern Chinese society. Of course, there are others, such as the contradiction between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat and the contradictions within the reactionary ruling classes themselves. But the contradiction between imperialism and the Chinese nation is the principal one.” (*The Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party*)

So what should be the basic course of revolution in China? The

short answer, according to Mao, was:

“Taken as a whole, the Chinese revolutionary movement led by the Communist Party embraces the two stages, i.e., the democratic and the socialist revolutions, which are two essentially different revolutionary processes, and the second process can be carried through only after the first has been completed. The democratic revolution is the necessary preparation for the socialist revolution, and the socialist revolution is the inevitable sequel to the democratic revolution. The ultimate aim for which all communists strive is to bring about a socialist and communist society.” (*ibid*)

Six years later, when with the victory in the war of national liberation the task of building a New Democratic China became an urgent one, Mao dwelt on the theme in some detail:

“It is foreign oppression and feudal oppression that cruelly fetter the development of the individual initiative of the Chinese people, hamper the growth of private capital and destroy the property of the people. It is the very task of the New Democracy we advocate to remove these fetters and stop this destruction, to guarantee that the people can freely develop their individuality within the framework of society and freely develop such private capitalist economy as will benefit and not ‘dominate the livelihood of the people’, and to protect all appropriate forms of private property.

... China’s national economy at the present stage should be composed of the state sector, the private sector and the co-operative sector. But the state here must certainly not be one ‘privately owned by the few’. ...

Some people fail to understand

why, so far from fearing capitalism, Communists should advocate its development in certain given conditions. Our answer is simple. The substitution of a certain degree of capitalist development for the oppression of foreign imperialism and domestic feudalism is not only an advance but an unavoidable process. It benefits the proletariat as well as the bourgeoisie, and the former perhaps more. It is not domestic capitalism but foreign imperialism and domestic feudalism which are superfluous in China today; indeed, we have too little of capitalism. ...” (*On Coalition Government*, April 1945)

From this skeletal introduction to the theory of new democratic revolution, let us now move over to a brief summary of the actual course of the revolution, and the attendant developments in political line.

Foundation of the CPC: the Immediate Backdrop

The Communist Party of China (CPC) was born, as the legatee of the Chinese people’s centuries-long struggle for liberation from exploitation, oppression and bondage, at the confluence of (a) the new high tide in national liberation movement in the aftermath of World War I and (b) the deep integration of Marxism Leninism with the growing working class movement -- both currents being inspired by the October/November revolution in Russia.

Unlike India, China was then a semi-colony ruled by the Qing (now spelt as Ch’ing) dynasty. In 1911 a section of the Army, at the urging of the revolutionary societies of the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie, and with active support of workers and peasants, staged an uprising in Wuchang that rapidly spread to other provinces. By the end

of the year the rule of the Ching Dynasty crumbled, thus bringing to an end over 2,000 years of feudal monarchical rule. On January 1, 1912, the Provisional Government of the Republic of China was set up in Nanking, and Dr. Sun Yat-sen¹ was elected Provisional President. However, the new government failed to bring real benefits to the peasants and yielded to the pressure of imperialism and the feudal forces. State power actually fell into the hands of the Northern warlord Yuan Shih-kai and the semi-colonial and semi-feudal nature of Chinese society remained unchanged.

The next great mass upheaval took place in protest against the injustice meted out to countries like China by imperialist great powers in the so-called Peace Conference at Versailles (a suburb of Paris) in January 1919. On May 4, thousands of students staged a militant demonstration at Tienanmen Square in Beijing. Thus began the historic May 4th Movement which spread, despite ruthless suppression, to other cities and industrial, commercial and mining centres across China. In port city Shanghai, China's largest industrial and business centre, some 70000 workers staged the first explicitly anti-imperialist strike. Thanks to its rapid expansion and concentration in major industrial centres, ports and mining regions during and after World War I, and its organised collective militancy, the modern proletariat actually

[1] Dr. Sun was a revolutionary democrat, the founder leader of the Kuomintang (KMT) and a lifelong explorer trying out various ways of liberating his country from feudal-imperialist bondage. The quest ended with the Russian Revolution of 1917, which he welcomed wholeheartedly. Later he accepted -- and implemented in letter and spirit -- the communist proposal for a united struggle against the Japanese aggressors.

emerged as the vanguard in the anti-imperialist movement.

The May 4th movement also drew in almost every other social Strata including the national bourgeoisie (basically the small and medium nationalist businessmen and industrialists) who were happy to see an expanding market for their products at the cost of foreign products. The movement thus became so broad-based and powerful that the government was compelled to halt repression, release the arrested students and others, and sack the three ministers who betrayed the nation in post-war negotiations in Paris. The highly successful movement provided a great impetus to the struggle against imperialism and its domestic allies.

Meanwhile, a radical democratic cultural movement, targeted against feudal culture, antiquated values and irrational ideas as well as archaic language and writing style and in favour of a modern scientific mass culture, was spreading across the country. Led by eminent personalities like Lu Hsun, Li Ta-chao, Chen Tu-hsiu (all three were immensely inspired by the November revolution in Russia and embraced Marxism-Leninism) the radical cultural awakening provided one of the essential prerequisites for the emergence of a revolutionary Marxist movement and party in China.

In tandem with these objective development, small communist groups, barely connected with one another, sprang up in Shanghai, Beijing, Changsha, Wuhan, Jinan, Guangzhou (exactly as they did in India around almost the same time) and also in Japan and France in 1920-21. Trade unions, socialist youth leagues, communist study circles among students were also formed. The Shanghai group --

the most prominent among them -- published a *Manifesto of the Communist Party of China* and launched a monthly magazine, *Communist Party*. They brought out, and distributed on a vast scale, newspapers and periodicals like *Workers Voice* as well monographs like *Class Struggle*, and translations of classics like *The Communist Manifesto*. Thus developed the most essential condition for the foundation of a Communist Party - a rapidly expanding modern proletariat and integration of Marxism Leninism with an ascending working class movement.

On July 1 1921, 12 comrades elected by a total of just 57 members of these groups assembled clandestinely in Shanghai to hold the founding Congress of the party. Comrade Chen Duxiu, a senior leader from Shanghai, was elected secretary of the "Central Bureau". The young Mao Zedong² was appointed party secretary of his native province, Hunan.

[2] In 1917, at the age of twenty, he founded an association in Hunan for cultivation of what came to be known as "the new culture". After graduation in 1918 he worked in the Beijing University library, where he had the opportunity to make a thorough study of Marxism. Next year he came back to Hunan and joined the May 4th Movement, mobilizing the students and progressive intellectuals in the great battle. In 1920 he organised a Socialist Youth League and a Marxist Study Circle. While systematically studying Marxism, the members of these groups seriously took up the task of arming the industrial proletariat with the Marxist world outlook and organising them for the ensuing great battles. Later, as party incharge of Hunan, he paid utmost attention to combining the study of Marxism in the Chinese context with regular trade union work. To educate party and mass organisation members and others he started two monthly magazines -- "Self-study University" and "New Times", which became very popular even in distant areas.

The Formative Years (1921-24)

In January 1922, representatives of the CPC attended the First Conference of Representatives of Communist Parties and National Revolutionary Organisations of Far Eastern Countries organised by the Comintern in Moscow. They shared their experiences at, and learned a lot from, the conference and held their Second Party Congress in July the same year. While proclaiming the establishment of Communist society as the final goal, the Congress also declared an immediate or minimum program, best expressed in three war cries:

Down with imperialism!
Down with feudal warlords!
Build a democratic republic!

During the first three years the party built itself -- and this is something not quite well-known -- mainly among the working class, and that with considerable success. In January 1922, more than 30000 sailors in foreign shipping companies in Hong Kong (HK) struck work. Solidarity strikes in other sectors, followed by a successful general strike, ultimately forced the British authorities in HK to bite dust. They withdrew the order to shut down the sailors' union, freed the arrested workers and partially accepted the demand of wage raises. The nearly two months-long strike came to a victorious conclusion on 8 March. On May Day the same year, the First National Workers' Conference was successfully organised by communists in Canton.

The next two years witnessed a series of stubborn strikes and massive, militant protest marches throughout the country. These were frequently subjected to firing and

other forms of brutal repression by the provincial armies. The valiant struggles earned the working class -- and the Communist Party as its friend, philosopher and guide -- the wholehearted support and admiration of the entire nation, including democratic and patriotic sections of the KMT. In 1924, a CPC-KMT united front came into being.

The First Revolutionary Civil War Period (1924-27)

The All-China Federation of Trade Unions was founded in May 1925 under communist initiative, but TUs led by non-communists also joined it. At the end of the month a massive strike and protest march were organised in Shanghai. 12 Protesters were killed in firing by the British police; the workers, supported by students and others, responded with a strike that would last for 16 months. With the spread of the movement to HK, Canton, Quantung and other areas, and thanks to the CPC-KMT cooperation, a "Strikers' Congress" was set up in Quantung, which acted as a revolutionary local government. The general people boycotted the HK dollar and started making all transactions with paper notes issued by the revolutionary government.

In July 1926, the revolutionary government launched a war against the Northern warlords, better known as the Northern Expedition, under the slogan *Oppose Imperialism and Warlords*. The expedition made a very rapid progress, but on ground landlordism was not completely eradicated. The worst part was that Chen Duxiu, general secretary of the CPC, had been pursuing a rightist line of unprincipled compromise with

KMT. Taking advantage of such weaknesses, the ace conspirator Chiang Kai-shek, who had grabbed the leadership of KMT after the death of Dr. Sun in 1925 and was bidding his time with a cunning duplicity, launched a sudden attack in 1927 against communists and other revolutionaries on a vast scale. The left wing of the KMT tried its best to resist this, but in vain. The first united front was thus demolished with a bloodbath. The total membership of the party, which had grown to more than 60,000, fell to a little over 10,000.

