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Recent Developments in Bangladesh

Bangladesh, our neighbouring country on the north-eastern flank is now making news headlines not because of any feats in the socio-economic front but because of the spectre of violence that looms large. Reports of bomb-blasts and violent attacks on the Opposition including secular forces and religious minority community have been daily on the increase. But the bestial attack on 21 August last on the leader of the Opposition and former Prime Minister Sk. Hasina who narrowly escaped death, has surpassed all previous records of violent attacks in dimension and its import in the prevailing politics of animosity. While she was addressing a rally organized by Awami League in Dhaka, series of grenade and highly explosive bomb blasts rocked the venue. The Awami League central leader Ivy Rahman along with 22 other leaders-workers were killed and 200 workers and 10-12 central Awami League leaders were grievously wounded. It is to be noted, in this connection, that the operations of communalists-fundamentalists pre-date the fateful 21 August event: even during the earlier Hasina-led Awami League regime, there had been quite a large number of violent outrages.

Perhaps not a single day passes nowadays in Bangladesh without one or more bomb/grenade blasts or live bomb-grenade and explosives being seized by the security forces. The social milieu being terror-stricken amidst this violence, the day-to-day living and livelihood of the people there are deeply

affected, and they are in a fix as to how they can come out of this imbroglio. All sensible persons admit that this perilous turn of events is no isolated a phenomenon. It is connected with the evil design of the dark fundamentalist forces, which were opposed to Independence of Bangladesh with a secular democratic polity. It has also to be acknowledged that although Awami League leaders and workers were the direct target of gruesome grenade attacks on this fateful 21st August, nonetheless, the secular, democratic-progressive forces, that present a stiff obstacle to the freerun by the communalists-fundamentalists, are very

Contd. on page 2

Offer of FBI's services to meddle into North-East — a dangerous portent

Central Committee

Comrade Nihar Mukherjee, General Secretary, SUCI in a statement issued on 6 October, 2004 expressed deep concern and indignation over the offer of services of the infamous Federal Bureau of Investigation by the American Ambassador in tackling violent activities in Assam and Nagaland. It is a clear move, said Comrade Mukherjee, on the part of the US imperialists to meddle into the internal affairs of India and portends far greater danger in the context of well-known indulgence of the US imperialists in fomenting divisive, separatist and secessionist activities in the North-Eastern states. Hence the offer should be rejected forthwith.

Comrade Mukherjee also pointed out that the present Congress-led UPA government like its predecessor, the BJP-led NDA government has been treading the same path of appeasing the US imperialists and so the US administration has dared to moot such a heinous proposal. Comrade Mukherjee, therefore, called upon the countrymen to be on high alert against such growing dangerous trends.

Comrade Mukherjee urged upon all concerned in the North-Eastern states to refrain from causing senseless spilling of blood of common men, women and children, as it brings in its trail nothing but devastation to every section of the people, and strongly demanded that the government must guarantee safety and security of all sections of the people in Assam and Nagaland and promptly as well as adequately redress the genuine grievances of the people.

Savarkar and BJP's veiled design : The truth

Bourgeois parliamentary politics in India has added one more example of its filth, hypocrisy and unscrupulousness. On the eve of elections in Maharashtra, an important state on parliamentary counts, a Congress Minister of the latest installed UPA government at the Centre announced removal of the plaque in the name of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar from the front of the cell in the Cellular Jail of

Andaman and Nicobar Islands where he had been imprisoned for more than a decade by the British imperialists in early days of the independence movement of the country. BJP, the mainstay of the former NDA government, jumped upon the issue, for it was them who had placed the plaque, named Port Blair airport after Savarkar, or even hanged his portrait in the Parliament Hall. The issue created uproar among

these parties and their allies; proceedings of the parliamentary sessions were disrupted and the issue was dragged into a national topic. In such a situation it demands some discussion; people ought to know who Savarkar was, what were his socio-political views or where he stands in the history of Indian independence movement. We present this brief note in that regard.

Vinayak Damodar

Savarkar was a front-ranking Hindu Mahasabha leader, with close connection with RSS. He began his life, however, on a different note. In fact, right from the early days of his life, Savarkar came up with contradictory traits. He was born of an aristocrat family of Maharashtra in which religion and traditionalism on one hand, and politics, on the other, influenced its members. The ambience of traditionalism and casteism

moulded even his tender mind so much so that only at an age of ten, in 1893, he, organized a few playmates to attack a mosque in his village in retaliation of communal riots in Uttar Pradesh and Mumbai (the then Bombay) (See: Savarkar and His Times 1950; Veer Savarkar 1966-both written by Dhananjay Keer). At the same time, he and his family, were inspired by Bal Gangadhar

Contd. on page 4

Both BNP and Awami League are abetors of hideous fundamentalism

Contd. from page 1

much its indirect but ultimate targets. For, these dark forces are waiting in the wings for the moment when they could ride forth with their war cries for dominance and destruction. That's why, cutting across the barrier of party affiliations, all Left and democratic-progressive parties and forces voiced their indignation and severely condemned the gruesome attack demanding at the same time punishment of the real culprits through proper investigation and an end, once for all, to this orchestrated violence. The ruling BNP led by Khaleda Zia, who initially maintained silence, in the face of spontaneous outbursts of all sections of the people, broke its silence in a gathering on 30th August where its central leaders including many a cabinet colleague of Khaleda Zia, squarely blamed the Awami League itself for the dastardly grenade assaults. Following suit, Khaleda Zia herself in the founding ceremony of her party on 1st September, echoed the tune of her cabinet colleagues, pretending at the same time, not to cast aspersion on anyone. From the above, it is as clear as daylight that Khaleda Zia's government, as on previous occasions, is not serious at all to bring the culprits to book.

