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Publication of final draft of farcical NRC in Assam

Deliberate exclusion of more than 40 lakh applicants records sinister attempt to subvert judiciary and worst racial-chauvinist-communal hatred against genuine Indian citizens

The first draft of the NRC (National Register of Citizen) of Assam was released on the midnight of 31 December, 2017. While a total of 3.29 crore of applicants had applied for inclusion of their names in NRC, as many as 1.39 crore names mostly of the religious and linguistic minorities were found missing. As it had caused severe apprehension in the minds of the people not featuring in the draft, the authorities had said that the missing names would be included in the final draft. Now the second and final draft NRC has been published on 30 July 2018 in which the number of exclusions is found to be 40.07 lakhs. This figure is also unbelievable given the socio-political context and historical facts. As we had mentioned in our previous article (P Era 15

March 2018), the very idea of publishing NRC was conceived with an ulterior motive of branding the Indian citizens belonging to the religious-linguistic minorities as "illegal infiltrators" by the chauvinist-communal-racist forces backed by the ruling bourgeoisie. For long, various chauvinist-communal forces had been active in the state of Assam and trying to instigate the common Assamese-speaking people against the non-Assamese Indians of the state on the plea that the latter would endanger their language and culture, take away their political power, reduce them to numerical minority and thus virtually swamp them. It was nothing but slow-poisoning the minds of the common toiling Assamese-speaking masses with racial-chauvinist-communal

thoughts. The decision to prepare an NRC has come in the trail of this heinous chauvinist-communal-racist propaganda of the quarters of vested interest. In order to bring the NRC into operation and thereby achieve the vile objective of snatching away the citizenship of the genuine Indian citizens, there has been a slew of manipulations, subversion of rules, norms and principles of natural justice, arbitrary change of law and flagrant violation of constitutional provisions. Apart from Assam, even in the other North-Eastern states like Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur, there has been prevalence of such chauvinist-parochial thoughts which, of late, are getting further boosting with the NRC

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Left Parties call for an All India Protest Hartal on 10 September 2018

In a Press Statement issued on 6 September 2018, Left Parties including Communist Party of India (Marxist), Communist Party of India, Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist)-Liberation, Socialist Unity Centre of India (C), Revolutionary Socialist Party gave the following call for an All India Protest Hartal on 10 September 2018:

Unprecedented economic burdens are being mounted on the people by this Modi government. The exponentially rising prices of petroleum products is having a crippling effect on the livelihood of crores of Indians. The farmers, already groaning under mounting agrarian distress, see their production costs further escalated. This price rise has a cascading all-round inflationary impact. This is contributing to a further economic slowdown reducing existing employment, leave alone creating any new opportunities. The unprecedented fall in the value of the Indian rupee reflects the deep economic crisis created

by this Modi government. Such economic attacks on the people come on top of the vicious communal-authoritarian onslaughts mounted by this Modi government.

While the peasantry all over the country has been demanding the promised remunerative price and loan waiver, the Modi government callously refuses. On the other hand, it shows largesse of waiving off loans taken by the corporates during the last four years of nearly Rs. 4 lakh crores. Humongous amounts of loans taken from our banks by the corporates and the consequent NPAs has bled our banking system. Such crony capitalism is also evident in the various deals, like

the Rafael fighter aircraft purchase scam, that is fast unfolding. Obdurate rejection of any enquiry into this deal only reconfirms the scam. Black money, instead of recovering, as promised, has been legitimized. All efforts to divert people's attention away from these monumental failures by spreading an atmosphere of hate, violence and indiscriminate arrests of activists will not succeed.

In protest against this situation, the Left parties have decided to call for a nationwide hartal on September 10. Left parties call upon the people to join this protest in a big way to demonstrate people's rejection of the Modi government and its policies.



All India Protest Hartal : In Assam [left] and TamilNadu. More news and photos on page 10

NRC**More crisis-ridden is ruling capitalism, more stress is given on exacerbating the divides by whipping up of communal-casteist-chauvinist-linguistic passions***Contd. from page 1*

exercise in Assam. The turn of events in the aftermath of publication of 2nd and final draft NRC fully corroborate what our Party had been cautioning the toiling masses about right from the beginning and what was clearly stated in our previous Proletarian Era article referred to above. The situation has indeed turned extremely grave and consequences would be devastating unless conscientious right-thinking persons not only of Assam but of the entire country rise up to the occasion and frustrate this chauvinist-racist-communal conspiracy.

Looking back into the historical background

A rational analysis of facts in sequence and reiteration of some of the points we put forth earlier, would clearly reveal the hideous underbelly of this craftily executed conspiracy. It needs to be mentioned at the outset that growth and thumping around of the chauvinist-communal-racist forces as well as the RSS-BJP has not happened overnight but through a definite long-drawn process. Undivided Assam during the British period was made a part of the Bengal Presidency. In 1906 it was made a part of Eastern Bengal. In 1912, it was reconstituted into a chief commissioners' province with inclusion of the districts of Goalpara and Sylhet hitherto part of undivided Bengal. In 1913, a legislative council and in 1937, the Assam Legislative Assembly, were formed. This state of Assam, as is known to all, occupies a unique position in the whole of the North East, both geographically and culturally. It has been the abode of various linguistic-religious-ethnic people with no particular section constituting numerical majority. Despite this heterogeneous character of the populace, the various communities lived in peace and harmony for millennia, observing traditional protocols of mutual engagement in the cherished spirit of amity and fraternity. It was expected that during the freedom movement and then after independence, the process of unification among various communities of people would pick up momentum and the spirit of Indian nationalism would further cement the chord of unity and fraternity. But it did not happen because Indian freedom struggle took place at a time when world capitalism had lost

all its progressive character and become out and out reactionary and moribund. The Indian national bourgeoisie which provided leadership to the freedom movement with the Gandhi leadership working as its political face, was a part and parcel of decadent moribund world capitalism and hence played, in the main, a reformist-oppositional role against imperialism and made compromises with obsolete backward feudal thoughts. So, the Indian national bourgeoisie, instead of fighting old feudal fads, fanaticism, obscurantism, casteist-religious divides and discriminations, virtually compromised with all such retrograde thoughts. Why did it do so? Because, the Indian national bourgeoisie, as inseparable part of reactionary world capitalism, sought to grab the state power of India by ousting the British imperialists in culmination of the freedom struggle, but was also mortally afraid of anti-capitalist proletarian revolution which was being successfully accomplished in various countries. In order to thwart revolution, what it needed most was disunity among the various sections of the toiling people who had been participating in the freedom movement with the objective of emancipation from all sorts of exploitation and oppression. How best could these freedom-loving people be deceived and defrauded? Only by throwing a spanner in their growing unity and setting one section of the people against the other. As Comrade Shibdas Ghosh, one of the foremost Marxist thinkers of the era and Founder General Secretary of the SUCI (C) had shown in course of his brilliant analysis based on objective facts and scientific reasoning, "Although politically India became an Independent nation, culturally it remained divided." The ruling Indian bourgeoisie after assuming state power through compromise began, alongside strengthening and consolidating their economic and political power, sustaining, nurturing and fomenting all sorts of religious-casteist-ethnic-linguistic-provincial divides in a planned way. It knew that if people were to be kept in the dark about the fact that the ruthlessly oppressive capitalist system is the very root of their growing misery and penury, they should be made to remain politically unconscious, bereft of rational thinking, nurture a feeling of hatred and animosity

towards each other and be embroiled in fratricidal feuds, mutual bickering and even occasional bloodbaths. The entire arsenal was arrayed accordingly. The more crisis-ridden the ruling capitalism became because of its endemic law of operation, more stress was given on exacerbating the divides by whipping up communal-casteist-chauvinist-linguistic passions and elevating these even to the stage of frenzy, insanity, mindless violence and killing. So long as common oppressed people remain pitted against each other and exhausted themselves through internecine clashes and conflicts, the ruling bourgeoisie would feel safe as the threat of a conscious mass upheaval against its brutally oppressive rule would stay elusive. The spectacle of the entire country bears eloquent testimony to this fact. The happenings in Assam and the motive behind creating so called NRC are to be understood in this backdrop.