The Second Revolutionary Civil War Period (1927-37)

The counter-revolutionary offensive forced the communists to fan out to the rural backyard, where they found a vast reservoir of revolutionary energy in the poor and landless peasantry. Later Mao would remark, in a lighter vein, that communists should be thankful to Chiang for pushing them from the cities to the countryside.

The fact, however, is that Mao himself had been doing pioneering work among the peasantry -- not just because he loved them but because he realised, from a proletarian class viewpoint, the pivotal role of the peasantry in the revolution of a semi-feudal agrarian society -- well before the 'push' from Chiang came. If you open Volume I of Mao's Selected Works, the first article you will come across is "Analysis of the Classes In Chinese Society". Written in March 1926, it begins with a very simple yet fundamental question of all revolutions:

"Who are our enemies? Who are our friends? This is a question of the first importance for the revolution. The basic reason why all previous revolutionary struggles

in China achieved so little was their failure to unite with real friends in order to attack real enemies. ... To distinguish real friends from real enemies, we must make a general analysis of the economic status of the various classes in Chinese society and of their respective attitudes towards the revolution.”

The author then goes on to assess the economic status and political leanings of the major classes in China in those days and arrives at the conclusion that all those in league with imperialism--the warlords, the bureaucrats, the comprador class³, the big landlord class and the reactionary section of the intelligentsia attached to them are our enemies; the industrial proletariat is the leading force of the revolution; the entire semi-proletariat and petty bourgeoisie (including the small and landless peasants) are our closest friends; and among the vacillating middle bourgeoisie, the right-wing may become our enemy and the left-wing may become our friend.

Mao vastly expanded these ideas on the basis of intensive work among the peasantry in the celebrated “*Hunan Report*”⁴, which

[3] A comprador, in the original sense of the word, was the Chinese manager or the senior Chinese employee in a foreign commercial establishment. The compradors served foreign economic interests and had close connection with imperialism and foreign capital. Gradually, some of these managers started their own enterprises too, while keeping intact their relations with the foreign capitalists.

[4] Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan, March 1927. This article was written as a reply to the vehement -- often hateful -- criticisms both inside and outside the party then being levelled at the peasants' revolutionary struggle. Comrade Mao spent thirty-two days in Hunan Province making an investigation and wrote this report. The Right opportunists in the Party, headed by General Secretary Chen Tu-hsiu, refused to accept Mao's views and stuck to their own wrong ideas. To appease the KMT they

for the first time highlighted, *inter alia*, a slogan coming up from the ground and being fully implemented in Hunan: “Down With the Local Tyrants and Evil Gentry! All Power to The Peasant Associations!”

But let us get back to the sequence of events that we were narrating.

Chiang's bloody offensive did not go unanswered. Launched under the leadership of Zhou Enlai, the Nanchang Uprising of 1927 fired the opening shot for armed resistance against the KMT reactionaries and armed agrarian revolution. The Autumn-Harvest Uprising in the Hunan-Jiangxi border area, led by comrade Mao, brought into being the First Division of the Chinese Workers' and Peasants' Revolutionary Army and the first rural revolutionary base area⁵ in the Jinggang Mountains. Before long, the insurgents led by Comrade Zhu De also arrived there. Several other base areas as well as Red Army divisions emerged. The Red Army and the revolutionary masses successfully resisted a series of “encirclement and suppression” campaigns launched by the KMT troops. Armed agrarian revolution thus became the mainstay of the new democratic revolution in China and the path of encircling the cities from the rural areas and seizing political power by armed force was opened up.

chose not to support the surging peasant movement, thus deserting the peasantry, the chief ally in the revolution, and left the working class and the Communist Party isolated. It was mainly because it was able to exploit this weakness within the Communist Party that the Chiang and his right-wing clique dared to betray the revolution and launch attacks on the communists and the people in the summer of 1927.

[5] Liberated zones where peasants overthrew the landlords, shared out the land, established workers' and peasants' governments and formed people's militias.

But “left” adventurist deviations on the part of a section of leadership resulted in a major setback and forced the First Front Army led by Mao to embark on the 25,000-li (12,500 KM) “Long March” in October 1934 -- across snow-capped mountains, hot deserts, and other extremely difficult terrain -- to join forces with other units of the Red Army in northern Shaanxi. In the base areas in south China, from where the main forces of the Red Army had withdrawn, guerilla warfare was carried on under extremely difficult conditions. In these struggles and in course of the Long March, the Red Army of 300,000 men was reduced to about 30,000 and the number of party members came down from nearly 300,000 to about 40,000.

Despite the heavy losses, the fire of revolution raged on. During the Long March, an extended Polit Bureau meeting of January 1935 at Zunyi charted a correct course of advance, which led the *Long March to a successful conclusion*. But there was a longer-term and deeper significance of this meeting. After fourteen years of painstaking inner-party ideological struggle, the leading position of Mao Zedong was firmly established in the Red Army and the party, thus bringing to an end a chapter of Chinese revolution that was marked by a cruel contrast between impressive advances achieved through arduous struggles and disastrous setbacks caused by both right and ‘left’ deviations.

By this time, Japan had severely intensified its war of aggression, leading to a new upsurge in the popular patriotic movement throughout the country. In this context, the party called for an end to the civil war and a vigorous united resistance against Japan with a CPC-KMT united national government. As on earlier

occasions, it backed up the call with massive struggles like the great students' agitation of December 9, 1936.

"At the present time, the basic task of [the united national] government should be to oppose the annexation of China by Japanese imperialism. It will have a broader representation so that it may include those who are interested only in the national revolution and not in the agrarian revolution, and even, if they so desire, those who may oppose Japanese imperialism and its running dogs, though they are not opposed to the European and U.S. imperialists because of their close ties with the latter."

- Mao Zedong, On Tactics Against Japanese Imperialism (December 27, 1935).

The call evoked spirited response from all democratic and patriotic forces, including those in the KMT. Chiang, on the contrary, became still more active in his military preparations for the suppression of the Communists and massacred young anti-Japanese activists in Xi'an. But patriotic army officials -- including some in the top brass -- were in favour of united resistance. When, on Dec. 12, 1936, Chiang visited the headquarters of Chang Hsueh-liang and Yang Hu-cheng to plan a new anticommunist campaign, they took joint action and arrested Chiang. This was the famous Xi'an Incident. Chang and Yang demanded cessation of the civil war between the ruling nationalists and communists, the establishment of a national united front to oppose the Japanese, and the reorganization

of the nationalist government on that basis. Responding to the rebels' requests, the Chinese communists, represented by Zhou Enlai, took part in their negotiations with Chiang. After Chiang accepted the proposals, he was set free to return to Nanzing. The CPC's role in securing this peaceful settlement and conditional release of Chiang firmly established its credentials as the only party which really placed the interests of the nation above its own and called for unity with a treacherous man whose hands were red with the blood of thousands of its beloved comrades. As Mao noted in the article cited in the box, "...the Anti-Japanese National United Front proposed by the Communist Party of China became the openly advocated policy of all patriotic people. The Chiang Kai-shek government with its traitorous policy became very isolated."

The CPC therefore hoped that at this juncture Chiang could be pressured into accepting the communist proposal, the more so because, thanks to his close ties with Anglo-American imperialist interests, he might change his attitude to Japan at his boss's biddings. Accordingly, both the Red Army and the CPC Central Committee separately sent direct appeals to the KMT Government to form a bi-partisan united front against Japan. In the given political atmosphere, Chiang had no way out but to reluctantly accept the proposal even as he waited for an opportune moment to strike back again. The CPC were well aware of this possibility -- rather certainty -- but that did not deter it from going ahead for unity with its shrewd and revengeful arch-enemy in the struggle against the foreign aggressor.

Period of United Resistance against Japan (1937-45)

Despite the agreement, the KMT ruling clique continued to oppose the Communist Party and remained passive in resisting Japan. As a result, the government forces suffered defeat after defeat in battles with the Japanese invaders. By contrast, the CPC persevered in the policy of maintaining its independence and initiative within the united front, closely relied on the masses, penetrated deep behind enemy lines to mobilize the people, peasants in particular, to launch guerilla warfare, and set up a number of anti-Japanese base areas, where democratic governments, with representatives from all sections of people, were set up. Diverse forms of anti-Japanese struggle were unfolded on a broad scale in areas occupied by Japan or controlled by the KMT. The Red Army, the People's Militia and the base areas were widely recognised as the mainstay in the war of resistance. The city of Yan'an, headquarters of the CPC Central Committee, became the principal command centre of the anti-Japanese war and the entire populace held it in high esteem.

All along, the party sincerely tried to maintain the united front. It acted with restraint even against the die-hards who insisted on opposing the communists and appeasing the Japanese aggressors. As a result, the party made remarkable progress in developing its own mass organisations and united front work even in the KMT-controlled areas.

On 8 August 1945, the Soviet Union declared war on Japan and moved swiftly to attack and destroy the main bases of the Japanese army. The Chinese Red Army and the people of China joined forces

and on 14 August Japan declared unconditional surrender.

Even as the anti-Japanese war was going on, the party conducted a rectification movement, a very successful movement of Marxist education, beginning in 1942. It was on this basis that the *Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party* was adopted by the Central Committee in 1945 and soon afterwards the party's Seventh National Congress was convened. Summing up the rich experience since its inception, the party laid down the correct line, principles and policies for building a new-democratic China.