Both BNP and Awami League abate fundamentalist forces

It is worth recounting that even during Hasina's Awami League regime also, none of the incidents of ghastly violence was ever properly investigated to identify the culprits. With this background, observers of Bangladesh politics point out that when the Awami League was in power, the first bomb-blast of this kind occurred on March 6, 1999. At the conference of an artists' forum at Jessore district, bomb-blasts took a toll of 10 innocent lives while 70 were wounded. The second incident took place at Khulna on October 8, the same year, in which 8 people were killed and 26 sustained severe injury. A spate of murderous attacks were continued on the Leftists, secularists and Bengali cultural workers till Hasina regime lost power in the elections in 2001. It has been reported that during Hasina's regime alone, as many as 25 big criminal assaults were

engineered in which over 150 innocent people lost their lives and a very large number were severely wounded. It has, so to say, become a common pattern. All these violent fundamentalist crimes mysteriously remained to be solved and with days passing by, these vile acts have become more intense today. It is no wonder, therefore, that none of the culprits behind the 21st August event have been booked so far. And unless the BNP government can prove that its security forces do not stoop to the same level as do those whom it calls "destabilizing force" or "terrorists", the marauding spree of the communalists-fundamentalists will contribute to the growth and rampage of these dark medieval forces. At any rate, the fact of circumstances boils down to this, that while Hasina refused to make any serious effort to unearth the truth behind such criminal assaults, Khaleda government now follows her footsteps caring a whit to put an end to such unending assaults through holding investigations taking the people into confidence.

In such a prevailing vicious atmosphere, the pertinent question that is uppermost in the minds of the enlightened people of Bangladesh is why both Hasina and Khaleda Zia's governments, instead of dealing sternly with the real culprits in order to eradicate the pernicious influence of these dark forces, are indulging these violent types of terrorist attackers? It is admitted on all hands, that let alone Khaleda Zia's government, even Hasina government had been using these dark communalist-fundamentalists to ensure easy electoral victory. So none of them is interested at all to touch the culprits. It is not possible, for argument's sake also, to strike at the roots of the groups of dark forces operating for the bourgeois outfits like Awami League and the BNP since the squabbling groups inside each of these bourgeois outfits are aligned with these dark forces directly or indirectly. Given the reality of the intense crisis in socio-economic political scenario of Bangladesh, it is next to impossible for them to strike at the roots of these dark forces. So, even after asserting vociferously that 'they won't stop before finishing me physically', Sk. Hasina is found the

next moment conducting hectic parleys and mysterious activities to stage a comeback to the governmental power 'at any price' rather than focusing her efforts on revealing the truth behind devastating grenade attack on her party and on her life. Well, can anyone assert that with the installation of Hasina's Awami League in the governmental power, the real culprits would be hauled up and punished and consequently the safety and security of her life and her party would also be guaranteed? Hypocrisy, par excellence! That's why, whenever the needle of suspicion points to these dark forces operating from within Zammāt-e-Islami and/or Jatiya Oikya Jote as also these two main ruling bourgeois outfits, being the mainstay of these dark forces, the real culprits were shielded by the powers-that-be so as to allow the perpetrators of crime to go scot-free. So, belying the hopes and wishes of all sections of the people of Bangladesh, Hasina and her party, recipient of the deadliest blow the other day, went whole hog to emphatically demand resignation of Khaleda Zia government, obviously to reap electoral gains.

Role of US imperialists and India

Another question that has cropped up in the minds of right-thinking people of Bangladesh is the role of the imperialist powers and that of Indian government. A deep sense of misgiving is working surrounding the motive behind their presence in the aftermath of such a terrorist attack in the prevailing situation of anarchy inside Bangladesh. The moves and conducts of ambassadors of both USA and India aroused serious misgivings. For reason best known to him, the US ambassador was found to be freely moving around Bangladesh, having parleys with the ministers and leaders of ruling and parliamentary Opposition parties and making speeches and statements to the press violating diplomatic code of conduct. One Mr. Patterson, the US Assistant Defence Secretary, was reported to have stated on September 13, in a press meet, that Bangladesh might undergo a sea-change and lose her democratic polity. A dubious indication,

indeed! They also went so far as to assert that people wanted export of surplus gas for development of the country which some politicians stood opposed to and so on and so forth. Without going into further details, it is quite apparent that the US is on the lookout for naked interference in the internal affairs of Bangladesh as it does all over the globe today. Nepal, another neighbouring state down the Himalays, stands out as a glaring example where the US imperialists in league with medieval Palace rule are at work to ruthlessly suppress the ongoing mass movement for establishment of full-fledged parliamentary democracy. What business have they got to meddle into the internal affairs of another country, travelling thousands of miles to land in Bangladesh for uncalled for gratuitous sermons? The people of Bangladesh must remain alert and in the way they have valiantly resisted bartering away the vital interests of the country on all important issues of gas-power-port to foreign power forcefully demand of their government not to allow, in any way, the imperialist powers to interfere in the matters of their country. So also the moves and conduct of the Indian ambassador have raised questions. The ambassador's surreptitious moves, hither and thither, in conjunction with the recent tirade of the Indian ruling parties against Bangladesh at a time when Bangladesh is in turmoil and the people are in search for a way out of this crisis, cannot but evoke serious apprehension about their motive. This, perforce, creates tension between the people of the two neighbouring countries which, we the people of India, cannot afford to go unchallenged, on any pretext whatsoever. This unnecessary meddling into the internal affairs of another country provides a handle to the anti-people ruling clique in Bangladesh to misdirect the people's attention from the real cause of misery and abject poverty as well as the politics of terrorization wreaking havoc on them. We, on behalf of the toiling people of India, demand that the Government of India must desist from meddling into the internal affairs of Bangladesh.

Contd. on page 7

Communal exploitation of census data

Collecting and publishing the census data in any country is a normal practice. This gives a lot of insight into the composition of the population, co-relation of the forces, various demographic classifications, the degree of unevenness in development of various strata of the people, poverty level, penetration of literacy, mortality rate, male-female ratio and so on. This is therefore a detailed exposition of the society comprising people of different religion, language, caste or ethnicity. So these figures from both government and non-government sources are required by all particularly to get an objective picture of how and to what extent the unevenness is existing and also the various social differences and discriminations on different counts are impacting the various communities of people. Even a bourgeois government cannot ignore these sociological data and are forced, from the point of view of governance, to make use of these revelations supposedly for adopting appropriate measure for welfare and development of the people irrespective of their social disposition. Any civilized government is expected to be spurred following census findings to remove aberrations, weaknesses and shortcomings. Similarly those who are committed to uphold people's cause are aware of the fact that it is the capitalist system which breeds all inequality, unevenness, disproportionate distribution of wealth; they also need these census data for objective assessment of the social fabric of the country, undertake various necessary sociological study and strengthen movement to ultimately overthrow the exploitative capitalist order through revolution.