Seed of divisiveness planted long back by vested interest

It is true that the British imperialists, in order to perpetuate their colonial rule, resorted to a divide-and-rule policy in our country. In keeping with that vile policy, they made every attempt in Assam to drive a wedge between Assamese-speaking and non-Assamese speaking people, between the Hindus and the Muslims as well as between the tribal and non-tribal populations and thus making the state yet more prone to communal-ethnic conflicts. After independence, all sections of the toiling people of Assam, whether Assamese-speaking or non-Assamese speaking, tribals or non-tribals, Hindus or Muslims or Christians, found that whereas they were being deprived of the bare necessities of life and dragged to the dregs of virtual ruination, all prosperity and development were skewed on the side of a few rich. The burden of on-going price rise, growing unemployment, non-availability of minimal education-healthcare-sanitation and civic amenities were surpassing the endurance level. Obviously, mounting discontent started brewing against all these mounting deceptions and deprivations.

Lest this fermenting discontent should get channelized along right track and take shape of an organized movement involving all sections of the oppressed people, the

then ruling Congress leaders in Assam found that whipping up of chauvinist-communal frenzy and squarely passing the onus of the rising plight and poverty of Assamese-speaking people on the so-called 'outsiders' and 'illegal settlers' would be the best strategy. So, they alongwith other chauvinist-communal forces unleashed a vicious campaign to that effect and gradually stepped up Assamese-chauvinism to a kind of jingoism first against the Bengali-speaking Hindu people and then the immigrant Bengali-speaking Muslim community branding them as 'infiltrators' and 'illegal settlers'. It is pertinent to mention here that during the days of British rule, an anti-Bengali feeling termed as 'Bongal kheda' was constantly fomented by the reactionary quarters which resulted in outbreak of violent attacks on the Bengali-speaking people with a view to driving them out of Assam. After independence, the ruling Congress found in this sprouting chauvinist-communal frenzy a convenient plank to shield the capitalist oppression and keep surge of united people's movement at bay. So, they began to foment such divisive thoughts more vigorously and a sizeable section within the Congress which nurtured such chauvinist-communal feeling became instrumental in polluting the minds of the common innocent Assamese-speaking people with all such rot.

Following the trail of the intense propagation of Assam-chauvinism initiated and later further intensified by the Congress leaders in their desperate bid to regain governmental power in 1979 riding on the ultra-chauvinist Assam movement with the provocative slogans like "Assam is for the Assamese" and "Flush out the foreign nationals" swept across the state. The Bengali-speaking minorities were made target of attack and suspicion; mistrust and disunity among different sections of toiling people in Assam were precipitated in a planned manner. Many of the workers and leaders of the AASU (All Assam Students' Union) leadership which spearheaded the Assam movement between 1979 and 1985 were former Congressmen. The whole attempt was to engineer a "people versus people" conflict to serve the heinous diabolic class interest of the ruling bourgeoisie.

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Chauvinist-communal-racist forces widely spread a falsehood that “silent invasion of foreigners” would swamp the Assamese-speaking people

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Deliberate distortion of history by the chauvinists and quarters of vested interest

Going a step further, these chauvinist-communal-racist forces then raised a bogey that the Bengali-speaking Muslim people who were domiciled in the catchment areas of the river Brahmaputra like the districts of Goalpara and Dhubri were all “illegal immigrants” from Bangladesh and hence are ‘foreigners’. It is a criminal distortion of history. As we mentioned earlier, in the early period of 20th century, both Assam and undivided Bengal were under the administrative rule of the same commissioner and thus deemed to be a singular state in British India. So, moving from one district to the other of the same state was a normal thing. Secondly, the poor landless Bengali-speaking Muslim peasants were expert tillers who were capable of turning the barren river islands (‘char’ areas) into fertile productive soil. Hence, the then zamindars (landlords) of undivided Goalpara district did encourage the diligent Muslim peasants mostly from Mymensingh, Rangpur and Pabna districts of undivided Bengal to come and settle in the uncultivable fallow lands owned by them. The British Government also supported this move as it enhanced their revenue collection. Some Zamindars even extended material help to these poor people for permanent settlement. So, they were heartily welcomed at that time by the common Assamese-speaking people with a spirit of amity and togetherness. This is the reason why there is a large-scale presence of Bengali-speaking Muslim population mostly engaged in cultivation in this part of Assam. Hence it was no influx, but a normal shift of dwelling place from one part of the country to the other that helped both Assamese-speaking as well as non-Assamese speaking common people in their economic development at that time.

After partition of the country in 1947, when a communal riot had broken out, a section of the Bengali-speaking Muslim minorities of lower Assam opted to go back to the then East Pakistan. But a huge section of the Bengali-speaking Muslims to whom India was the homeland preferred to

remain here. In independent India, the bulk of the Muslim population in lower Assam vowed allegiance to the Congress on the one hand and adopted under strong pressure Assamese as their mother language. Now the protagonists of the Assam chauvinism who do not care to know this historical background are claiming that the progenies of these Indian citizens who are born and brought up in Assam and constitute one of poorest sections of the masses are Bangladeshi ‘foreigners’ and hence need to be deported. Is there any semblance of logic in it?

As mentioned earlier, another falsehood widely spread by the chauvinist forces has been that as a result of “silent invasion of foreigners”, the Assamese-speaking people would be swamped by these “foreigners”, become minority numerically, lose their political power, lose their language and culture and thus would be enslaved in their own land. Going a step further, it was also propagated that Assam would eventually be annexed to Bangladesh. These are very catchy slogans to befool the common oppressed Assamese-speaking people by cunningly suppressing the historical fact that the Assamese language with its two hundred years old prose literature has got a very solid foundation of its own. Census data of 1931 showed that 31.4% of the then Assam were Assamese-speaking. Even being minority numerically, the Assamese language flourished without any threat. Secondly, history does not hold any instance where cultural and political rights of one section of the poor people were snatched or jeopardized by another section of the poor people. It is the oppressors who endanger culture and political rights of the people to perpetuate their exploitative class rule. In course of their united struggle against the common enemy, that is, the exploiting class, the common toiling people complement and supplement development of each other’s languages and help cultural flourishing of both through mutual exchange.