Third Revolutionary Civil War Period (1946-49)

On the eve of the successful conclusion of the war of resistance against Japan, the CPC put before the nation the call for a broad-based national government based on the principle of "peace, democracy and unity". To quote Mao from *On Coalition Government* (April 24, 1945):

"... the moment is near when the Japanese aggressors will be defeated by the Chinese people in co-ordination with the allied countries. But China remains disunited and is still confronted with a grave crisis. In these circumstances, what ought we to do? Beyond all doubt, the urgent need is to unite representatives of all political parties and groups and of people without any party affiliation and establish a provisional democratic coalition government for the purpose of instituting democratic reforms, surmounting the present crisis, mobilizing and unifying all the anti-Japanese forces in the country to fight, in effective co-ordination with the allied countries, for the defeat of the Japanese aggressors, and thus enabling the Chinese people to

liberate themselves from the latter's clutches. After that it will be necessary to convene a national assembly on a broad democratic basis and set up a formally constituted democratic government, which will also be in the nature of a coalition and will have a still wider representation of people from all parties and groups or without any party affiliation, and which will lead the liberated people of the whole country in building an independent, free, democratic, united, prosperous and powerful new China."

This call was warmly received by the whole people and all democratic parties, but the Chiang government, with the help of US imperialism, launched an all-out civil war against the communists. With the active support of the people in the liberated areas as well as in the KMT areas, with the powerful backing of the students', workers' and peasants' movements, and thanks to the co-operation of the democratic parties and non-party democrats, the CPC led the People's Liberation Army in fighting the more than three-year long war of liberation. Nearly 8,000,000 counter revolutionary troops were wiped out; the PLA and the revolutionary people also had to sacrifice many precious lives. Ultimately the Chiang government fell under a siege laid by the whole people under the leadership of the communist party. Just on the eve of the 28th anniversary of the Party, Mao succinctly summed up the new task at hand -- building *the state system of New Democracy or People's Democracy* -- the people's democratic dictatorship:

"The combination of these two aspects, democracy for the people and dictatorship over the reactionaries, is the people's democratic dictatorship. ...

"The people's democratic dictatorship is based on the alliance of the working class, the peasantry

and the urban petty bourgeoisie, and mainly on the alliance of the workers and the peasants, because these two classes comprise 80 to 90 per cent of China's population. These two classes are the main force in overthrowing imperialism and the Kuomintang reactionaries. The transition from New Democracy to socialism also depends mainly upon their alliance. ...

"To sum up our experience and concentrate it into one point, it is the people's democratic dictatorship under the leadership of the working class (through the Communist Party) and based upon the alliance of workers and peasants. This dictatorship must unite as one with the international revolutionary forces. This is our formula, our principal experience, our main programme." (*On the People's Democratic Dictatorship*, June 30, 1949).

"The Chinese people have stood up", said Mao, inaugurating the First Plenary Session of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference⁶ on 21 September, 1949. On October 1, 1949 a grand ceremony was witnessed by 300,000 people in Beijing's Tiananmen Square, and Mao Zedong, as chairman of the Central People's Government, solemnly proclaimed the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC). "The heroes of the people who laid down their lives in the People's War of Liberation and the people's revolution shall live for ever in our memory!", he said at the end of his short speech.

[To be continued] □

[6] This session was attended by delegates from all the democratic parties and people's organizations of China, the People's Liberation Army, the various regions and nationalities of the country, the overseas Chinese and other patriotic democrats, thus representing the will of the people of the whole country and demonstrated their great unity and solidarity.

Freedom Struggle and Partition

What India Must Learn From These Experiences

The RSS and the entire Hindu-supremacist faction in India remained aloof from India's freedom struggle, instead choosing to collaborate with the colonial British rule's "Divide and Rule" mission by breaking the unity of the people on Hindu-Muslim lines.

That Divide and Rule policy resulted in the bloody partition and the creation of India and Pakistan. Bangladesh broke from Pakistan later.

Now the Modi regime – implementing an RSS agenda – has announced that 14 August (Pakistan Independence Day) will be observed in India as "Partition Horrors Remembrance Day". This is a move intended to perpetuate the divisive tragedy of partition inside India and between India and Pakistan.

Why does the Modi regime wish to reduce 74 years of India's freedom to the blood-soaked chapter of Partition (in which on both sides of the border, Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs participated in mass killings and rapes)? How is it seeking to rewrite the history India's freedom struggle, inserting the RSS and Hindu-supremacists into the story where they never had a part?

RSS' is a Hindu-supremacist ideology and project, which dreams of turning India into a nation free of Opposition politics, where the RSS rules in the name of Hindus, and non-Hindus have to live as second-class citizens or as non-citizens. This vision of India goes against the entire spirit of the freedom struggle. Indians of all communities fought and sacrificed equally for freedom, and so all communities have an equal claim over India.

Is Indian Nationalism distinct from the European model of nationalism because it is "cultural" rather than "economic"?

This self-serving claim by RSS leaders could not be more false.

The nation state emerged in Europe as an "imagined" identity with the emergence of capitalism to fulfil capitalism's historical needs – for creating a unified home market for capitalism, and as a binding force for new form of governance by replacing the 'loyalty' to a monarch by 'loyalty' to a 'nation-state'. Language, religion were among the factors invoked as bases for nationalism. So the economic and political aspirations



Rebel Politik

of emergent capitalism constituted the essence of nationalism in this first phase in the 16th-18th centuries.

In the late 19th and early 20th century, a new phase of nationalism emerged: as a battle cry that united diverse people in colonised countries for liberation from the colonial subjugation of first generation of capitalist nations. So, anti-imperialism and the quest for sovereignty are the essence of nationalism in colonised countries this phase. Indian nationalism was not based on a unifying sense of shared religious beliefs, but a shared purpose of fighting the colonial oppressor.

Indian nationalism: Born Fighting Company Raj, Not Mughal Raj

India's first war of independence in 1857 against Company Raj (the rule of the British East India Company) marks the first expressions of anti-colonial nationalism and a sense of belonging to one country. Following close on the heels of the great santhal hool led by Sido and Kanhu, the 'peasants in uniform' rose above religious narrow-mindedness and challenged the British Raj as Indians, as 'Hindustanis' in the sense of being legitimate owners of Hindostan: "Ham hain iske malik, Hindostan hamara" (We are its owner, Hindustan is ours)— in the words of the 1857 Anthem penned by Azimullah Khan. 1857 – with its diverse

set of fighters hailing not only from princely feudal backgrounds, but also from the oppressed castes and women, thus announced the birth of popular, militant anti-imperialism some thirty years ahead of the birth of the Indian National Congress.

Prior to 1857 there had been a host of peasant and tribal uprisings against British rule. 1857 was the first such uprising that began to speak the language of belonging to one country – Hindustan – and defending it from the “firangi” (foreigner) who came to plunder it.

The British were frustrated at the firm unity among diverse communities displayed in the 1857 uprising: a senior British officer Thomas Lowe observed: “the cow-killer and the cow-worshipper, the pig-hater and the pig-eater, the cries of Allah is God and Mohammad his prophet and the mumblers of the mysteries of Brahma, they are all joined together in the cause.”

The command of the revolutionary army was in the hands of Bakht Khan, Sirdhari Lal, Ghaus Mohammed and Heera Singh – Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs all together. The artillery commander in Rani Lakshmi Bai’s army was Ghulam Ghaus Khan, and her infantry commander, Khuda Bakhsh. Her personal security officer who fought and died alongside her was Mundar – a Muslim woman.

There are a number of examples of Hindu-Muslim unity and sacrifice from 1857. After the brutal suppression of the uprising, the British formulated their “Divide and Rule” policy, which was especially venomous against the Muslim community.

Battle Between Rulers – Or Religions?

The RSS narrative claims that Mughal rule was “foreign” to India and resented and resisted by Hindus. So Indian nationalism, they claim, was Hindu in character since primordial times and must remain so now. RSS ideologue Golwalkar was keen to supplant anti-colonial nationalism with a Hindu “nationalism” that was hateful towards Muslims. He had written: “Anti-Britishism was equated with patriotism and nationalism. This reactionary view has had disastrous effects upon the entire course of the freedom struggle, its leaders and the common people.” (Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts*)

And no wonder that this RSS narrative is as “Britishist” as it can get. It was James Mill who periodised Indian history into “Hindu Period, Muslim Period and British period”. When Yogi Adityanath, the CM of Uttar Pradesh says that “remembering Mughals is a symbol of slave mentality” he is actually echoing a colonial lie.

Even the historian RC Majumdar who follows Mill’s classification and shares a Hindu-nationalist ideology

with the RSS, admits that an idea of “India” or Bharat as a nation “had no application to actual politics till the sixties or the seventies of the nineteenth century.” So the “Hindu” rulers and soldiers were not champions of “India”, and Muslim rulers and soldiers were not “invaders” or “occupiers”.

The facts show us that battles of the Mughal period were battles between rulers not religions; between kings not communities.

Take a few examples.

- *At the Battle of Haldighati in 1576, Akbar’s forces were led by his commander-in-chief, Man Singh I of Amber – a Hindu. They clashed with Maharana Pratap’s army which was led by a Muslim named Hakim Khan Sur.*
- *What about Shivaji’s defeat of Afzal Khan? We hear the story that Shivaji was going to meet Khan without any weapons, but his bodyguard persuaded him to carry the famous ‘iron claws’ which he used to kill Khan when the latter attacked. Who was the bodyguard? Rustam Zawan – a Muslim. After Shivaji killed Khan, Khan’s assistant, Krishnaji Bhaskar Kulkarni, a Hindu, tried to kill Shivaji to avenge his master’s death.*
- *The third example is that of Tipu Sultan the ruler of Mysore in the 1700s against the Maratha Army that the British had recruited against Tipu. After the ‘Hindu’ Maratha army ransacked the Sringeri monastery in Mysore at the behest of the British, Tipu Sultan offered his resources for the consecration of the Goddess, and sent gifts for the idol. A Hindu army destroyed a temple, and a Muslim ruler sent money and resources to rebuild it.*

Indian nationalism was born against colonial oppression and plunder – against Company Raj not Mughal Raj, and was defined by the unity of diverse religious and caste communities.

Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose’s assessment of Mughal rule is worth remembering for its accuracy: “*With the advent of the Mohammedans, a new synthesis was gradually worked out. Though they did not accept the religion of the Hindus, they made India their home and shared in the common social life of the people – their joys and their sorrows. Through mutual co-operation, a new art and a new culture was (sic) evolved....*”

Bhagat Singh vs Savarkar; Sacrifice Vs Surrender

The RSS ideologue Golwalkar in a chapter titled ‘Martyr, Great But Not Ideal’ in his book *Bunch Of Thoughts*, expressed contempt for the martyrs of India’s freedom struggle, calling them “failures”. He



Bhagat Singh

wrote that “such persons are not held up as ideals in our society. We have not looked upon their martyrdom as the highest point of greatness to which men should aspire. For, after all, they failed in achieving their ideal, and failure implies some fatal flaw in them.” And he advised Indians that the willingness to sacrifice one’s life for the cause of the country’s freedom was not in the “complete national interest.”

Nor was Golwalkar’s attitude towards freedom fighters and martyrs an aberration – it was the norm among the Hindu-supremacist ideologues. The attitude of Hindutva ideologue Savarkar in the face of a life sentence contrasted with that of the revolutionary Bhagat Singh in the face of a death sentence tells us a lot.

Savarkar, imprisoned in the Cellular Jail in the Andamans in 1911, first petitioned the British for early release within months of beginning his 50 year sentence. Then again in 1913 and several times till he was finally transferred to a mainland prison in 1921 before his final release in 1924. His petitions begged the British rulers to let him go in exchange for his loyalty. He promised not only to give up the fight for independence but to work to persuade “misled” young freedom fighters back towards loyalty to the British. While inside jail he also complained that he was not given “better food” and “special treatment” compared to “ordinary prisoners” even though he was categorised

as a “D” category prisoner. . He declared, “I for one cannot but be the staunchest advocate of constitutional progress and loyalty to the English government which is the foremost condition of that progress.”

In contrast, Bhagat Singh and his comrades on death row for “waging war” on the colonial state, declared boldly “Let us declare that the state of war does exist and shall exist so long as the Indian toiling masses and the natural resources are being exploited by a handful of parasites.” Moreover they demanded that as they were war prisoners, they must be treated as “war prisoners” and thus “we claim to be shot dead instead of to be hanged.” They concluded, “We request and hope that you will very kindly order the military department to send its detachment to perform our execution.”

Pro-British RSS Vs Ideologically Diverse Freedom Fighters

It is widely documented that RSS and Hindu Mahasabha did not participate in the freedom struggle and actively collaborated with the British. The RSS and BJP leaders now attempt to slyly “insert” RSS into the freedom struggle canvas.

One such attempt is a recent piece by RSS representative Rakesh Sinha. In an article published in Indian Express on August 15, 2021, he starts, strangely, with a warning against “the exaggerated glorification of the icons and incidents from the freedom struggle” during the celebrations of the 75th year of Indian independence. Who in fact are these icons and incidents whose “exaggerated glorification” Sinha resents? Knowing the Sangh’s record, including its past hatred for Gandhi and current hatred for Nehru, one can easily guess.

Rakesh Sinha argues that there were many differences among freedom fighters – about violent and non-violent tactics or the use of religious symbolism and imagery in the movement. That is a point many have made before him.

India’s March to Freedom: The Other Dimension, authored Dipankar Bhattacharya and published by the CPIML in July 1997, for instance, traces the lessw observes that “If the ordinary people, workers and peasants, figure in this story of how India won her freedom, they do so only as numbers. Faceless, nameless numbers. ...But they are never shown in action as men and women fighting their own battle with their own vision, dynamism and initiative and trying to become arbiters of their own collective destiny. The working people are thus not only denied their due in the present. They are also denied their role in the past.”

But Rakesh Sinha's claim that the RSS too was some kind of contrarian stream within the freedom movement, which has been hitherto neglected, is bogus. He writes that "forces like the Forward Bloc and the Indian National Army (INA), both formed by Subhas Chandra Bose, and the RSS, along with the revolutionaries, despite their differences in socio-economic perspectives, campaigned and acted to dethrone the British regime and made violence moral. At the same time, there was counter indoctrination of the masses against their ideology and programmes by the mainstream leadership." So Sinha tries to slip RSS past our eyes, quietly and without any citations, in the company of those forces like Bose' INA and Forward Bloc, and Bhagat Singh's HSRA, as proponents of "violence" as opposed to the mainstream ideology of "non-violence." This is thoroughly laughable, since the RSS' only displays of violence were against the Muslims, never against the British! Never did an RSS leader advocate dethroning the British; instead they dissed "anti-Britishism" and advocated anti-Muslim hate and violence instead. And Bose and Bhagat Singh were one with Gandhi and Nehru and Azad on one thing – the absolute, forthright, unequivocal rejection of Hindu-supremacist nationalism and communal politics.

Violence/Non-Violence is in fact a jaded and outdated way of classifying the diverse actors of the freedom struggle. Studying their specific ideological inspirations and their strategies makes more sense than this lazy labelling. And the fault line that matters is not whether they advocated "violence" or "non-violence" – it is whether or not they rejected communal, Hindu-supremacist "nationalism", and to what extent. There, Bose and Bhagat Singh stand alongside Gandhi and Nehru and Maulana Azad, uncompromisingly secular, with the likes of Tilak and Lajpat Rai flirting with Hindu supremacist ideologies without however giving up their determination to resist British rule. The RSS is quite distinct in its collaboration with the British and its never-flinching anti-Muslim hatred. That is why RSS is the proverbial stone in the lentils – it may hide but even if your eyes miss it, your teeth cannot let you swallow it unnoticed. It is quite indigestible.

The 1920s

In the 1921 Ahmedabad Session of Congress, Maulana Hasrat Mohani was the first to introduce a resolution for Purna Swaraj – complete independence. Gandhi and the Congress as a whole did not come to endorse this demand till 1929.

What other significant developments happened in the decade of the 1920s? The Communist Party of India

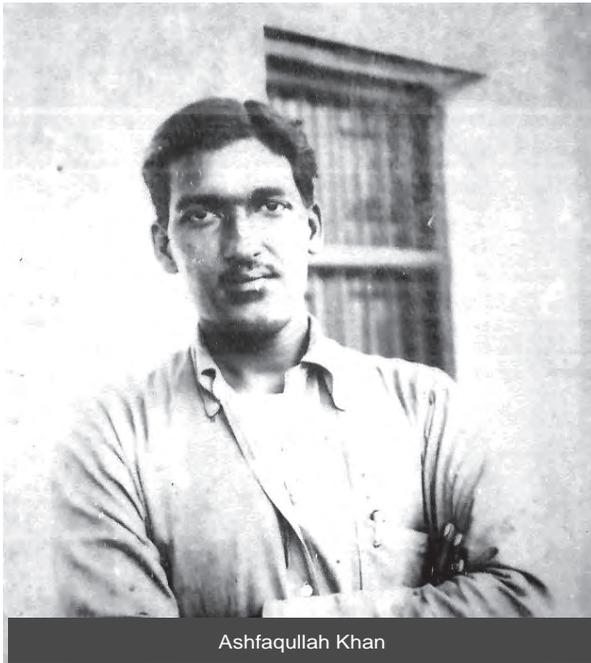
and the RSS both came into being in 1925.

The CPI came into being on the heels of a spurt of working class struggles and emergence of four early communist groups in 1922-23. The enormous galvanising impact of the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, and the immediate factor of Gandhi's controversial decision to call back the Non Cooperation movement in the wake of the Chauri Chaura incident, together formed the backdrop to the rise of the communist movement.

To quote Arindam Sen from his popular primer on the role of communists in the freedom struggle:

That the British rulers recognised communists as their most dangerous enemies was evident from a series of conspiracy cases - Peshawar , Kanpur , Meerut and others - hatched against them during 1920s and early 1930s. The most famous was the last named. Panicked at the high tide in workers' struggles, rapid spread of WPPs, (see below) the revival of mass anti- imperialist movement provoked by the Simon Commission, the revolutionary activities of Bhagat Singh and his comrades, and the coming closer of communists and a section of the nationalist leadership, the government struck back in 1929 with a chain of repressive measures. Most important among these were: the Meerut conspiracy case, the Public Safety Bill and Trade Disputes Bill, and the prosecution of and death sentences to Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru. In March 1929, 31 labour leaders (including 3 Englishmen) from Calcutta , Bombay , and other parts of the country were rounded up. They were brought to Meerut for the conspiracy case. The accused communists made very good use of the courtroom for the spread of their ideology, aims and objectives. The British move to drive a wedge between communists and nationalist leaders also proved futile. Nehru, Gandhi and many others visited the Meerut jail while the accused communists also sent messages to the satyagrahis in different jails supporting their just struggles for political status. From the dock communists vigorously exposed the bankruptcy and hypocrisy of British rule in India and their 'civilised' legal system. Not only did workers all over the world launch agitations against the trial and conviction, even men like Romain Rolland and Prof. Albert Einstein raised their voices in protest against the trial.

In contrast to those within Congress pushing for Purna Swaraj, and the communists and other revolutionaries pushing for liberation from colonial rule as well as socio-economic transformation, the RSS has nothing whatsoever to show in terms of participation in the freedom struggle.



Ashfaqullah Khan

Ashfaqullah's Warning

The Kakori Martyrs – Ramprasad Bismil, Ashfaqullah Khan, Rajender Lahiri and Roshan Singh – were deeply distressed while on death row by the attempts to spread communal poison by the “Shuddhi” movement run by Hindus to “purify” Muslims and reconvert them to Hinduism, and the “Tableegh” movement to propagate Islam in competition with Shuddhi. Three days prior to his hanging on December 19, 1927, Ashfaq's last letter was smuggled out of Faizabad prison. In that letter, he appealed to Hindus and Muslims, “Live harmoniously and be united. Otherwise, you will be responsible for the plight of the country and you will be held responsible for the slavery of India.” He penned a couplet: “Yeh jhagre aur bakhere metkar aa-pass mein mil jao/Abas tafreeq hai tum-me ye Hindu aur Musalman ki” – Leave these quarrels behind, close your ranks/Strange are your distinctions of Hindu and Muslim”.