Growth rate of communities

But release of Census India, 2001 in the first week of September 2004, by instalments was on a different note. The media caused a chilly flutter by highlighting that there has been an accelerated growth rate of Muslim population from 34.5% to 36 % between 1991 and 2001 while similar rate for the Hindus declined from 25.1% to 20.3 % during the same period. So glaring has been the highlight of this aspect of the findings that everything else got suppressed. Immediately the communal BJP and its ideological affiliates the RSS, began to play the charade that this poses danger to the Hindu identity of the country since Muslims would overtake the Hindus in future. Venkaiah Naidu, the BJP President expressed "grave concern over the Muslim population growth as reflected in the report of religion" on 8 Sept. 2004 in a reaction to the press. The same day Ram Madhan, the RSS spokesperson quipped "our views on demographic changes about which we had been warning, stands vindicated. " Clearly theirs has been an attempt to exacerbate communal tension and inflame the already tenuous socio-political atmosphere.

The findings — many suspected — had been manipulated to suit the BJP's Hindu fundamentalist plank. Some inconsistencies were apparent and it was also a fact that the exercise began when the BJP-led NDA government was in power. It is also known to all how inflation numbers, price indices and such other vital statistics are massaged in

capitalist India to present a distorted picture of reality and keep the skeletons under wrapper. One also had a glimpse of the BJP's "India shining" campaign varnished with statistical gloss. And almost in articulation of this apprehension, J. K. Banthia, Census Commissioner and Registrar General of India, declared within three days from the date of publication of census details that some "clerical error" had crept into the figures which need some "adjustments". It was revealed that there was no enumeration in Assam in 1981 and Jammu and Kashmir in 1991. Hence comparisons were made between incomparables. When the figures were thus suitably "adjusted", it was found that the Muslim population growth rate in fact steadily decelerated since 1971 and this deceleration rate is more than that of the Hindus. Figures showed that more Hindus were added to the population than Muslims — 4.8 Hindus for one Muslim to be exact. Moreover Jains, Sarnas and Lingayats, who were granted independent recognition in the latest counting were earlier classified as Hindus. This also distorted Hindu population figures.

Once these "clarifications" and "adjustments" were provided, the BJP leadership toned down their rhetorics a bit and instead accused the present Congress-led UPA of being politically motivated to revise the figures. The Congress-led UPA government, on the other hand, announced its intention to conduct an enquiry into the confusion over

the Muslim growth rate. It also removed Banthia, installed by the former BJP-led government in the post of Census Commissioner, from the office. An impression was also sought to be created as if such religion-based data should not have been released and the BJP was accused of trying to cook up such projections to strengthen its communal agenda.

Should religion-based data be banned

If Banthia has wilfully committed misdemeanour which cannot be ruled out in the context of extensive communalization of the bureaucracy during the past several years, he should be adequately dealt with. There is no dispute over it. But is it not that in the process, certain pertinent issues, even some of the relevant findings, glaring revelations are getting buried? Is it for the first time that such religion-based growth rates on population figures are published? Are not such statistics declared in the census of other countries? If such publications are prescribed, will not some vital informations be held back seriously impeding not only sociological research and study, cultivation of knowledge, but misdirecting the course of action needed to improve the situation?

Withdrawing publication of such statistics would obscure the fact that during 57 years of post-independence the toiling Muslim population has been subjected to severe exploitation, discrimination and deprivation following the machination of the Indian bourgeois rulers. It was the British imperialists who in order to "divide and rule", conspired to create an artificial schism between the Hindu and the Muslim masses over religion. And because the imperative task of democratization of the society was neglected during the anti-British freedom struggle, the divide could not be eradicated through appropriate socio-cultural movement. The Indian bourgeoisie who usurped the political power following independence from British rule, fully exploited this divide, nurtured and fomented it with all care, as a means to perpetually disrupt the unity of the toiling Indians against the oppressive capitalist regime. The Muslims, as minorities have always been looked down upon and their

security constantly threatened. While every Indian, irrespective of religion or caste, is groaning under the yoke of capitalism, the downtrodden Muslim community has been worst victim following continuous injection of a fear-complex and sense of insecurity by the power that be to buttress its class interest. Several times, the Congress who as one of the most trusted representatives of the ruling capitalist class ruled the country uninterruptedly for the first 30 years after independence, engineered communal riots that further frightened and devastated the minorities. After the Congress, the Hindu fundamentalist BJP continued this with yet more ferocity and the gruesome pogrom of Gujarat showed how vulnerable the Muslims are in their own motherland.

Discriminatory treatment of most of the minorities is practised in the various capitalist imperialist countries. Everywhere, majority fundamentalism, racial hatred, colour domination are raising their ugly heads as part of the bourgeois conspiracy to wedge a permanent divide among the people so that the forces of reaction could have a fertile ground to ignite communal or racial passion at the spur of the moment. Would such facts come to light if shutters are put on the sociological studies and data publication exercises?

Myth and reality

Let us once again turn to Census India, 2001 to discern certain important findings buried under the din. The level of education for every 1000 persons in every age group is lower for the Muslims. 59% of the Muslim women have not attended school, 60% are married by the age of 17 and hardly 14 % have registered work participation. Infant mortality rate is higher for the Muslims. Contrary to the propaganda of the Hindu fundamentalists and the vested interest, percentage of polygamous marriages is lower among the Muslims. One more myth that the votaries of arch communalism seek to create is that religion has a major influence on fertility behaviour. Taking a cue from that, the preachers of rabid Hindutva argue that Islam prompts increased fertility. But sociologists find no evidence of that. "It is virtually

Contd. on page 8

BJP sheilding Savarkar's dominant pro-British and communal role

Contd. from page 3
Tilak, one of the front-ranking leaders of the freedom movement. And we find, in 1899, when he was just 16, Savarkar founded an organization, 'Mitra Mandal' with the aim of achieving freedom, if necessary, by armed rebellion (See : *Makers of Modern India* : published by the Indian Council of Historical Research, 1973). He is also said to have inspired the three Chapekar brothers of Pune, who were among the early martyrs of the independence movement.