Assam Agitation and the bogey of ‘illegal infiltration of foreigners’

In 1979, when a by-election was due in Mongaldoi Parliamentary constituency, the AASU and its cohorts backed by

all reactionary chauvinist-communal-racist forces, the bourgeois political parties including the Congress, raised a hue and cry that the voters’ list of the constituency had names of over 47,000 foreigners and those names ought to be dropped before holding the by-election. Though to appease them, some names were straightway struck down, the AASU was not pacified. Because, they wanted to use that as a pretext to launch the pre-planned Assam agitation on the demand of expelling the ‘infiltrators’ and ‘foreigners’. As Goebbels, the infamous propaganda minister of fascist Hitler, had once said that if you repeat a lie on and on, people tend to believe it to be the truth. The same thing happened in Assam. The poor wretched Assamese-speaking people with no respite in sight from the strangulating life got swayed by that chauvinist propaganda and rallied behind the agitation. To bestir them further, the chauvinist-parochial-communal leadership raised a bogey that the border was porous and everyday thousands of Bangladeshis were infiltrating into Assam over and above the 70 lakhs of Bangladeshi who had already trespassed illegally. These figures were published in the then print media. Frenzy went to such an extent that one after another ghastly massacres took away many innocent lives in Nellie, Mukalmoa, Chalkhowa, Silapather, Darrang, Lakhimpur, Kamrup, Goalpara and Barpeta. At that time, the AASU also targeted all other political parties as well. But, not to speak of the bourgeois political parties, even the self-proclaimed Marxists like the CPI(M), CPI, endorsed the views of the chauvinist-parochial forces. It was only our party, the SUCI (C) which could correctly analyze and appraise the situation at its right perspective and gauge the deeply-seated apprehension created among of the common Assamese-speaking people about losing their language, culture and political rights. Taking cognizance of the sensitiveness of the issue and to arrive at a just settlement of the raised controversy, our Party placed a four point formula as follows:

(1) Without affecting the rights of the linguistic minorities as enshrined in the Constitution, the status of the Assamese language as the State Language or official

language of Assam should be made permanent at all costs without relating it in any way to the change in the pattern of the population of the state. Special Resolution might be adopted or Acts might be passed in the Parliament to ensure the present status of Assamese as the State Language.

(2) A set of fool-proof measures should be taken to protect any covert or illegal entry of any single foreigner. The intelligence machinery should be capable enough to catch hold of any covert infiltrator right at the border and send him to the Tribunals for fair trial.

(3) A comprehensive package plan should be adopted by the government for speedy economic and industrial development of Assam.

(4) 25 March 1971 should be accepted as the cut-off date for detection of “foreign nationals” and the process of detection should be carried out by observing all accepted relevant national and international norms, laws and traditions and fully honouring and complying with the directives of the Constitution as well as our national commitment arising out of communal partition of the country—a commitment espoused by Jawaharlal Nehru and other national leaders—that in case there was religious persecution, doors of India would be open to Hindu minorities living in Pakistan. Those who had come to India prior to the cut-off date should be regarded as *bona fide* Indian citizens. As regards deportation of others, it should be done in accordance with the law of the country as well as international laws, conventions and practices.

This 4-point formula was appreciated by many right-thinking Assamese-speaking people so much so that some of the leading Assamese dailies carried it on the first page. But, the rabid chauvinist-communal-racist forces who had spearheaded the Assam agitation and all other bourgeoisie parties buttressing the agenda of keeping the conflicts and conflagration alive and making the cleavage everlasting, paid no heed to this crucial 4-point formula which spoke of justice and reason from a humanistic outlook.

The ‘Assam Accord’

Later, in 1985, Rajiv Gandhi, the then Congress Prime Minister,

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Our Party placed a four point formula to arrive at a just settlement of the raised controversy

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invited the AASU leaders to sit across the table and discuss the contentious issues. In that conclave was signed the much-clamoured "Assam Accord" in which the central government succumbed to the highly chauvinist pressure of AASU leaders and agreed to reverse the cut-off year for detecting the targeted "foreigners" from 1971 to 1966, deleting the names of so detected "foreigners" forthwith from the voters' list and deport them. Not a single aspect of our 4-point formula including linguistic safeguard provided to remove the anxiety and apprehension of the Assamese-speaking people in regard to their mother tongue was touched upon. Also, our demand for a concrete plan for industrial development of the state and creation of gainful jobs which was eagerly expected by the people, was not considered. Almost 33 years have rolled by since then, But, nothing has been done to solve the problems in right earnest and restore unity and amity amongst various sections of the toiling people irrespective of caste, creed, language, religion or ethnicity. As a result, following machinations of the anti-people forces, the complicated situation has become further complicated and aggravated.

Ploys to anyhow detect so called "Foreigners"

On the other hand, what was noteworthy was that soon after signing the 'Assam Accord', the chauvinist-communal leaders of the agitation formed a political party named Assam Gana Parishad (AGP) which won the 1985 Assembly election with massive mandate and formed the government. It was evident that they were bent upon fuelling the chauvinist-communal-linguistic sentiment more and more and so had a single point agenda—to anyhow 'locate' lakhs and lakhs of 'foreigners' they had been harping on for all these years. The entire government machinery was engaged to focus attention on this vexed issue clearly to divert attention from the real issue of improving economic-social life of the people by taking concrete measures. Even the police was given a 'quota' for bringing 'charge' of being "foreigners" against the Indian citizens belonging to religious-linguistic minorities mostly the hapless and impoverished

segments, then referring their names to the 'Foreigners' Tribunals' and sending them to the so called detention centres which were only short of being hell. This is how there has been a complete mockery of democracy and the Constitution of the country. Since then, the state was highly surcharged with communal tension in which the worst victims were the Bengali-speaking Hindu and Muslim minorities. Particularly, the immigrant Muslim minorities became the targets despite their being *bona fide* Indian citizens and therefore fully entitled to all kinds of protection to their life and livelihood. They were illegally and motivatedly branded as "Bangladeshis" or 'infiltrators' or 'illegal encroachers' and targeted for being persecuted, harassed, forcibly evicted and even killed in the name of 'ethnic cleansing'. The RSS-BJP had been and is still spewing venom systematically against the Muslim minorities as a part of their arch Hindu-communal-fundamentalist agenda and instigating parochial-chauvinist forces in their bashing of and violence against the religious-linguistic minorities most of whom are extremely poor and languish in a hand-to-mouth situation.

But even after exhausting all their efforts, the AGP government could identify only 8,000 odd people as "foreigners". So, they resorted to other means. In the name of scrutinizing the voters' list, the common people mostly belonging to the religious minority were asked to produce the documents to prove their Indian citizenship. Even enduring a spate of hardships, hassles and harassments, these hapless people produced the valid documents to the authority. But the authorized Government officials obviously under instructions from the top were not ready to accept the documents as valid on this plea or that. The same type of scrutiny continued even four to five times. Yet they could not find out "lakhs of foreign nationals" since it was a mere concoction of the ruling quarters and had no objective basis.