Netaji Set Up Armed Resistance While Hindu Mahasabha Recruited for British Army

It is well known that Netaji Bose set up the Azad Hind Fauj to offer an armed challenge to the British colonial rule. While Bose can be criticised for allying with Japan and fascist Germany, it is undeniable that he was secular. In ‘Free India and Her Problems’, Bose wrote that it was the British who had set Hindus against Muslims, and that communal tension would go when the British went. He envisioned a state where “religious and

cultural freedom for individuals and group” should be guaranteed and no “state-religion” would be adopted. The trial of the Azad Hind Fauj leaders Shah Nawaz Khan, Prem Sahgal and Gurubaksh Singh Dhillon, Abdul Rashid, Shinghara Singh, Fateh Khan and Captain Malik Munawar Khan Awan itself proved to be a great inspiration for anti-colonial unity and a rebuff to communal politics.

In contrast, Savarkar as Hindu Mahasabha President recruited for the British Army during World War II:

“So far as India's defence is concerned, Hindudom must ally unhesitatingly, in a spirit of responsive co-operation, with the war effort of the Indian government in so far as it is consistent with the Hindu interests, by joining the Army, Navy and the Aerial forces in as large a number as possible and by securing an entry into all ordnance, ammunition and war craft factories... Hindu Mahasabhaitees must, therefore, rouse Hindus especially in the provinces of Bengal and Assam as effectively as possible to enter the military forces of all arms without losing a single minute.” (V.D. Savarkar, Samagra Savarkar Wangmaya: Hindu Rashtra Darshan, vol. 6, Maharashtra Prantik Hindusabha, Poona, 1963, p. 460.)

Another Hindu Mahasabha bigot and current Sangh hero Syama Prasad Mookerjee was the Finance Minister of Bengal and the second most senior minister in the government after Bengal's Prime Minister, Fazlul Haq from the Muslim League. Both the League and Mahasabha – fierce rivals playing communal politics – participated in the British war effort. When Congress elected representatives resigned in support of the Quit India movement, HM and ML refused to resign. Mookerjee on July 26, 1942, wrote to the British governor of Bengal, John Herbert, promised to act sternly against “Anybody who, during the war, plans to stir up mass feelings, resulting in internal disturbances or insecurity, must be resisted by any government that may function for the time being.”

RSS Denigrated The Indian Tricolour: The Same Day A Muslim Couple Designed The National Flag

On 14 August 1947, the RSS English organ Organiser denigrated the national tricolour in the following words: “The people who have come to power by the kick of fate may give in our hands the Tricolour but it will never be respected and owned by Hindus. The word three is in itself an evil, and a flag having three colours will certainly produce a very bad psychological effect and is injurious to a country.”

An extremely interesting story lies behind the



Surayya Tyabji and her husband Badruddin Tyabji

designing of the national tricolour on the same day, the eve of independence, by 28-year-old Surayya Tyabji and her husband Badruddin Tyabji.

Their daughter Laila Tyabji writes that a couple of months before independence, at Nehru's request, her father Badruddin Tyabji "set up a Flag Committee headed by Rajendra Prasad, and sent letters to all the art schools asking them to prepare designs. Hundreds came in, all quite ghastly. Most of them heavily influenced by the British national emblem, except that elephants and tigers, or deer and swans replaced the lion and unicorn on either side of the British crown. The crown itself was replaced by a lotus or kalash or something similar." As Nehru and everyone for desperate and time flew by, her "parents had this brainwave of the lions and chakra on top of the Ashoka column. (They both loved the sculpture and ethos of that period). So, my mother drew a graphic version and the printing press at the Viceregal Lodge (now Rashtrapati Niwas) made some impressions and everyone loved it. Of course, the four lions (Lion Capital of Ashoka) have been our emblem ever since."

It was then that Surayya and Badruddin together came up with the design for what is today India's flag; modifying Pingali Venkayya's design of the Congress tricolour flag, replacing the charkha with the same Ashoka chakra.

Laila writes, "My father watched that first flag – sewn under my mother's supervision by Edde Tailors & Drapers in Connaught Place – go up over Raisina Hill." This loving personal involvement and attention to detail is what makes the national tricolour special. In Laila's words, "Despite the scars of Partition, there was a unity and sharing. The struggle for freedom had bound very diverse people together. People connected then to a broader identity – Indianness rather than caste or community."

Who Broached Partition, and Who Resisted It?

Modi had declared 14 August as Partition Horrors Remembrance Day in a blatant attempt to blame Pakistan and Muslim for "partition horrors" and incite a hateful urge amongst Hindus to reenact those horrors on Muslims today. Evidence of these hateful preparations can be seen in the manner in which large rallies are being allowed in Haryana and Delhi unchecked, in which leaders of BJP and allied radical Hindu-supremacist outfits call for genocide of Muslims; and Hindu-supremacist online gangs "auction" Muslim women journalists online.

In the wake of partition and independence, the RSS and Hindu Mahasabha stoked hatred towards Gandhi, blaming him for partition – it is this hatred that radicalised Godse and led him to shoot Gandhi dead. Now under Modi, Gandhi is reduced to an icon for "Swacch" toilets, and it is Nehru who is hated and vilified for partition, falsely claiming that Patel was not in favour of partition. In fact, it was Patel who first agreed to Mountbatten's proposal of Partition.

Savarkar Mooted Two Nation Theory Before Jinnah Did

In his presidential address at the All India Hindu Mahasabha convention in Karnavati (Ahmedabad) in 1937, Savarkar declared, "India cannot be assumed today to be a unitarian and homogeneous nation, but on the contrary there are two nations in the main; the Hindus and the Moslems, in India." (Samagra Savarkar Vadmay- Volume 6, Maharashtra Prantik Hindusabha Publication, 1963-65, Page 296)

Jinnah mooted Pakistan and the Two-Nation Theory only in 1940.

Syama Prasad Mookerjee Campaigned For Partition

As Professor Shamsul Islam establishes, "In reality, Mookerjee supported Partition right from 1944, and was once even shouted down at a Calcutta rally

for advocating splitting Bengal. On May 2, 1947, Mookerjee even wrote secretly to Viceroy Louis Mountbatten asking for Bengal to be partitioned even if India remained united. Mookerjee would also vehemently oppose plans for a united, independent Bengal being pushed by the Prime Minister of Bengal, Hussain Suhrawardy, and the two major Congress leaders in Bengal, Sarat Chandra Bose (older brother of Subhash Chandra Bose) and Kiran Sankar Roy. Mookerjee preferred a communal Partition as per the two-nation theory instead.”

Muslims Against Partition

While the Hindu Mahasabha and Muslim League drove a wedge between Hindu and Muslim communities, there were many prominent progressive Muslims who passionately campaigned against the Partition proposal.

Foremost among them was Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, who tried in vain to persuade Patel not to accept the proposal. In *India Wins Freedom* Azad wrote, “I was also convinced that if the Constitution for free India was framed on this basis and worked honestly for some time, communal doubts and misgivings would soon disappear. The real problems of the country were economic, not communal. The differences related to classes, not to groups. Once the country became free, Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs would all realise the real nature of the problems that faced them and communal differences would be resolved. I found that Patel was so much in favour of partition that he was hardly prepared even to listen to any other point of view. For over two hours I argued with him. I pointed out that if we accepted partition, we could create a permanent problem for India. Partition would not solve the communal problem but would make it a permanent feature of the country.”

How prescient Maulana Azad was – the RSS, BJP and Modi regime now do indeed seek to make Partition a permanent wound. The foreboding expressed by Azad on July 17 1946 is today dangerously close to coming true: “Muslims would awaken overnight and discover that they have become aliens and foreigners, backward industrially, educationally and economically; they will be left to the mercies of what would become an unadulterated Hindu Raj.”

Allah Baksh: “Put Communalists In A Cage”

At the historic All India Independent (Azad) Muslims Conference which began on April 27 1940 in Delhi, newspapers recorded a gathering of not less than

75000 Muslims. Allah Baksh, a prominent leader from Sind, inspired the gathering to reject the Muslim League proposal of Partition. He told a reporter that day, “It is better to put the communalists in a cage so that they may not spread the hymn of hatred between the Hindus and the Muslims.”

Communalists “Only Say Nice Things To Our Rulers”

The great Shibli Nomani, founder of the Shibli College at Azamgarh, was a dedicated campaigner for a united India, exposing the politics of the Muslim League. In a poem titled ‘Muslim League’, he satirised the party thus:

*It is patronised by the government and popular
with the rich*

*It is the patron of the community - and subservient
to the rulers*

I asked the League to tell the rulers of our plight

About police high-handedness and court cases

About the sorrow-filled life of the peasants

After listening, League said -

It is my nature to say only nice things to the rulers.

The selfsame could well have been said of the Hindu Mahasabha and RSS!

Urdu Poetry Against Partition

A host of poems were written in Urdu by Muslims, appealing to Hindus and Muslims against Partition. Shamim Karhani’s ‘To those who want Pakistan’ asked, “Tell me what does ‘Pakistan’ (land of the holy) mean? Is this land, where we Muslims are, unholy?”

Karhani’s ‘Indian Warriors’ called for a war against communal hatred: “Let the fights over cow and loudspeaker go to hell”. In “hamara Hindostan” Karhani declared “If someone asks the traveler where I’m from; I will proudly say it is Hindostan.”

Several of these poems have been collected by Shamsul Islam in his book *Muslims Against Partition*.