Savarkar's brief support to armed struggle ended in seeking clemency and giving birth to thoughts of Hindutva

In 1906, Savarkar moved to London and associated himself with political campaigning for armed rebellion, building up organization like Free India Society, training with arms and such other activities. He became a follower of Krishna Varma, an ardent proponent of armed struggle against British rulers. Reportedly, Savarkar also arranged smuggling of arms to India. His book on Sepoy Mutiny entitled *The Indian War of Independence*, reflected his the then views (See: *Revolutionary or not?* : Letter to the Editor: *The Statesman* : 23 September 2004, MH Kidwai, former MP). There he recognized Maulana Ahmadullah and Bahadur Shah Zafar as national heroes along with Nana Saheb, Tanyta Tope, Rani Laxmi Bai and Mangal Pandey. He cautioned against having any enmity towards Muslims and spoke high of the valiant five-day struggle in Delhi during this war, in which Hindu and Muslim fought hand-in-hand against the British. The book was, however, 'deeply rooted in Hindu mythology'. The British government proscribed the book, arrested him on several charges of sedition in London in 1910 and sent him back to India. He was immediately sentenced to life imprisonment on his return to India. And, here started his turnaround. In just an year, in 1911, Savarkar wrote his first letter of apology and undertakings of loyalty to the colonial government. Subsequently, he wrote two more such letters , in 1913 and 1925 respectively. In his letter of 1913 (November 14), he wrote : "...I remind your

honour...the petition for clemency, that I had sent in 1911...if the Government in their manifold beneficence and mercy release me 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...I am ready to serve the Government in any capacity they like.... The Mighty alone can afford to be merciful and therefore where else can the prodigal son return but to the parental doors of the Government?" [See : *Penal Settlement in Andamans* by R.C.Majumder, 1975, p.211-214]. His letter also made it clear that he was yielding to the pressure of imprisonment and so was pleading to the government for clemency.

The British government could not trust his words outright, though their attitude was apparent in the report from the Home Member of the British Government Rejnald Craddock. On 23 November 1913, he wrote about Savarkar "... he affects to have changed his views, urging that the hopeless condition of Indians in 1906-07 was his excuse for entering upon a conspiracy... Mercy to him would, he said, have a calming effect upon those who still conspire against British rule, and he was willing and anxious to send an open letter to the native press..." [ibid] The British with their hawkish eyes, thus identified his weaknesses, promoted him to the rank of Foreman in the Cellular Jail and finally released him from the Andamans in 1920. He, however, was kept under detention in different jails of the main land India till 1923. After release, he was interned till 1933 in Ratnagiri of Maharashtra.

Seeking clemency was not the only change in Veer Savarkar. There were others , too, going on in him. He had eulogized Muslim leaders of the Sepoy Mutiny in his book referred above. But in about two years in Andaman, he started working for the 'Suddhi' or 'purification' movement for converted Hindus and dalits. Gradually, but surely, he started nurturing his own idea of 'Hindutva and Hindu- padpatshahi (Hindu overlordship/ suzerainty)' (See: *Hearts all a-flutter* : *Hindustan Times* : 9 September 2004, Praful Bidwai). He defined nationhood on

so-called ' cultural nationalism' in 'punyabhu (holyland) as well as pitribhu (fatherland)', where everybody would have Hindu blood flowing in him. In his scheme, Hindus alone had the right to be nationals of the country and Muslims and Christians could not be part of Hindustan. These views of him, he published in 1923 in his book 'Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?' written in Marathi. They clearly reflected an attitude towards Muslim, that was the same as Hitler's attitude towards Jews. (See: *Veer Savarkar: Itihaser Aloy* (in Bengali) : Ranjan Gupta, 2003) Here we must also add that this very theme was taken up enthusiastically and was resounded, may be in different words, later by Hedgewar, Golwalkar and other Hindu Mahasabha and RSS leaders and their followers of the recent times, the BJP-RSS-VHP leaders. These formed the ideological basis on which Savarkar identified Indian nation to be divided into two. On 30 November, 1937 Savarkar in his presidential address for Hindu Mahasabha at Ahmedabad said, "India can not 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 Muslims. These two antagonistic nations are living side by side in India." BJP-RSS call Savarkar a 'Veer', but keep mum about these naked truths, that Savarkar sought clemency for his role in freedom struggle, articulated his ideas of the 'two-nation' more than a decade earlier, that is in twenties, than when Jinnah worded that phrase in 1939! He was thus the father of the idea, which later Jinnah could make use of to bring about partitioning of India on the basis of religion.

His fanatic Hindu communal views with fascist traits as well as capitulation to the British rulers ran side by side. During the second world war, Savarkar offered his full cooperation to the British. In 1941, as the President of the Hindu Mahasabha session, he declared , " our national best interest demands — so far as India's defence is concerned Hindustan must ally unhesitatingly, in spirit of responsive cooperation with the war efforts of the Indian government by joining the army, navy and aerial forces in as large a number as

possible." (See Ranjan Gupta, op.cit.) So, one time proponent of armed struggle against the British rulers was advocating for joining the imperialist army of the same rulers, forgetting about freeing his own country from their clutches !

Again during Quit India movement in 1942, Savarkar as the Hindu Mahasabha leader instructed all members of his organization, working in government offices or elected to local and regional legislative bodies, to attend their office and cooperate fully with the British government. The slogans he raised were 'Hinduization of politics' and 'Militarization of Hindutva'. They were nothing but admixture of call for cooperation with the British and rabid anti-Muslim feelings. By that time, however, Muslim League had also come up with its similar views and activities: cooperation with the British and rabid anti- Hindu feelings. So here was the tragic figure of Savarkar, who started his life with a view to freeing his country through even 'armed rebellion', but was drawing close to end it with theories and practices of fanatic Hindu communalism and capitulation to the British imperialists who held India in subjugation.