In the election in 1991, the Congress came back to power defeating the AGP. To regain their vote bank in the Assamese-speaking areas, the Congress leadership also followed the same policy of harassing the genuine Indian citizens belonging to religious and linguistic minority and keeping the precipitated

divide among the poor toiling masses alive. Even they did not have any qualm in appeasing the chauvinist-communal-racist forces and maintain clandestine rapport with them. It once more showed that whipping up of chauvinist-communal-racist passion was a neatly crafted design of the ruling bourgeois class and its subservient political parties. Hence all the bourgeois parties, national or regional, craving for pelf and power, were under mandate to implement that design by hook or by crook. In 1996, the AGP came to power for the second time with a slender majority and formed a government with the CPI joining the cabinet and the CPI (M) supporting from outside. This once more brought it to the fore that except the SUCI(C), all other parties including the pseudo-Marxists were sailing in the same boat as their sole concern was to brighten their electoral prospect even if that required befriending the communal-chauvinist forces and abandoning leftism. And within no time of AGP's ascent to power, the exercise of hunting down imaginary "foreigners" was renewed, this time more vigorously. As a first step, they arbitrarily and randomly started marking genuine Indian citizens belonging to religious-linguistic minorities as 'D' voters meaning 'doubtful' voters. They did not care for any legal procedure or validity in doing so. It was stated at that time that the D-voters would be cleared after necessary verification of documents within six months. But 20 long years have passed and still such clearance is awaited for no valid reason. In this process, many Indian citizens and their progenies who were born in this country and hence were eligible for getting citizenship by virtue of their birth were marked as 'D' voters and thus disenfranchised. Number of such D-voters was around 3.7 lakhs. It was made clear that though these D-voters would be eligible for applying for inclusion of their names in the voters' list, such would not be considered unless they were cleared by the so called 'Foreigners' Tribunals'.

Introduction of IMDT Act and its subsequent repeal

It is pertinent to mention here that when the chauvinist Assam movement which was not only anti-democratic in character but later on also turned out to be a semi-fascist

one, swept the entire state, there was strong indignation against it both within and outside the country. At that time, in the face of all round denouncement, the Government of India enacted an 'Illegal Migrant (Determination Tribunal) Act (IMDT Act) which, at least outwardly, provided certain safeguards against worst form of harassment and persecution of the genuine Indian citizens belonging to religious-linguistic minorities. It was decided that the Indian citizens who came to Assam between 1966 to 1971 would remain in the state but without any voting right for the next ten years from the date of registration as so called "foreigners". It was also stated that all those who came to Assam on or after 1 January, 1966, but before 25th March, 1971 from the specified territories of Bangladesh and since then are residents of Assam, must register themselves under Section-18 for citizenship. For this purpose, a new clause 6A was inserted in the Citizenship Act, 1955 by way of an amendment in 1985.

But in 2000, the AASU had under the patronage of the arch communal RSS-BJP combine and as representative of the then AGP government of Assam, moved the Supreme Court with the unjust demand of repealing the IMDT Act. They falsely argued that this Act was applicable only in Assam and not all over India. The sub-section (2) of this Act clearly stated that this Act 'extends to the whole of India and the Central Government can enforce this Act in any state by a notification whenever it is considered necessary'. Further, the argument that if an act or a law is adopted for a particular region under a special condition, then it becomes discriminatory in nature does not stand valid on any logical premise. But upholding their prayer, the Supreme Court repealed the IMDT Act in 2005. As a result, whatever little protection the persecuted and harassed Indian citizens malevolently branded as "Foreigners" by the chauvinist-communal forces had so far, got lost.

Clear violation of accepted juridical principles

There has been another blatant subversion of the accepted judicial norms. The Supreme Court also declared that thenceforth, detection of "foreigners" would be on the

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Countrywide protest against draconian NRC

In protest of the draconian Draft NRC clamped by the BJP-led Union government on Assam robbing citizenship of millions of genuine Indian citizens, demonstrations were organized in different parts of the country. A few are given here. Those include protests at Ballari, Hyderabad, Mysore, Kolkata, Tamilnadu and Patna.



Literary Competition

At Hazaribagh, a literary and educational competition –namely, Saratchandra and Premchand Memorial Competition was organised to celebrate the two literary stalwart of yesteryears. The competition held on 1 and 2 September involved as many as 3000 competitors, 75 volunteers, 55 committee members and judges.

AIUTUC on All India General Strike

Comrade Sankar Saha, General Secretary, All India United Trade Union Centre (AIUTUC), issued the following statement to the press on the call of General Strike & Hartal on 10 September, 2018:

In protest against continuous price-rise of petroleum-diesel and other essential commodities, growing unemployment, anti-working class labour law reforms, most reprehensible communal politics etc., in the BJP rule, left parties have given call of an All India General Strike and Hartal on September 10. It is pertinent to mention that all such anti-people and anti-working class measures were there in the previous Congress rule as well. It is our apprehension that the vested interest might rise up to reap electoral benefits from this General Strike call.

While appealing to the working class to make the General Strike and Hartal a grand success, we urge upon the people at large to keep vigil and prepare ground for developing a country-wide united continuous mass movement over these burning issues.

Observance of Comrade Shibdas Ghosh Memorial Day

[In volume 52, number 1 (15 August 2018) of Proletarian Era we covered news of countrywide observance of 42nd Comrade Shibdas Ghosh Memorial Day, in different parts of the country. A few reports that could not be included in the last issue (1 September 2018) are included here.]

Uttarakhand

The Memorial Day meeting was held on 9 August at the Retired Association Hall in Srinagar-Garhwal of Uttarakhand. In the beginning, all the state leaders of the Party, AIDS, AIMSS leaders and comrades representing Children's Club paid floral tributes to Comrade Shibdas Ghosh. In his address as the main speaker, Comrade Pratap Samal, Madhya Pradesh State Secretary, highlighted Comrade Shibdas Ghosh's historic revolutionary life-struggle and his invaluable teachings and guidelines on the strength of which the Party is spreading fast in the state of Uttarakhand and developing powerful mass struggles over the burning issues of life and rousing people particularly the students and youth with the fervour of a higher ideological-cultural-moral base there. Comrade Mukesh Semwal, Uttarakhand State Coordinator, also laid importance on vigorously spreading Comrade Shibdas Ghosh Thought. Veteran trade union leaders, teachers and students attended the meeting with enthusiasm.

Alipore Central Jail

Like previous years, the Party workers and leaders held in custody on fabricated charges because of leading class and mass struggles, observed Comrade Shibdas Ghosh Memorial Day inside the Alipore Central Jail (Correctional Home), Kolkata, on 5 August. The Party paid floral tributes to the great departed leader. Comrades Banshinath Gayen, President, Nalgora Local Committee also representing South 24 Parganas Teachers' Organisation and Aniruddha Halder on behalf of the 24 Parganas District Committee addressed the brief meeting, while Comrade Yusuf Gayen presided over.

Andaman and Nicobar Islands



Memorial Day meeting being held in the Little Andamans on 5 August with Comrade Comrade Baramanna, Party in-charge of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands presiding over.

“The Government has failed in performing the most basic of the responsibilities given to it by the people”

Retired civil servants write an open letter to the Prime Minister

[Referring to the rape and murder at Kathua and Unnao and condemning the heinous role of the ruling party, BJP and the administration of the Modi government, 49 retired civil servants (IAS officers) wrote an open letter addressed to the Prime Minister. The letter was published in the daily, The Hindu on 16 April. Considering its importance, we reproduce it here though belated for unavoidable reasons: Ed Board, P. Era]

Honourable Prime Minister,

We are a group of retired civil servants who came together last year to express our concern at the decline in the secular, democratic, and liberal values enshrined in our constitution. We did so to join other voices of protest against the frightening climate of hate, fear and viciousness that the ruling establishment had insidiously induced. We spoke then as we do now: as citizens who have no affiliations with any political party nor adherence to any political ideology other than the values enshrined in our Constitution.