In the 75th year of India’s independence, it is important to collect the writings and documents from both sides of the border, which expressed the pain and anguish and guilt of Partition, so that the people of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh can vow to learn from Partition never to allow communal violence and discrimination and war-mongering to sully the subcontinent again. □

Arrest Organisers and Participants of Delhi Mob That Called For Slaughter of Muslims

A week before Independence Day, on August 8, a mob of 5000 men led by BJP's former Delhi spokesperson Ashwini Upadhyay gathered at Parliament Street in India's national capital Delhi in what they called a "Wake India" event, and raised slogans declaring "When Muslims are slaughtered they will cry out the name of (Hindu god) Ram." A flyer was distributed by organisers of the gathering asking people to call them if they are interested in the "Annihilation of Islam" The gathering did not have permission from Delhi Police, and yet the police did not disperse, nor detain or arrest a single participant on that day. It is only following widespread protests and demands for action that the Delhi Police has arrested Upadhyay and four others – though it has only invoked relatively weak sections of law against them.

Organisers of the "Wake India" event Preet Singh and Ashwini Upadhyay had announced that they were demanding that the "foreign" legal structure of India be abolished, and a "1000 amendments" be made to the Indian Constitution so as to "lay the foundations of the Hindu Rashtra (Hindu Nation)". It is clear that by "foreign" laws, these men do not mean colonial-era and colonial-inspired laws like sedition, UAPA, AFSPA. They wish to desecrate the secular, democratic Constitution of India so as to make it compatible with a Hindu-supremacist nation.

It must be noted that Haryana BJP spokesperson Suraj Pal Amu led a mob at Pataudi on July 4 where the same slogan calling for slaughter of Muslims in the name of Ram was raised, and Amu himself said "we know how to cut throats when necessary".

Amu is still the BJP spokesperson and neither Haryana police or India's Home Ministry have taken any action against him. Clearly the event at Delhi was not a one-off event nor carried out by any "fringe group". It is India's Hindutva supremacist ruling party the BJP which is systematically organising and training violent mobs in preparation for genocidal violence against the country's Muslims.

A violent and dangerous outfit based in a temple at Dasna in Uttar Pradesh's Ghaziabad district in the National Capital Region, has had a hand in all the anti-Muslim violence in the national capital in the past year. The August 8 mob is no exception. Yati Narsinhanand Saraswati, 'Mahant' of the Shiv Shakti Dham Mandir in Dasna, Ghaziabad, has declared that his "followers were present in large numbers" at the event, and has justified the slogans calling for slaughter of Muslims in the name of Ram saying "The event was much needed and those raising slogans are justified because Hindus have a lot of pent up anger..." Neither the UP Government nor the Central Government has taken any notice of, let alone action against Narsinhanand who has openly declared that he runs "arms training" camps for Hindutva supremacists.

The Modi regime is singularly responsible for this openly violent demonstrations in and around India's national capital. In the course of the past year, a series of BJP, RSS and ABVP leaders and other Hindu supremacist men and women have indulged openly in anti-Muslim violence in Delhi and the National Capital Region, without any action by police and government. BJP leader Kapil Mishra incited anti-Muslim violence in Delhi by calling for Muslims

to be shot dead; Ram Bhakt Gopal actually fired a gun at students on the Jamia Millia university campus; ABVP leader Komal Sharma led a mob that conducted a murderous attack with iron rods on JNU students and teachers; Ragini Tiwari boasted of having led a violent mob that killed Muslims in North East Delhi. No action has been taken by police against Mishra, Sharma or Tiwari; Gopal was briefly arrested on weak charges, and then released on bail. While activist organisers of non-violent protests are being jailed under draconian laws equating protest with terrorism, perpetrators of anti-Muslim hate-speech and violence have enjoyed the impunity and even the patronage of the Government of India led by Modi and Shah.

But the people of India will not sit silent as the BJP and RSS try to turn our country into a "blood-bathed slaughterhouse". We appeal to people to hold protests on August 11-12 demanding that:

1. *Ashwini Upadhyay and Yati Narsinhanand, as well as those responsible for the hateful flyer, be arrested and charged under all the relevant laws*
2. *Delhi Police chief step down in light of the failure to prevent the August 8 gathering*
3. *All Delhi Police officers responsible for the failure to intervene to stop the August 8 gathering be identified and sacked*
4. *A court-monitored investigation be undertaken to expose and dismantle Hindu-supremacist networks in Delhi-NCR including Kapil Mishra's 'Hindu Ecosystem' and Yati Narasinhanand's 'Shiv Shakti Dham Mandir'.*

- CPIML Central Committee

Uttarakhand ASHA Workers On Strike

KAILSH PANDEY



The indefinite strike by ASHA workers (affiliated to AICCTU and CITU) in Uttarakhand has entered its third week as the government has taken no decision so far. The statewide strike has been going on since 2 August for monthly salary and other demands.

The ASHA Health Workers Union issued a statement saying that the negligent attitude shown by the state government towards the ASHA movement is shameful. ASHA union delegations have met the Chief Minister, Health Secretary, National Health Mission Director and DG Health, all of whom acknowledged that the ASHAs' demands are just, and gave assurances of resolution. But no action has been taken so far, raising a question mark

on the modus operandi of the government.

It should be noted that on 23 July 2021 ASHA workers had organized statewide Block level protests and submitted a memorandum to the Chief Minister but the government paid no heed. On 30 July protests were held at District HQs but still the government remained deaf and blind. Therefore ASHAs were forced to boycott work. Prior to this ASHAs have been consistently bringing their problems to the notice of the state government since its formation in 2017 but till date their demands have not been heard. Statewide work boycott and protests are being held from 2 August under the call given by Uttarakhand ASHA Health Workers Union affiliated to AICCTU and Uttarakhand

ASHA Swasthya Karyakatri Union affiliated to CITU.

In a statement the Union said, how much longer will ASHAs be oppressed in the name of service? The struggle for rights, safety and dignity in Uttarakhand has reached a do-or-die stage. The movement is now united across the State. ASHA workers will remain on the streets for their wages and dignity until the government announces monthly salary for ASHAs. ASHA workers have organized this historic work boycott across the entire State and now this fight will end only after the government ends its oppression of ASHAs.

The Union further said that ASHAs, who are deployed primarily for mother-infant safety and protection, are being made to work for Covid, pulse polio, vaccination,

family planning, dengue, malaria, ORS distribution and all kinds of surveys and campaigns. They do not get a moment to spare for their own families but the government does not pay them even a single rupee as monthly salary.

Demands raised by the ASHA workers include:

- *Government employee status and a minimum of Rs 21000 salary for ASHA workers.*
- *Till such time as monthly salary and government employee status is not implemented, monthly honorarium for ASHAs should be fixed as it is for Anganwadis and other scheme workers.*
- *Pension for all ASHAs upon retirement, and a lump sum package for ASHAs who have developed knee problems while doing duty on foot.*
- *Credit the Corona allowance announced by the former Chief Minister immediately into ASHAs' accounts and pay all ASHAs at the rate of Rs 10000 per month from the commencement of Corona duty.*
- *Rs 50 lakhs life insurance and 10 lakhs health insurance for ASHAs doing Covid work.*
- *Pay Rs 50 lakhs insurance and 4 lakhs ex gratia amount to dependents of ASHAs who died on Covid duty. Pay special monthly allowance to dependents of such deceased ASHAs, as is being done in Odisha.*
- *Make safety rules in case of accident, heart attack, or illness while on duty and provision for a minimum of Rs 10 lakhs compensation.*
- *Make timely payment of all due monthly amounts with arrears.*
- *Curb corruption and commission-mongering rampant at lower levels in payment of*



various dues to ASHAs.

- *Appoint specialist doctors without delay at all government hospitals.*
- *Ensure respectful and dignified behaviour with ASHAs in hospitals.*
- *ASHAs should not be used for Corona duty until separate Corona monthly allowance is provided.*

During the entire Corona period ASHAs were not provided with adequate safety kits and yet they put their lives at risk in order to do Corona duty. A large number of ASHAs and their families became infected with Covid. Uttarakhand ASHA Health Workers Union State President Kamla Kunjwal said in Haldwani that instead of making Anganwadis do the work of ASHAs, the government should pay ASHAs

honorarium like the Anganwadis.

On the 6th day of the strike the Union said that the government, rattled by the ASHAs' movement, is trying to break the unity of ASHAs and is using the BJP's pocket organization Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh for this purpose. Some ASHAs affiliated to BMS are being used to spread confusion among ASHA workers. ASHAs asked, "If the BMS was really concerned about ASHAs, why did they not resolve the ASHAs' issues with their double-engine government during the last four and a half years?"

ASHA workers affiliated to Delhi ASHA Kamgar Union have sent revolutionary wishes and solidarity to the Uttarakhand ASHA Health Workers Union. The Union has thanked Delhi ASHAs for their solidarity. □

Meghalaya on the Boil

The encounter killing of the former leader of HNLC, Chesterfield Thangkhiew, on 13th August has once again put Meghalaya on the boil. Family and acquaintances of Thangkhiew have alleged that his killing was a part of a pre-planned 'fake encounter'.

The HNLC, founded in the 1980s, claims to represent the Khasi and Jaintia population, especially against the 'dkhars' (outsiders). In recent years, the increasing corruption of the Chief Minister Conrad Sangma, and especially the mismanagement of the COVID19 crisis in the state has resulted in greater sympathy, if not support, for the militant

movements.

Meghalaya remained on the boil after Thangkhiew's funeral procession drew thousands of people and the petrol bombs were hurled at the CM's personal residence. Curfew was imposed on the state on Independence Day as violence threatened to escalate as government and police vehicles were torched by the protestors. Even guns were reportedly snatched from police personnel by protestors. Home Minister Lahkmen Rymbull submitted his resignation to CM Sangma in response to the violence.