Savarkar's turnaround judged on the anvil of history

To understand why this happened, why Savarkar could not or did not hold on to his stand of uncompromising struggle barring for a brief period of his life, why he made a complete turnaround, bearing contradictory traits virtually all through life, we should critically judge some characteristics of the history of Indian independence movement.. For that purpose, we have the valuable analysis of Comrade Shibdas Ghosh , the great Marxist thinker and the founder General Secretary of our party, SUCI. With its help we would find that, historically and ideally, processes of emergence of different modern nations of the western world during the days of the Renaissance, united people of a geographic territory with the common aim of fighting against the disarticulated, localized feudal order. It was only through this fight fought uncompromisingly, that people of these nations could get

Contd. on page 6

Calcutta District Conference held with enthusiasm

The 2nd Calcutta District Conference of our party SUCI was held on 10 October. The delegate session was held at Yuva Kendra from 10 am to 2 pm and the open session at the Calcutta University Institute Hall in the evening. Amidst slogans Comrade Provash Ghosh, Central Committee member and Secretary West Bengal State Committee, hoisted the Red Flag and Comrade Manik Mukherjee, member West Bengal State Secretariat and Secretary, Calcutta District Committee garlanded the martyrs' column. With it started the Calcutta District Conference.

Comrade Kalika Mukherjee, member West Bengal State Committee and Calcutta District Committee presided over the Conference. On the dais were also present Comrade Provash Ghosh, Comrade Manik Mukherjee, and Comrades Prativa Mukherjee, Chhaya Mukherjee, Soumen Bose, members, West Bengal State Secretariat, and other leaders. The organizational report was presented by Comrade Manik Mukherjee. The delegates made lively discussion on the report which was unanimously accepted. The new Calcutta District Committee with 25 members and Comrade Manik Mukherjee as Secretary was unanimously elected by the House. Finally, Comrade Manik Mukherjee delivered his concluding speech where he said that the image of our party was

growing among the people because of the party's leading role in organizing continuous movement on urgent public issues and the high cultural standard reflected by the party. People have great expectations from the party. To fulfil this, we need to further develop our comrades' abilities as well as revolutionary character. Organizational weaknesses and ideological backwardness have to be overcome. The District Conference is being held with this objective.

The open session was presided over by Comrade Kalika Mukherjee. Comrade Provash Ghosh in his address dealt on various organizational problems. He reminded the comrades that Calcutta District party had a glorious tradition which today's comrades have to carry forward. He said that many a comrade put in hard physical work for the party but they do not devote adequate time in uplifting their theoretical standard with the same zeal, do not try to grasp dialectical materialist philosophy in manner desired. This could seriously jeopardize their struggle to become real communists. He also appealed to the comrades to devote time daily to study the works of Comrade Shibdas Ghosh, fight out individualistic and such other tendencies and strengthen the foundation as well as organization of the party.



Leaders on the dais and the delegates to the Calcutta District Conference paying Red Salute to the great leader of the proletariat Comrade Shibdas Ghosh

UTUC-LS condemns heinous role of CPI(M)-Front Government

Strongly condemning the heinous role of the CPI(M)-Front government in respect of closing down its undertakings and curtailing the trade union rights, Comrade Shankar Saha, Secretary, West Bengal State Committee, UTUC-LS issued the following statement on 14.10.04 :

The CPI(M)-led Front government in West Bengal has recently terminated the service of 447 workmen in the name of Early Retirement Scheme (ERS) and thereby virtually closed down 5 units of the state-owned West Bengal Electronics Industry Development Corporation (WEBEL), surreptitiously evading the compliance of statutory requirements under the prevailing law. It is interesting to note that the corpus required for ERS has been financed by the Department of Foreign Investment and Development, UK. This is not all. Out of terminated staff, 41 workers have been recruited in WEBEL Technology Ltd., a unit of the West Bengal government on contractual basis for 5 years, terminable at any time and that too on the condition they would neither get continuity of service nor compensation for early retirement. Conditions of service as specifically laid down in the appointment letter, inter alia, include fixed wage without any dearness allowance, annual increment subject to discretion of the management on the one side and on the other virtual ban on right to strike and participation in trade union and political activity, no right to refuse work on off-days and holidays and beyond working hours etc. which are but 'misconduct' that would attract punishment including termination of service.

Introduction of contractual and part-time service by the West Bengal government is not limited to state-owned industries alone. It has been extended to educational institutions, hospitals and even to the government offices. Be it mentioned in this connection that in the recent past, under the garb of ERS aided by DFID finance more than 1000 workers of the state-owned units, namely Indian Paper Pulp and Sunderban Sugar Beet have been thrown out of employment thereby closing down the units. Decision of joint venture allowing 74% equity share to the selected monopoly houses is in the offing in respect of 10 more state-owned units by the CPI(M) Front government on the excuse of making the units viable.

All these acts would embolden the domestic and foreign monopolies which have long been demanding the legitimatization of the policy of 'hire and fire' and cessation of all sorts of trade union rights on the one hand and smooth entry in the domestic industry in general and the IT industry in particular.

This once again demonstrates that the CPI(M) Front government is much ahead of BJP and Congress led governments in wooing the monopoly houses and implementing the policy of reform and globalization.

The situation is alarming indeed. Hence we urge the working millions of West Bengal to forge unity and fight back the criminal onslaught let loose on them by the CPI(M) Front government.

Hutment Dwellers' Movement in Neyveli, TN

The local Organizing Committee of our party SUCI, Neyveli, Tamil Nadu, has started a movement demanding proper residential facilities for some 10,000 workers, belong to the unorganized sectors who while catering to the needs of the Neyveli township, are compelled to live in sheer hutments with no proper sanitation and drinking water facilities. The township houses the Neyveli Lignite Corporation's 19,000 permanent and 15,000 contract workers.

A one day Dharna programme was conducted under the auspices

of Neyveli Hutment People Struggle Committee, with 2000 workers participating and a memorandum submitted to the Management Neyveli Lignite Corporation Ltd. for the redressal of these problems.

This was followed by a march to the District Collector's Office on 13th September, where 5000 people assembled. They virtually forced the reluctant District Authorities to receive the memorandum. The latter assured the demonstrators of an early settlement of the problem after consulting the NLC authorities.