We had hoped that as someone sworn to upholding the Constitution, the Government that you head and the party to which you belong would wake up to this alarming decline, take the lead in stemming the rot and reassure everyone, especially the minorities and vulnerable sections of society that they need not fear for their life and liberty. This hope has been destroyed. Instead, the unspeakable horror of the Kathua and the Unnao incidents shows that the Government has failed in performing the most basic of the responsibilities given to it by the people. We, in turn, have failed

as a nation which took pride in its ethical, spiritual and cultural heritage and as a society which treasured its civilisational values of tolerance, compassion and fellow feeling. By giving sustenance to the brutality of one human being against another in the name of Hindus we have failed as human beings.

The bestiality and the barbarity involved in the rape and murder of an eight year old child shows the depths of depravity that we have sunk into. In post-Independence India, this is our darkest hour and we find the response of our Government, the leaders of our political parties inadequate and feeble. At this juncture, we see no light at the end of the tunnel and we hang our heads in shame. Our sense of shame is all the more acute because our younger colleagues who are still in service, especially those working in the districts and are required by law to care for and protect the weak and the vulnerable, also seem to have failed in their duty.

Prime Minister, we write to you not just to express our collective sense of shame and not just to give voice to our anguish or lament and mourn the death of our civilisational

values - but to express our rage. Rage over the agenda of division and hate your party and its innumerable, often untraceable offshoots that spring up from time to time, have insidiously introduced into the grammar of our politics, our social and cultural life and even our daily discourse. It is that which provides the social sanction and legitimacy for the incidents in Kathua and Unnao.

In Kathua in Jammu, it is the culture of majoritarian belligerence and aggression promoted by the Sangh Parivar which emboldened rabid communal elements to pursue their perverse agenda. They knew that their behaviour would be endorsed by the politically powerful and those who have made their careers by polarising Hindus and Muslims across a sectarian divide. In Unnao in UP it is the reliance on the worst kinds of patriarchal feudal Mafia Dons to capture votes and political power that gives such persons the freedom to rape and murder and extort as a way of asserting their own personal power. But even more reprehensible than such abuse of power, it is the response of the State Government in hounding the victim of rape and her family instead of the alleged perpetrator that shows how perverted governance practices have become. That the Government of UP finally acted only when it was compelled to do so by the High Court, shows its hypocrisy and the half-heartedness of its intent.

In both cases, Prime Minister, it is your party which is in power. Given your supremacy within the party and the centralised control you and your Party President exercise, you more than anyone else have to be held responsible for this terrifying state of affairs. Instead of owning up and making reparations however, you had until yesterday chosen to remain silent, breaking your silence only when public outrage both in India and internationally reached a point when you could no longer ignore it.

And even then, while you have condemned the act and expressed a sense of shame, you have not condemned the communal pathology behind the act nor shown the resolve to change the social, political and administrative conditions under which such communal hate is bred. We have had enough of these belated remonstrations and promises

to bring justice when the communal cauldron is forever kept boiling by forces nested within the Sangh Parivar.

Prime Minister, these two incidents are not just ordinary crimes where, with the passage of time, the wounds inflicted on our social fabric, on our body politic and the moral fibre of our society will heal and it will soon be business as usual. This is a moment of existential crisis, a turning point - the way the Government responds now will determine whether we as a nation and as a republic have the capacity to overcome the crisis of constitutional values, of governance and the ethical order within which we function.

And to this end we call upon you to do the following:

- Reach out to the families of the victims in Unnao and Kathua and seek their forgiveness on behalf of all of us.
- Call Fast-track the prosecution of the perpetrators in the Kathua case and request for a Court directed SIT in the Unnao case, without further ado.
- Call in the memory of these innocent children and all other victims of hate crime, renew a pledge to offer special protection to Muslims, to Dalits, to members of other minority communities, to women and children so that they need not fear for their life and liberty and any threat to these will be extinguished with the full force of State authority.
- Take steps to remove from Government anyone who has been associated with hate crimes and hate speeches.
- Call for an All Party Meeting to deliberate on ways in which the phenomenon of hate crime can be tackled socially, politically and administratively.

It is possible that even this may be too little too late but it will restore some sense of order and give hope that the free fall into anarchy can be arrested. We live in hope.

Signatories include *Vappala Balachandran, Chandrashekhara Balakrishnan, Ardhendu Sen, Harsh Mander, Meeran C Borwankar, Sundar Burra, Anna Dani, Javid Chowdhury, Meena Gupta, Aruna Roy, Julio Ribeiro, Jawhar Sircar, SP Ambrose, Wajahat Habibullah, Sajjad Hassan* and thirty four others.

AIUTUC on the government's announcement of marginal increase in the salary of Anganwadi and ASHA workers

Comrade Sankar Saha, General Secretary, All India United Trade Union Centre issued the following statement on 12 September 2018:

“The prolonged and persistent movement of Anganwadi and ASHAs continuing for years together throughout the country has forced the Prime Minister to open his mouth after four years of his coming to power when election of Parliament is knocking at the door.

The announced increase of Rupees 1500 and 750 for Anganwadi workers and Helpers respectively as well as doubling incentive of ASHA workers based on items of works available to them which differ from area to area is far behind than what was actually due to them. This increase can at best be called a mere compensation to the unabated erosion of their purchasing power due to sky-rocketing price-rise of essential commodities.

Under this circumstance we call upon millions of working women engaged in the Schemes not to relent but to consolidate their unity, build up broad-based alliance comprising all categories of the Scheme Workers including Mid-Day-Meal workers who have been left out of the recent meagre increase in allowance and continue the united powerful movement more vigorously to force the government to regularize them as ‘worker’ instead of volunteers, grant minimum wage of Rs. 18000/- per month and social security, etc., pending recognition as government employee.

NRC

Through a slew of manipulations, subversions and trickeries, genuine Indian citizens belonging to religious-linguistic minorities were sought to be branded as “illegal infiltrators”

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basis of Foreigners’ Act 1946. It was a draconian piece of legislation which overruled the time-tested tenet of jurisprudence that burden of proof lies with the prosecution and not with the prosecuted. But, in the case of D-voters (subsequently extended to NRC also), the onus of proving themselves as *bona fide* Indian citizens lie with the alleged “infiltrators” and not on the persons raising objection. In order to actualize this highly undemocratic procedure, the authorities invoked the Foreigners’ Act 1946 formulated during the British imperialist rule. It only reconfirmed how deep-rooted has been the conspiracy at the highest level of administration.

So-called D-voter issue

Before coming back to the issue of D-voters, another fact needs to be recalled. Way back in 1951, a National Registrar of Citizens (NRC) was prepared in Assam under the purview of the Foreigners Act of 1946, just before the first flow of immigrants from the then East Pakistan. The NRC of 1951 was challenged in the Guwahati High Court, which in 1970 ruled that it was not admissible as evidence of citizenship. But, still the ill-treatment, harassment and persecution of the

Indian citizens belonging to the religious-linguistic minorities went on and was gradually stepped up.