A judicial probe into the killing of Chesterfield Thangkhiew has been

ordered though his supporters have refused to participate in an enquiry that they see as biased. Opposition leader Mukul Sangma also lambasted the CM for defending the police even before the enquiry was completed.

These developments once again show that custodial killings continue to be a grim reality in the North East. Coming on the heels of the Assam-Meghalaya border clash following Home Minister Amit Shah's visit, the latest developments also underline how the BJP-NDA presence in North East seats of power and at the Centre, are contributing to tensions in the region. □

Bihar All Party Delegation Meets Prime Minister on Caste-Based Census

Representatives of all parties met the Prime Minister on 23 August for talks on the need for a caste-based census. Leader of CPIML legislative party Mahboob Alam was the party representative in the talks and apprised the Prime Minister of his arguments in favour of a caste-based census.

Mahboob Alam said that no census has been conducted after 1931, whereas there have been huge changes in the structure of society in this period. A caste-based census is essential in order to make reservation and schemes related to the upliftment of dalits/OBCs meaningful and rational. Till

date there is 50% reservation for this section. But social scientists believe that this section comprises about 70% or even more of the population. Therefore the population dalit/OBC communities can be accurately fixed and reservation and government schemes made accordingly only if a caste census is done.

He further said that this caste census should be conducted among all religious communities. It is not as if the caste system does not exist in the Muslim community. About 1 crore Surjapuri population residing in Seemanchal is considered by the Bihar government to be

within the OBC ambit, but does not find place anywhere in the Central government list, causing this large section to be deprived of government schemes. Therefore it is right that caste census of all religious communities should be done without discrimination.

Mahboob Alam said that the Prime Minister heard the views of Bihar CM Nitish Kumar, leader of Opposition Tejashwi Yadav and leaders from all other parties with seriousness. We trust that after this meeting with the Prime Minister, positive steps will be taken in the direction of a caste-based census. □

Visit to Flood Affected Areas in Bihar

CPIML MLAs and prominent party leaders are visiting flood affected areas in Bihar. Politburo

member Dharendra Jha, MLA Satyadev Ram, Darbhanga District Secretary Baidyanath Yadav, farm

leader Jitendra Yadav, Pappu Paswan, Dhruv narayan Karn, Dinesh Mahto and other leaders



are visiting Mithilanchal, the worst affected by floods. Local teams are active in various other affected areas.

Dhirendra Jha said that the ravages of the floods and excessive rains on top of Corona and inflation have broken the backs of the people. The government and administration remain extremely insensitive and flood relief is not being given as per established protocol. The Bihar government and all parties should demand a special package from the Central government. A chakka jam protest will be organized in Darbhanga on 27 August for relief and compensation for flood affected poor and farmers.

Deputy leader of CPIML legislative party Satyadev Ram said that farmers and workers

have been relentlessly distressed by floods for the last 2 months. Farming and crops have been ruined. But government relief work is conspicuous by its absence. All these issues will be raised with the Bihar Chief Minister. He raised the demand of flood relief for rural agrarian workers, one-year waiver of electricity bills, price of cooking gas to be cut by half, and waiver of KCC loans and land rent for farmers.

Meanwhile, CPIML leaders visited Ismailpur, Gopalpur and Rangra Blocks in Bhagalpur where many dams including the Ring Dam have been washed away. The team reported that about 80% homes in these Blocks have become water-logged. Many houses have been destroyed, cattle swept away, fields submerged and crops

ruined. Even Bhagalpur city is flood-ravaged. Relief camps have been set up here and there but these are highly inadequate. The government's flood-preparation seems confined to announcements and does not extend to relief and aid for the affected people. As the water recedes in urban areas, problems of filth and disease have started but the Municipal Corporation and administration are doing nothing to tackle this. These problems will soon be rampant in rural areas also.

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Survey of ASHA Workers in Delhi

The Covid 19 pandemic has brought the importance of the ASHA workers in running and sustaining the public health care system to the forefront. Since the pandemic broke out ASHA workers have been working as frontline workers against the coronavirus outbreak performing important tasks like disease surveillance, reaching out to infected patients with medicine, conducting daily temperature checks in neighbourhoods and encouraging people to get vaccinated against the virus. But little is known about the fact that most of the work done by ASHAs goes unnoticed and is grossly underpaid. To begin with ASHA workers were meant to carry out tasks around healthcare for children and pregnant and young mothers. But during the course of the pandemic, they have been made to most of the grunt work in the public health system with little or no pay and zero recognition of the risks they have taken and putting their own lives in danger while carrying out their responsibilities. An overwhelming number of ASHA workers across the country didn't even get basic equipment like masks, face shields, gloves and sanitizers during the covid pandemic. On top of being perennially underpaid, receiving just Rs. 3000 as honorarium for their regular work, they received a pittance of Rs. 1000 as bonus for the extra work they performed during the pandemic. Despite this they have received scant recognition for the crucial role they performed as frontline workers.

To highlight the apathy with which they are regarded the Delhi ASHA Kamgaar Union affiliated to AICCTU conducted a sample

survey of over 200 ASHA workers across 10 dispensaries in Delhi. The findings of the survey paint a stark picture of the underpaid and exploitative working conditions that ASHA workers have to face day in and day out. It also shows that little respect that is paid to the labour of ASHA workers who work in undignified work conditions. The important findings of the survey are as follows:

- *Nearly all the respondent ASHA workers said they have no fixed working hours and are on call 24*7, which means they are perennially on standby mode to respond to any emergency. While they are on call throughout the day, they receive no allowance for this.*
- *86% of the respondents said they do not receive a fixed remuneration for the work they do. This is despite the fact that ASHA workers who were surveyed had an average work experience as ASHA of six and a half years. This clearly means that the problem of not receiving any fixed remuneration is a long standing one.*
- *Most ASHA workers are supposed to receive Rs. 3000 per month as honorarium. This is way lower than the legally mandated minimum wages for workers. The sheer cruelty of this becomes starker when seen along with the finding of the survey that 30% of the respondents said they are the only earning member in the family, which means their family survives on the Rs. 3000 they earn as honorarium.*
- *In addition to the pittance, they receive as pay 66% of ASHA workers surveyed said some amount is regularly deducted from their monthly pay on some pretext or the other.*

- *All ASHA workers said they performed duties other than child health and maternal health care during the pandemic like monitoring home isolation and conducting surveys during the pandemic.*
- *On an average each ASHA workers covered 550 households as part of their work during the covid pandemic performing a variety of tasks. For this work they received an average of Rs. 180 per ASHA worker pointing to the fact that remuneration paid to ASHA workers are completely arbitrary and irregular.*
- *90% of the respondents said there are no restrooms available for their use in the dispensaries.*
- *About 45% of ASHA workers said they regularly face misbehaviour and harassment from their superiors at their workplace.*
- *85% of respondents said they did not receive any gloves, 67% said did not receive any mask and 75% said they did not get any sanitiser to perform their work relating to the coronavirus.*
- *Family members of many ASHA workers were infected with the virus both in the first and the second wave but not barring a few exceptions ASHA workers got no help from the government for their treatment.*
- *While ASHA workers are supposed to be paid Rs. 1000 as covid allowance which in itself is absolutely shameful many do not get that regularly. In the survey it was found among the respondents that only 30% of ASHA workers received the covid allowance regularly.*

From the above findings a clear picture emerges of the underpaid and exploitative nature of the work that ASHA

workers do. Trade unions of ASHA workers and trade unions in general have been saying it for years that ASHA workers are one of the most underpaid and overexploited members of

the working class. Despite the invaluable service they have provided during the course of the pandemic only lip service has been paid to them without guaranteeing their rights and

dignity. The findings presented here are preliminary findings from the survey conducted by the Delhi ASHA Kamgaar Union, a detailed report will be released very soon. □

Water Crisis and Water Conflict: A New Threat

The recent protests in Iran highlight once again how global warming and capitalism induced climate change can increasingly result in an increasingly volatile global political order. Droughts have resulted in exacerbation of political conflicts in places as far flung as the western United States, Syria, and Central Asia among other places in recent times .

Iran Water Protests

Southern Iran is currently experiencing one of the worst droughts it has faced in nearly 50 years, affecting 700 villages and nearly 28 million people, i.e. one third of the entire population of Iran. This comes at a time when the Iranian economy has been severely crippled by the sanctions placed on it by the Trump regime, which the Biden administration has failed to revoke so far, resulting in a 60% drop in GDP from 2017. The corruption of the Iranian administration and the mismanagement of the COVID19 pandemic has meant that public trust in the government is rather low.

The province of Khuzestan, largely inhabited by an Arab ethnic minority in Iran, has been the hardest hit by the drought. However, water from the Karun River has been diverted towards the neighboring Isfahan province provoking allegations of ethnic bias. Kaveh Madani has pointed out that the Iranian government's

“symptom-based management paradigm”, which emphasizes on treating the symptoms of the water crisis, are also to blame for the problem . Protests spread from locally contained ones with specific demands to much wider protests with demands for systemic change. The heavy handed response from the Iranian government has resulted in multiple deaths.

Central Asia on the Verge of a Water War

Another region that has been prone to climate conflict has been Central Asia with a number of states emerging out of the break-up of the USSR in 1991. The Aral Sea, the fourth largest lake in the world, has largely dried up due to industrial and agricultural overexploitation. The Fergana Valley, drained by the Amu Darya and Syr Darya rivers, is one of the most prosperous areas of the region and has been the focus of nearly 70 border conflicts between Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan from 2011 to 2015.

The key problem as identified by researchers at PeaceLab is the conflicting needs of the upstream and downstream countries . The upstream countries like Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan use water for electricity generation through hydropower plants. This leads to lack of reliable availability of water for irrigation in the downstream countries. The problem was alleviated during the Soviet times by compensating the upstream

socialist republics with alternative sources of energy including coal and natural gas so that the reservoirs could be operated in favor of their downstream neighbors.