Eulogy of Savarkar a fascist design

Contd. from page 4

over the divisions centring round religion, races, languages and such others and thus could give rise to the modern, democratic, national states. This was the process through which also emerged the concept of secularism and secular state; it hinged on non-recognition of any supernatural entity, which latter was ingrained in religion and feudal thoughts. Thereby a secular state overcame the divisions and barriers of religion of its people, in one and all affairs pertaining to the activities of the state. In India, the nation-building process was released at a time when capitalism, as a world system, had lost its progressive role. The system that once had fought uncompromisingly against feudalism for democracy, freedom and secularism, was in the stage of imperialism curtailing democracy and freedom of other countries. Indian nation was emerging with the country under such an imperialist rule. The Indian bourgeoisie that led the nation-building process, thus, lacked the revolutionary fervour of the days of the Renaissance and suffered from the fear-complex of working class revolution. They maintained a reformist oppositional, compromising role against both feudalism and British imperialism, the two forces they confronted and could not wage uncompromising struggle to uproot the seeds of division within the society, like religion, caste system, race etc. to unite people getting over these. As a result, the protagonists of anti-feudal, anti-imperialist struggles could not free themselves of the influence of religion. Even the fervent revolutionaries of the independence movement, who stood for uncompromising armed struggle against the British rulers, took oath of freedom struggle with Geeta, the sacred Hindu religious scripture in hand. Right from the start of growth of Indian nationalism, there were organizations like the "Hindu Mela" and such others that sought to delve into the glorious past of the Hindus to crystallize and rouse the nationalist feelings in people. Thus, as Comrade Shibdas Ghosh pointed out, "Indian nationalism, was basically religion-oriented" manifesting itself "in the form of Hindu religious revivalism". As an outcome of this Hindu orientation in the nation-building process and independence movement, there were

no serious and pervasive efforts, on the part of the Indian bourgeoisie to win over the vast masses of religious minority, for instance the Muslims, or so-called lower castes and draw them into the mainstream of the independence movement, knowing fully well that they lagged quite behind culturally and on questions of education and others. The British rulers, on the other hand, used this weakness of our nation-building process, to generate and foment bitter communal hatred and enmity. The Indian bourgeoisie, in their haste of wresting the political power from the imperialists to establish their own class rule to freely exploit the Indian masses, "could not and did not carry out the tasks of social and cultural revolutions essential for the democratization of the society." In course of the political movement against imperialism, that is the independence movement, "the Indian people became a nation politically, but for failure on the part of the leadership of our national liberation movement...the Indian people remained socially and culturally divided into different communities disunited by religion, caste, language, race etc.". In reaction to this Hindu revivalist Indian nationalism, the non-Hindu masses, like the Muslims or even the socially backward strata of the Hindu community, who suffered from social and cultural suppression by the upper caste Hindus, rather kept themselves away from the national independence movement. Among the Muslims, on the other hand, even those who were against the colonial rule of the British, kept themselves away from even the English education, thereby actually shutting themselves and people of their community off from modern democratic and secular thoughts. Leaders like Gandhi did try to unite people across the divisions of religion, caste etc.. But even that was on the wrong premise; they wanted to tie people on religious thought itself. Thus communal and casteist feelings prevailed in social life (All the quotations and paraphrasing are from On Communal Problem by Shibdas Ghosh, 1964).

Needless to say, Savarkar, stemming from such an ambience, was obviously influenced by this Hindu religion-oriented nationalism. But whereas many others, in spite of

their having been influenced by the same trend, could stand firm on the question of independence of the country or of fighting the British, Savarkar failed that test. His downfall started as soon as he was put to pressure and it went to the extent that he gave birth to his ideas of Hindutwa, a rabid communal ideology, and from there to conceiving a theory reflecting attitude to the Muslims that can be compared only to those of the Nazi fascists, thus providing the ideological basis that could be used by Jinna to lead to partitioning of India on the basis of religion. Starting his life as a freedom fighter for a brief period of time, he ended in a leader of a communal force that fought for freedom from 'foreigners', but those foreigners were Muslims, and not the British, who were directly ruling at that time. To give effect to this fight he shamelessly capitulated to the imperialists whom he had once chosen as the enemy to fight against. There was no trace of a patriotic freedom fighter in his instance for the greater part of his life, that really determined his role in Indian history.

Savarkar involved in Gandhi assassination

But the matter did not end here. It is now an established fact, an undisputed part of history that Savarkar was the mentor of Nathuram Godse, the assassinator of Gandhi, as also his other accomplices and was himself involved in the conspiracy of assassination of Gandhi. Justice J Kapoor, in-charge of the investigating commission concluded in his report "All these facts taken together were destructive of any theory other than the conspiracy to murder by Savarkar and his group" (See Bidwai, Hindustan Times, op.cit.). Even Ballabbhai Patel, the then Home Minister wrote to Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime Minister on 27 February 1948 : "it was a fanatical wing of Hindu Mahasabha directly under Savarkar that hatched the conspiracy and saw it through". (See Kidwai in The Statesman, op.cit.) All this proved to what depth could Savarkar go down from his rabid anti-Muslim outlook.

But here again, in the face of pressure, Savarkar betrayed his already displayed traits. He came out with two letters of apology, in

1948 and 1950, to the Indian government, reacting hastily to prove his innocence and giving undertaking to behave: "...I wish to express my willingness to give an undertaking to the Government that I shall refrain from taking part in any communal or political public activity for any period the Government may require in case I am released on that condition." (See Ranjan Gupta, op.cit.). He could evade conviction, not from his innocence, nor on any recommendation, but only because 'one critical approver's (Digambar Bagde) evidence could not be independently corroborated.'. But the fact remained : This was how the 'Veer' behaved. He hatched conspiracy, incited a number of accomplices, and when he faced the consequences, his role having been exposed, he apologized, pleaded innocence.

We may mention another instance that exposed Savarkar further. He had been the front-ranking leader, even the President, of the Hindu Mahasabha that had decided not to hoist the Tricolour, the National Flag on the 15th August of 1947. Savarkar, a party to that decision, however, violated it and wrote to the Commissioner of Police on 22 February 1948 "On the 15th of August last I accepted and raised on my house our new National Flag even to the embarrassment of some of my followers".

It is thus clear from an unbiased, critical examination of historical facts that though Savarkar had started his life in the line of armed struggle against the British rulers, he succumbed in a short time to fall down to rather lowly depths of rabid communalism and capitulation to the imperialists, of conspiring to assassinate leaders like Gandhi. He cannot be placed, in any way, in the position he has been put to by the BJP-RSS; nor his portrait can be placed in the Parliament where those of the valiant fighters and glorious leaders of our independence movement are hanged.