Amidst all these trickeries and unilateral directives, many so called D-voter cases were referred to the ‘Foreigners’ Tribunals’. But nothing tangible emanated because all these were eyewashes. In fact, in a planned manner, cases of many D-voter were referred to the ‘Foreigners’ Tribunals’ without their knowledge and in a clear travesty of law, the Tribunals disposed of such cases *ex parte* and declared them as “foreigners”. Even ordinary police was instructed to lodge complaint against any person belonging to the linguistic-religious minorities. Once a ‘D’ voter was spuriously declared as “foreigners” by the tribunal, the victim was promptly arrested and was either thrown into the notorious ‘Detention Camp’ which can only be compared with the concentration camps the Hitlerite regime created for the Jews or pushed back to the other side of the border in the darkness of night like cats and dogs.

But, even after so many foul means, at the initial stage, just 5,550 persons out of the claimed figure of 3.7 lakhs turned out to be “foreigners”. Despite all these procedural juggleries, reckless

flouting of rules and procedures and even attempted and partially successful politicization of the Tribunals, 85% of the ‘D’ voters who could get a fair trial were found to be *bona fide* Indian citizens.

Introduction of NRC

Naturally, the ruling quarters and the communal-chauvinist forces were in a quandary—what newer conspiracies would need to be hatched to convert a reality into non-reality. After repeal of IMDT Act in the year, 2005, there was a tripartite meeting among the Congress-led Central Government, Congress-led Assam state Government and the AASU without consulting any other political party or any representative of the religious-linguistic minorities.

It was decided in that meeting that the NRC 1951 would be “updated” to detect the “foreigners”. It was once more laid bare how the arch chauvinist-communal-racist forces were engaged in hatching a deep conspiracy to disunite and fractionalize toiling people and turn them against each other even by giving law and constitution a slip. Section 18 Rule 4 of the Citizenship Act of 1955 has a provision to make a National Register of Citizenship or NRC by way of conducting house to house survey (in the country as a

whole and not in any perfunctory manner in any part of the land) to enumerate the details as is done for compiling census data. This provision in law is for application at national level, if considered necessary. But, barring the preparation of an NRC in respect of Assam in 1951, no initiative was taken to prepare NRC for any other Indian state. Since the Citizenship Act stipulated that preparation of NRC should be throughout the country simultaneously, the Act was changed arbitrarily through an executive fiat bypassing parliament by adding Rule 4 A which does away with house to house enumeration and stipulates that everyone will have to apply individually by providing proof that his or her forefather’s name is there in the NRC of 1951 or any electoral roll prior to March 1971. And yet these two documents are not even available in all the districts of the state. That Parliament was bypassed in this way though the amendment would have easily passed on strength of majority, clearly points to a definite intention which any discussion in Parliament might have brought to light. Since then the process started making the religious-linguistic community more

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AIDYO launches countrywide movement, pledges for stepping it up

As a part of a countrywide movement against ever-increasing unemployment and for allowance till jobs are secured, and demanding the right to job be made constitutional, of appointment at all vacant Government posts, of fees exemption for examinations, and of permanent job in place of contractual ones, ban on liquor-pornography etc., AIDYO observed a protest day on 6 September 2018. State-level demonstrations were held among others in Lucknow by AIDYO, UP state unit and in Kolkata by the West Bengal AIDYO unit. To step-up the movement an all India programme of ‘March to Parliament’ to be held in February 2019 was



Rally on 6 September 2018 in Lucknow by AIDYO

announced from Kolkata rally. A memorandum was placed to the Uttar Pradesh State Governor and a petition signed over by more than a lakh signatories was handed over by a delegation to the West Bengal State Governor.

Glorious victory of AIDSO in Uttarakhand

AIDSO achieved a glorious victory in students’ election at the Hemvati Nandan Bahuguna University (Uttarakhand). Winning 2126 votes out of 3300, AIDSO candidate Comrade Pooja Bhandari recorded thumping victory as joint secretary and AIDSO candidate Comrade Ankit Butola won unopposed as an executive member.



Protest meeting against NRC in Kolkata by Forum for Artistes, Cultural Activists and Intellectuals on 19 August at the Indian Association Hall. It was presided over by the fore-ranking lawyer Partha Sarathi Sengupta, conducted by Dilip Chakraborty, one of the Joint Secretaries of the Forum and was addressed by eminent intellectuals Professor Sujato Bhadra, well-known leader of Human Rights movement, Sumit Chakraborty, renowned journalist and Editor, Mainstream, Professor Gargi Chakraborty, formerly of JNU, Delhi and eminent leader of women’s movement, Protul Mukherjee, well-known musician and social activist and Dr. Tarun Mondal, former MP and Vice President of the Forum.

NRC

NRC is a farcical process under the cloak of judicial sanction to forcibly prove a non-reality as reality

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and more fear-struck. This was nothing but a perfect sinister move on the part of the ultra-chauvinist-communal forces to brand *bona fide* Indian citizens belonging to religious-linguistic minorities as “foreigners” under the wrap of a quasi-judicial exercise. While the other parties including the CPI (M), CPI supported this vile monstrous move, it was only our Party which correctly identified the inner-motive of the whole scheme and raised demand for stopping this farcical process. The current NRC upgradation in Assam has been a unique exercise unprecedented not only in respect of any other state of India, may be not in the whole world as well.

Judicial function discharged by non-judicial machinery

It is claimed that the current exercise for updating and finalizing NRC is being undertaken under the supervision of the Supreme Court. But the way the genuine Indian citizens have been harassed and persecuted days after days, months after months, years after years by the rabid anti-people communal-chauvinist-racist forces, either in power or under the shelter of the power that be and on false and flimsy pretexts and denied justice from either the Supreme Court or the High Court, one wonders if any fairness would at all be shown to them and also how far and to what extent the supervision of the Supreme Court is effective.

Preparation of NRC is stated to be a judicial process and fair expectation was that appropriately empowered tribunals or courts would be entrusted with the job. In the ‘Foreigners’ Tribunals’, the referred persons had to plead their cases with the help of their advocates. If done that way, there would have been some kind of justice in the process. But, the process of preparing NRC cannot be said to have any kind of judicial accreditation. Who have been authorized to check the documents of citizenship for inclusion in the NRC? They are no appointees by the court but are all carefully selected state and central government employees and school and college teachers. Right to citizenship is akin to right to life. How can the responsibility of pronouncing verdict over such a fundamental issue be entrusted to a set of government employees and

teachers? If they are ordered from the top to act in a highly undemocratic way with a prejudiced mind and pre-determined notion of rejecting even valid documents and thereby disapprove the appeals of bona fide Indian citizens, can they afford to disobey that? It is reported that they are under constant threat of “appropriate” action if they dared to act otherwise. Even secret circulars have been issued to them by the state coordinator of NRC asking to exclude names of Bengali-speaking minorities, their children and even brothers and sisters without caring for compliance with any norms or taking cognition any of the valid documents submitted by them. The pivot of jurisprudence is that all are supposed to be innocent unless proved guilty. But in the case of NRC bearing a stamp of the Supreme Court, as we pointed out earlier, everyone is pronounced as guilty unless proved innocent and that too not by those who are accusers but by those marked as guilty by the accusers. Has anyone ever heard of such a farcical process under the cloak of judicial sanction?