Clashes however broke out again in the Fergana valley between Kyrgyz and Tajik security forces in April leading to the death of over 50 civilians and military personnel from both sides. A UNDP-OSCE joint study of the situation linked climate change with the possibility of violent conflict in the region .

Climate Change and Global Security

Central Asia is not the only region in the world that is facing security threat from climate change and water crisis related to such change. The United Nations Secretary General António Guterres has pointed out that “Climate disruption is a crisis amplifier and multiplier”. The civil war in Syria was preceded by a severe drought between 2005 and 2011 that caused 75% farms to fail and created an economic crisis. Extreme droughts and flooding in Iraq can also be linked to the growth of ISIS. Much like in Central Asia, the construction of a dam on the Blue Nile by Ethiopia has resulted in increasing conflict between it and downstream Egypt, leading to an increasing defense expenditure in Egypt and the threat of war.

Balancing climate change and its economic fallout is becoming a global challenge as large sectors of global capitalism are linked

to unsustainable amounts of consumption and an anarchic form of production. Transitioning to a 'green' economy has not proven to be easy either as we see in the Appalachian areas of the United States where a decline in mining has devastated communities and emboldened support for 'White Nationalists', who have promised to bring mining back and undo anti-

climate change measures.

Climate change seems to have a multiplier effect on imperialism. While the wealthiest sections of the Global North often have the highest per-capita carbon emissions, the disproportionate effects of it are felt by the poorest, especially in the Global South. On the other hand such unequal distribution of essential resources

have emboldened the rise of right wing forces all over the world , primarily with the aim of controlling those limited resources.

The current conditions require left and progressive forces globally to come together towards building a future for the people as the link between climate change and capitalist overproduction become increasingly clear. □

Lebanon's Economic Woes: No Way Out?

Lebanon has been in the grip of a major economic crisis for more than a year. This has led to inflation of more than 700%, the currency losing 95% of its value, chronic shortages of essentials including food, medicine, fuel and even essential public services like healthcare. How did this happen? How did Lebanon go from being one of the most prosperous countries in West Asia, to one of with such immense crisis? The answer as usual lies with neoliberalism in particular and capitalism in general.

On 9 March 2020, Lebanon's government announced that it would not be paying \$1.2 billion in Eurobond payments, which meant that the country would face the first sovereign default in its history. This was clearly the result of an economic system that prioritized extracting rent-based income rather than the productive sector. Politicians used the financial sector to distribute the public resources among their cronies leading to an extreme concentration of wealth and income among the highest earning sections of the population. Large scale protests had started in the country in 2019 precisely demanding structural reforms to the economy that could prevent such a spectacular economic collapse.

The explosion at Beirut port on

4th August 2020 further hampered any scope of recovery. Caused by the spread of a fire that started at a fireworks warehouse that spread to the warehouse storing the ammonium nitrate deposit, a massive explosion killed over 200 people, causing 7000 injuries and leaving more than 300,000 people homeless. An investigation by *Human Rights Watch* showed that corruption and government apathy were primary reasons for the storage of such highly volatile substance in such dangerous conditions¹. The explosion happened on a day when owing to the COVID19 pandemic, the Beirut hospitals were already forced to cope with a patient load far beyond their capacity, when they were suddenly forced to bear with another crisis with thousands of serious injuries. The explosion also destroyed a huge chunk of Beirut port hampering nearly all economic activity.

Disaster capitalism soon swooped in to further exploit the Lebanese crisis with French President Emmanuel Macron leading the charge². He along with a host of international representatives

of finance capital promised aid but demanded 'reforms' in the economy. This meant that Lebanon was to open up its economy further to the same neoliberal forces that were responsible for the crisis in the first place. Zahra Bazzi and Nizar Hassan have pointed out that the IMF bailouts were more of a lifeline to Lebanon's corrupt elite that would further pressurize the poor with the burden of a crisis they had no role in generating³.

Most recently the dwindling fuel supply has led to long lines at the country's petrol pumps, which in turn have led to a major political unrest. The Prime Minister designate Saad Hariri was forced to resign due to the turmoil, as the western governments have conditioned any economic aid on 'reforms', which are deeply unpopular with the populace. It is important at this moment for global progressive forces step up and call for economic aid to the Lebanese people that is not preconditioned upon their further exploitation. This would go a long way to resolving the crisis and build an alternative vision of internationalism that challenges the exploitative nature of neoliberal globalization. □

[1] <https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/08/03/they-killed-us-inside/investigation-august-4-beirut-blast>

[2] <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2020/08/beirut-lebanon-disaster-capitalism-neoliberalism>

[3] <https://www.brettonwoodsproject.org/2020/10/an-imf-bailout-for-lebanon-can-make-things-worse/>

Comrade Ramkishan

To the great shock of the entire trade union movement in Delhi, the health workers movement and CPIML comrades all over India, Comrade Ramkishan, All India Vice President of AICCTU and General Secretary of All India Health Employees and Workers Confederation (AIHEWC), suddenly passed away on 17 August 2021 while on a morning walk near his home in Srinivas Puri, Delhi due to massive heart attack at the age of 72. Till the very last, he was his usual cheerful active self, helping comrades get vaccinated, and organising health workers to highlight how Covid-19 made their exploitation and insecurity worse. In the last few months, he made plans to build a successful Right To Health movement in India where health workers and people could come together, recognising health as a public good not a private relationship between profiteer/service provider and "consumer". Comrade Ramkishan was President of Deshbandhu College Students Union in Delhi during his college days. Comrade Santosh Roy of AICCTU recalled how he met Ramkishan in the early 1980s, and invited him to a Mazdoor Chetna Manch meeting which DTC workers had formed. He joined the CPIML in the 1980s itself, and remained a staunch party member and organiser till the last. Comrade Ramkishan began his trade union journey by organising employees of CGHS (Central Government Health Scheme), led several struggles as the General secretary of the union until his retirement. He used to give special emphasis on organising women employees and played a key role in developing women wing of AICGHS Employees Association. Simultaneously, he went on to organise employees of central and state government hospitals and health institutions and formed All India Health Employees and Workers Confederation involving mainstream unions of several central and state government hospitals across the country. He led several militant struggles of health employees and was even imprisoned several times. In addition to organising regular employees of the health sector, he also dedicated himself to organising contract and irregular health employees and played a key role in the formation of Contract Health Employees Federation, just before the first lockdown in March 2020.

Red Salute comrade Ramkishan!



Comrade Chandreshwar Prasad Rai

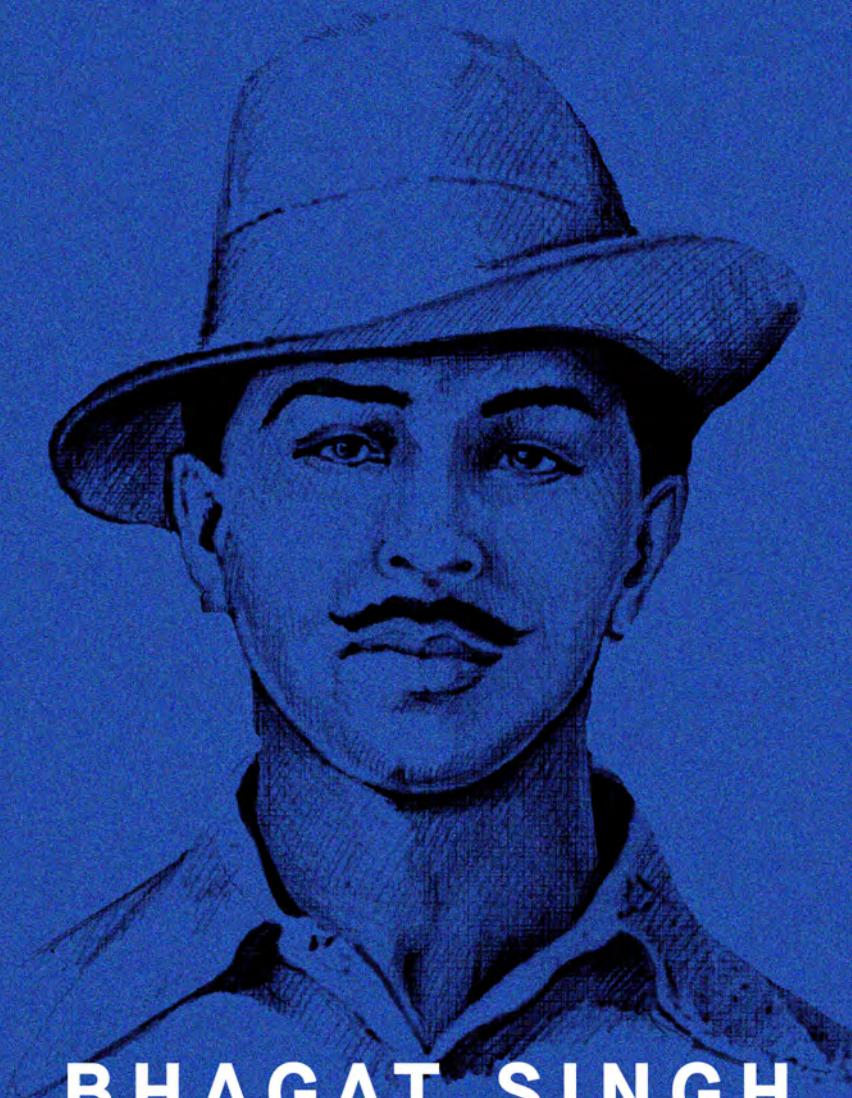
Veteran leader of State Govt employees' movement in Bihar and Jharkhand and CPIML Hazaribag District committee member Comrade Chandreshwar Prasad Rai, 76, passed away on 24 August. He suffered a sudden cardiac arrest. We mourn this unfortunate loss and pay our condolences to his bereaved family, friends and comrades.

Red Salute Comrade Chandreshwar Prasad Rai!



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