It is not difficult to understand why apparently the BJP-RSS raises the hue and cry with Savarkar. They have to combat criticisms that RSS had been not just anti-Muslim, even anti-national during the independence movement against British imperialists. Posing Savarkar

Contd. on page 7

Recent Developments in Bangladesh

Contd. from page 2

Role of left and democratic forces

Taking into account all these aspects for consideration what, after all, is the objective reality obtaining now before the people of Bangladesh? Being embroiled in a terror-stricken insecure condition coupled with ruthless exploitation, deprivation under an oppressive rule, the people of Bangladesh pine for restoration of peaceful atmosphere free from insecurity in life and livelihood. Expectantly, they sincerely believed that the left and democratic parties and forces were in the prevailing situation the only dependable allies who could deliver the goods. But the state of affairs in the left-democratic camp are not what the people had been aspiring for. Barring the Socialist Party of Bangladesh, the two combinations of Left and democratic parties, i.e., 7-Party Left Front and 11-Party Combination, share worst sort of confusion. Though the Socialist Party of Bangladesh is included in the 11-Party Combination and wages mass struggles on specific issues in people's life, right now, save and except the Socialist Party of Bangladesh, all the constituents of Left Front and the 11-Party Combination, notwithstanding their differences over emphasis to be given on the formulation of demands, are trying to anyhow rope in the major parliamentary Opposition party, Awami League. For all practical purposes, therefore, this camp on which the people reposed their confidence, has fallen a prey to Awami League's trap of electoral course to dislodge the BNP government from power. It is a betrayal to people's hope and aspirations.

Now, on the issue of forming an alliance with the Awami League, the pertinent question that has emerged is: in the face of people's demand for inflicting a crushing defeat on the dark fundamentalist forces and, in its wake, create a congenial atmosphere for living and livelihood, how could inclusion of Awami League, a party whose conduct and behaviour during its period of rule abundantly confirmed its refusal to deal with the dark forces, arise at all? Does the Awami League represent a force to reckon with in the arena of democratic mass movement? And secondly, since the Awami League, like

Khaleda, has nurtured these dark fundamentalist forces for reaping electoral dividends, it can, on no account, be considered a secular force. How can it be then taken into an alliance in the battle against these dark forces? So, in order to satisfy the people's need, what is to be done right now? It is the teaching of history that working out electoral arithmetic giving up the struggle for resolving burning issues of people's life would lead nowhere in saving the country from being taken over by the dark fundamentalist forces. On the contrary, when the toiling people from all walks of life unite on a platform for conducting mass movement, the common cause of their life override all barriers of religion, creed or ethnicity or the like, among the struggling masses. And in course of conducting such a movement under a genuine revolutionary leadership and in the process of its intensification, the unity of the people gets further cemented and the barriers separating them socially and culturally by religious intolerance, mutual distrust centring round it, communal disposition and all such obscurantist ideas, get progressively demolished. This is the scientific way to do away with the virus of communalism-fundamentalism and with all sorts of legacies of dark medieval ideas and thought processes. In view of this, can the people expect anything from the Awami League? As a discredited bourgeois outfit, the Awami League remained in power since 90's in cooperation with these dark forces and when out of power, went on compromising with these very dark forces with an eye to regain power in the next polls. It is anybody's guess, on what consideration then the forces who call themselves Left and democratic, confer secular credential to Hasina's Awami League vis-a-vis its refusal to give a determined fight against the black forces.

Need to identify and strengthen true Left force

It is, no doubt, a fact that at the impact of freedom movement of Bangladesh, the Awami League led by Sk. Mujib declared the newly born Bangladesh as a democratic, secular and socialist republic with constitutional guarantee which the Awami League promised in its own Manifesto. It is also a fact that Awami League banished the two

great principles of 'secularism' and 'socialism' from its Manifesto subsequently after the BNP-led by Ziaur Rahman removed the words 'secular' and 'socialist' from the constitution to pave the way for declaring Bangladesh an Islamic state under the pressure of rabid communalists-fundamentalists. If Mujib's Awami League was true upholder of secular principles in life and society, it would not have abandoned these noble principles governing democratic way of life. It was Mujibar Rahman again, who, in order to get into the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC), presented Bangladesh as the second largest Muslim state in the world. It was in Mujib's life time that an Islamic foundation was sought to be given to Bangladesh. The secular-democratic people of Bangladesh observe today that the dress code followed by the Awami League leaders indicates how anxious they are to demonstrate a Muslim identity. Sk. Hasina and her ilk in the party, almost every year, air-dash to Hajj pilgrimage and wears Hijab, the religious cap to present themselves as true Muslims, the exigency of which never impelled them in pre-independence days of Bangladesh. It is also a fact that by yielding ground to fundamentalists,

it encouraged an anachronic system of Madrasa education, so on and so forth. It is also found that in course of practising this nefarious game of communal politics, the Awami League, instead of containing communal flare-ups and lethal hostilities against the religious and ethnic minorities, has been abettor of such crime. The reason is not far to seek: to faithfully serve the scheming of the ruling capitalist class to bring about cleavage among the working people based on religion, creed, etc., on the one hand and to cultivate the majority Muslim communal politics for creating Muslim vote-bank on the other.

The people of Bangladesh are now in a dire situation. They have nothing to expect from the Awami League or the BNP, the two most trusted agents of the ruling Bangladeshi bourgeoisie. So also, parties other than Bangladesh Socialist Party claiming to be Leftists have really nothing to offer. In this situation, the Socialist Party of Bangladesh alone, true to people's wishes and aspirations, is making all-out efforts to build up movements to forestall the rampaging march of these dark fundamentalist forces. We strongly believe this movement will gather more and more strength and true leftism will strike deep roots in the soil.