Secondly, as per the rules, citizens or their descendants who have got their names enlisted in either the NRC of 1951 or any of the pre-71 electoral rolls could apply for registration in the current NRC. Accordingly, a total number of 3.29 crores of people had applied for registration by furnishing the valid legacy data or proof of citizenship and every one of them obtained an ARN (Application Receipt Number) family wise. In other words, it means that all of the 3.29 crores of ARN holders are all *prima facie* genuine Indian citizens or descendants of genuine Indian citizens. Not a single person who did not possess valid legacy data of his/her ancestors was allowed to apply for citizenship. Notably, there is no provision of any legacy data in the Citizenship Act which means there is no need for furnishing proof that one’s parents or grandparents were born in India. But that provision has been simply overruled in the NRC procedure seemingly with the vile intention of straightaway invalidating the *bona fide* citizenship of a sizeable section of Indians. Moreover, many of the women had shifted to their in-laws’ houses after marriage. As advised earlier by the authorities, they had produced linkage certificates from the Gaon

Panchayet Secretary countersigned by gazetted officers which were originally approved as valid documents. But, surprising names of such 3 million (30 lakhs) married women have been dropped from the NRC. The explanation provided for this non-inclusion is queer par excellence! It has been informed, no one knows at whose behest, that these documents are categorized as *weak* documents and hence not tenable. As per Supreme Court verdict, such certificates as well as migration certificates, refugee certificates and birth certificates issued after one year of birth were all valid documents. But these are also now brought under the definition of *weak* documents. Incidentally, there was no mention of any such *weak* document in the 15 point-modality originally prescribed for inclusion in NRC. Clearly, there has been a surfeit of unilateral, arbitrary, authoritarian and mischievous decisions like repeatedly revising the list of valid documents to exclude one after another lawful documents and invocation of weird terms like *weak* documents. There is no scope for any appeal against such arbitrary rejections of categorizations. How can a judicial process be operative unless the due judicial principles and norms are abided by to ensure that justice is upheld and delivered? Would it, therefore, be wrong to conclude that it is nothing but a politically driven exclusion aided and abetted by the state machinery by trampling underfoot all norms, laws and even basics of natural justice and those indulging in or used for operationalization of the whole design are also granted insulation from any kind of punitive action. Do not all these glaringly indicate that the whole exercise of updating the NRC was fractious, flawed, farcical and carried out for achieving a pre-determined noxious objective?

It is by way of this caricature of democracy that the 2nd draft NRC managed to arbitrarily inflate the number of so called “foreigners” to be over 40 lakhs. The state and central governments run by the BJP are now asking the people not to be panicky as this is only a draft and they would get ample opportunity to include their names through the process of claims which would follow soon. The Indian citizens belonging to the religious and linguistic minorities who have had enough experience of such hollow promises, pep talks and one after

another ploy to forcibly brand them as “foreigners” are feeling severely insecure, completely lost and passing days in fear. Even there is patrolling by police and para-military forces in the state to terrorize people and suppress dissent. Amit Shah, the BJP President and most trusted second-in-command person of Prime Minister Modi, has said openly that NRC is a landmark move and it should be carried out in other parts of the country as well. Prafulla Kumar Mahanta, ex-AGP Chief Minister of the state that all people who are left out of the NRC are “ghuspeties” (infiltrators) and would be driven out of the country. These are all clearly indicative of a well-planned ethnic cleansing.

Bluff of Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)

But the buck did not stop there. After the publication of the Final Draft of NRC, the Supreme Court had asked the Central Government to submit before 16 August 2018 the SOP for disposal of claims and objections for final updating of NRC. The SOP so submitted in the Supreme Court by the central government held that the documents for legacy and linkage will remain the same as submitted at the time of initial application. But if anyone wants to submit additional documents, he or she may do that. What a novel way of standardizing procedure for delivering justice! Where would the affected Indian citizens go for inclusion of their names in the final NRC? They would go to the same “Seva Kendras” (Service Centres) manned by the same set of people who earlier turned down their appeals undoubtedly under the instructions of the authorities. Moreover, verification, if anything of that sort does take place at all, would be based on same set of documents earlier rejected as invalid or weak. The applicants would also have no right to appeal against the decisions of such authorities.

Secondly, the Citizenship Act, 1955 provides that the person lodging objection to another person’s inclusion in the NRC will have to give reliable proof. If the proof is found to be false, the person would be subjected to a penalty of Rs.50,000 and/or a jail terms of 5 years. Moreover, the person objecting another person’s inclusion will have to be from the same locality where the person whose

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NRC

A concerted united powerful conscious movement involving all sections of toiling masses can alone frustrate bourgeois conspiracy of snatching citizenship of *bona fide* citizens

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inclusion is objected stays. On the recommendation of the state cabinet, the Central Government had suggested to the Supreme Court that the provision of penalty should be waived and the locality restrained should also be removed. This recommendation has not only been accepted but the scope of raising objections liberalized further. Now, by going through the draft NRC, any person from any part of Assam may file any number of objections against persons whose names are there in the draft. Thirdly, Prateek Hazela, the state coordinator of NRC has submitted to the Supreme Court that the list of admissible legality documents be pruned from 15 to 10. So, many of the documents like ration card, refugee registration certificate and citizenship certificate issued by competent authority upto 24 March 1971 and hitherto stated to be valid have been sought to be dropped.

Need to take cognition of circumstantial evidences

Moreover, because of repeated bouts of river erosion, devastating floods and other natural calamities, many of the valid citizenship proofs, whether belonging to the original list of 15 or pruned list of 10, have either been lost or damaged beyond retrieval. How and from where would the hapless wretched abysmally poor Indian citizens salvage those documents? Moreover, anyone conversant with the juridical norms and procedures is aware that there is a provision of disposing cases based on circumstantial evidences which are defined as proof of facts offered as evidence from which other facts may be inferred. Even murder cases like the famous Scott Peterson Murder Conviction of 2002 are often judged taking circumstantial evidences into cognizance. There are so many instances of that in India also. But for the purpose of NRC, there is complete denial of this basic tenet of jurisprudence for determination of truth and deciding inclusion.

So, what would be the outcome? There would be a plethora of objections against even the names already included in the NRC. On the other hand, all the fresh claims for inclusion would either be turned down or kept in

abeyance for being invalidated *suo moto*. Again, using judicial order as a subterfuge, newer techniques could be found out by the 'omnipotent' authorities using the so called verification machinery comprising pliable government employees to even drop many names which have featured in the 2nd draft NRC, let alone including any fresh name through the charade of SOP.

Axe would fall on D-voters

Next alarming report is that to inflate the number of so called "foreigners", the axe would fall on the D-voters. Reports are there that the persons who were declared 'D' voter and could prove themselves as genuine Indian citizens in the tribunal have started getting fresh notice that they are declared as 'D' voters. Most of the D-voters or those branded "foreigners" on flimsy pretext are mostly poor illiterate people who do not have the means to go to the higher courts for justice.