Savarkar

Contd. from page 6

as the great revolutionary in our freedom movement they wanted to cover this truth. Facts stand against them and their claim was not nicely received by people either. But there is much more beneath it and that is why we raise the issue. The Savarkar issue is not just an isolated one, it is a part of a broader design, a determined effort of the BJP-RSS combine. Immediately after they had assumed the power in the Centre, they started to give effect to this design of theirs that smacked of fascist falsehood. In a planned manner, they started to present a distorted history based on the views and thoughts of the RSS. They tried to dump aside the memories and history of struggles of the real illuminaries of the freedom movement and project the false figure such as Savarkar was. For instance, brushing aside the names of thousands of martyrs, they chose Savarkar's to name the Port Blair airport, who could get his terms

condoned, seeking clemency from the British rulers themselves.

We must also add that Congress does not stand at any different position. They raised the issue on the eve of the Maharashtra election to get hold of the minority support as also to divert people's attention from the reality, from the real burning problems of their life, that are aggravating every day with the UPA government in the power, just as it had been with BJP in the rein. But even that was a lip-service to the truth, which became evident when prominent leaders of the party tried to cover up words and deeds of the concerned minister. Congress, thus stands as the birds of the same feather as the BJP-RSS combine, in the design of distortion of history.

We are strongly of the opinion that this design must be thoroughly exposed and thwarted through an all-out fight against it. And this is the point at which we are concerned most.

Census Data

Contd. from page 3

impossible to assess the part played by the content of religion in fertility" — writes R.H. Cassen, a renowned social scientist. According to R.K. Chowdhury, another noted sociologist, working on Indian condition: "The observed differences in fertility are mostly due to socio-economic differences between Muslims and other religions. Once these differences are accounted for, the fertility differentials between Muslims and other religious groups will disappear." This conforms to the firm conclusion of the Marxists that all aberrations and anomalies arise from the socio-economic system.

Facts do corroborate these. Kerala, which has one of the highest literacy levels including among women, has the lowest fertility rates among all communities including Muslims. With the increased incidence of female foeticide, mostly among the Hindus, languishing under age-old obsolete creeds and superstition, the female populace compared to male is on the wane. That minority status with a sense of insecurity leads to a higher fertility level is also evident from census data. The fertility level of Hindus in Jammu and Kashmir where the Muslims are majority, is almost thrice that of Muslims. So it is the appalling socio-economic condition, lack of education, social discrimination, sense of insecurity and such other factors that work to significantly influence fertility rate. Once these aberrations and discriminations are removed, gap of unevenness shortened, not just literacy but education spreads, there will be changes in all communities. Muslim populace will also be changed in the same course.

Banish communalism, not census data

So it is evident that all such sociological data have a lot of utility value. What is important is to ensure that none can twist these figures to ignite communal passion to butress ulterior motive. We must understand

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Shibdas Ghosh

that it is the vile anti-people politics of the rabid communalists which is polluting the climate by systematically exploiting the artificially created divide between the communities on religious ground. Instead of taking up cudgels against these arch communalists and inflicting crushing defeat on them, both ideologically and organizationally, a demand for banning publications of such important findings regarding life condition of various religious communities will not only be tantamount to bailing out the real culprits but also hold back revelation of reality. Even if such publications are prescribed, the protagonists of fundamentalism-communalism will find some other pretext to bestir communal proclivities. Those who, out of their apprehension of misuse of the census data by the communal forces to incite violence, are in favour of excluding religion-based statistics from census data, must seriously ponder over this.

Communalism-fundamentalism is thus not only snuffing out innocent lives in fratricidal feuds, riots and carnages but overtly or covertly posing danger to necessary cultivation of various scientific studies and sociological research. Danger inheres here. So long as the bourgeois class rule will be there, its servitors of different hues remain in power, there will be no respite for the toiling people no matter what religion they profess or what language they speak. The wretchedness would continue to have firmer grip on their lives. Communalists-fundamentalists will go on baring their fangs. Pointless controversies would get piled up, trivial issues played up to cloud the truth. People must come forward to unite on the platform of movement to dislodge capitalism.

Five Million American Blacks Deprived of Voting Rights

The world is astounded having come across a recent news that the US administration has deprived five million (50 lakh) of the country's Black citizens of their voting right in the ensuing presidential election. This means, of the total US population when the Black people constitute 25%, the present decree would straightaway eliminate 13% of the 6.75 crore people at one stroke from the electoral process. It may be recalled in this connection that the Black people in this USA acquired this voting right only in 1965 through a long struggle of hundred years after their emancipation from slavery in 1865. The present decree of the US rulers is the beginning of the conspiracy to deprive the people of this hard-earned democratic right. These five million people would be debarred from applying their voting right on the plea that they suffered conviction on ground of theft. But clearly it goes against the democratic norm and its tenet which stipulate that while in prison for a guilt, although the right to vote of confined citizens remains suspended during the period of confinement, it is immediately restored to them as soon as they are free and come back to the normal life. Admittedly, of course, in such case there remains some restrictions on these citizens against contesting the elections. Such right stands suspended for some years to these people. The US rulers are trampling this democratic norm and tenet despite their unceasing claim that theirs is a 'great land of democracy'. And also this happens in a country which, led by its great predecessors like George Washington, Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson, once genuinely upheld the democratic rights and freedom. The

present act of the present rulers is an unabashed attack on this basic concept of democracy. To know why this attack we should probe the present-day economic condition of the USA. The economic crisis in the US is deepening day by day. Starting from economic stagnation, price rise, acute unemployment, no-wage growth — the crises have swamped the country abysmally. Thousands of poor people are living on the footpath under the open sky. Hundreds of them, hungry for want of means, are forced to take food from the public kitchen, and so on. This is giving rise to resentment and discontent among the whole of the US people. And the Black people are much more oppressed and exploited, at the same time are victims of racial hatred. The resentment and discontent against the government are widely mounting among these Black people also. Not only against the government, their resentment is pointing against the capitalist class too. Simultaneously with this, their proneness to the unethical means of livelihood is also escalating day by day.

However, of what the American ruling class is feeling frightened, for which they are mounting their attack on the coloured people, is their growing agitation against the government and the capitalist class. Hence the attempt is made to smother this protesting mind. And thus the rulers are implicating the Black people with various false cases. Disenfranchisement of lakhs and lakhs of people cannot be seen in isolation from the above conspiracy. It is a fascist attack. It should be vehemently protested against both from among the people of the USA and from the people the world over.



A view of the Open Session of First Jharkhand State Students Conference held on 5-6 October, 2004 at Ranchi.

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