Darkening clouds are gathering in the sky

In this way, genuine Indian citizens would be willfully victimized and branded as "foreigners". Once this huge number of Indian citizens are manipulatively and inhumanly categorized as "foreigners" or D-voters, they would be sent to the specially created detention centres for indefinite period—a fate which even hardcore criminals do not suffer from. One cannot rule out the possibility that the manipulatively constructed figure of so called "foreigners" might surpass the current declaration of 40 lakhs. With the arch communal RSS-BJP with sole agenda of making the country communally surcharged and exacerbating anti-Muslim hatred in power at both the centre and the state, the situation has been more threatening for the Indian citizens belonging to the religious-linguistic minorities. As stated earlier, the BJP President has also threatened that if NRC experiment is successful in Assam, it will be extended to other states as well. Thus, they are now firing all cylinders to use the NRC as a readymade tool to accomplish their sinister mission of inflating the figure of so called "foreigners" further by capriciously and

illogically excluding genuine Indian citizens and their descendants born and brought up here from so called NRC. It is a classic example of subversion and sabotage from within. This is the inner motive behind a craftily woven grave bourgeois conspiracy which all the subservient political parties starting from the Congress, the BJP to the pseudo-Marxists have ensured to materialize step by step.

This fascist attack must be thwarted

So, what all these would ultimately lead to? There would be nothing as *bona fide* citizenship right. The oppressed toiling people would be divided into two parts—the "citizens" and the "stateless". This would only strengthen the hands of the oppressors to resort to the infamous 'divide and rule' tactics. But there is no occasion of being mired in despair or fatalistic presumption that such a well-orchestrated bourgeois conspiracy cannot be resisted. Had the despots spoken the last words, history of the human civilization would have been different. Moot point is how do the conscientious right-thinking people respond to the need of the hour. The truth that all problems, miseries and penury, discriminations and deprivations are stemming from the decadent moribund utterly reactionary and ruthlessly oppressive capitalist system has to be imbibed first by all sections of the toiling masses no matter which region or ethnicity they belong to, which language they speak or which religion they profess. The saner section of the Assamese-speaking people need to realize that problems like acute unemployment, harrowing price rise and such other burning problems wreaking havoc in their life would not be solved by driving out innocent non-Assamese speaking innocent Indian citizens from the state through NRC or any such other mechanism. These are all ploys of the quarters of vested interest to hoodwink them, divert their attention from the actual cause of their distress and hinder the process of building up united democratic movement in Assam. Uttar Pradesh is not having any so called "illegal infiltration" issue. Then how is it that 23 lakh applicants including doctorates and post-graduates had applied for just

368 posts of peons? Task imperative now is to thwart the conspiracy of taking Assam towards fascization by destroying democracy and democratic values. Had there been surging waves of united mass movements over the burning problems of life and involving all sections of the toiling people, both Assamese-speaking as well as non-Assamese speaking, it would have acted as a powerful deterrent to engineering such a sinister design of the ruling bourgeoisie and its servitors. Moreover, in the cultural ambience of this united struggle, all precipitated differences centering on religion, language or ethnicity would have been substantially reduced, if not wiped out altogether. All of them would have shared common interest in directing the blow against ruling capitalism, the common enemy. Repeatedly our Party gave call for that and urged upon the suffering people not to fall prey to the communal-chauvinist-racist intrigue and cause more harm to themselves. Wherever we could reach out to the people with our analysis and concrete 4-point programme for resolving the raked up NRC issue, we did receive positive response.

It is imperative that the people whose citizenship has been robbed away in such a conspiratorial manner as well as all right-thinking people are to be persuaded to build up long-drawn movement till justice is restored and the citizenships so invalidated are retrieved. It is to be remembered that ultimately it is the people who pronounce the last words. To concretize development of the desired long-drawn united powerful people's movement not only in Assam but in the entire country over the legitimate demand for inclusion of the names of all the genuine Indian citizens surreptitiously dropped from NRC the task of setting up people's struggle committees at the grassroot level involving all sections of the toiling masses and recruitment of volunteer corps are to be taken out in right earnest. Alongside, an appeal should be made to the democratic-minded people of the world to voice their opinion against such a demonic attempt towards ethnic cleansing. It is only in this way that the ominous move of the RSS-BJP to exacerbate anti-Muslim hatred and bashing centering on the so called NRC can be repelled.

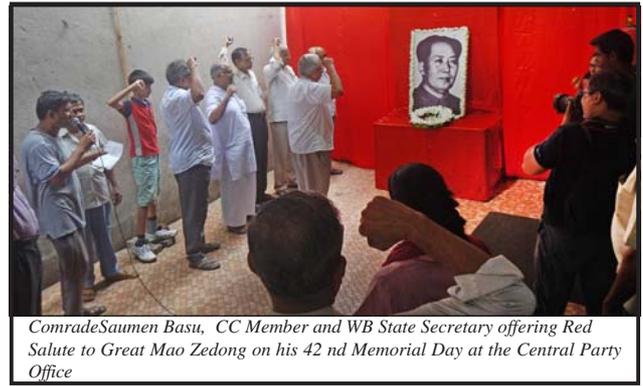
SUCI(C) on General Strike and Hartal called by the left parties on 10 September

On the call of General Strike and Hartal on 10 September 2018, Comrade Provash Ghosh, General Secretary, SUCI(C), issued the following statement to the media on 7 September, 2018:

In protest against continuous rise in the prices of petrol-diesel and other essential commodities, growing unemployment, and most reprehensible communal politics under central BJP rule and in demand for farmers' debt waiver, legitimate price of agricultural produce, muzzling the voice of the opposition, Comrade Sitaram Yechury, the CPI (M) leader informed us in Delhi that the other opposition parties were going to call a Bharat Bandh on 10 September, we the left parties separately should give a call on 10 September. Our party gave consent to the proposal. A joint statement of the left parties has also been released in this regard.

But surprisingly, the media, we find today, is reporting that the leftists are supporting a Bandh called by the Congress. This is not true. On our part the question of supporting a Bandh call of the Congress does not arise at all because price rise, unemployment, muffling the voice of the opposition and communal politics were very much there during the rule of the Congress as well. Moreover the Congress has not given this call for developing any mass movement but only for deriving electoral benefits. Our Party, the SUCI(C), does not practise the politics of entering into understanding with the Congress for reaping electoral dividend by abandoning leftism.

We call upon the people of the country to make the Bharat Bandh called by the left parties on 10 September a total success.



Toiling people of India rise in resolve to make the 10 September Bharat Bandh a remarkable success

The Party SUCI (C) congratulates common toiling people of the country for making the Bharat Bandh on 10 September 2018 a remarkable success. Called on a short notice by the left parties with supports from other opposition parties, the Bandh brought out to surface the simmering discontent and anger of common people against the present BJP rule. Exorbitant price rise of essential commodities including fuels, unbridled fomentation of communal hatred and enmity, limitless corruption, unbearable unemployment galloping with time and last but not the least the callous, arrogant, pro-corporate attitude of the BJP government at the Centre as well as in states, are making people's life a hell. Every attempt is being made to gag any protest even in the mildest form. Under such oppressive situation people have been gasping for fresh air to come out of this oppressive BJP rule and live a decent life with at least minimum necessities made available. The 10 September Bharat Bandh bears the testimony of these feelings of people, not only in this or that state, but virtually throughout the country. Even in BJP-ruled states like Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan people's response to the call of Bandh was noteworthy. And this happened despite the fact that everywhere, the government, its administration including police came down heavily upon the Bandh campaign and campaigners, took resort to use of brute force, causing severe injury to the campaigners, made arrests in a large scale, issued government circulars forcing employees to defy bandh for fear of break of service, etc.

The success of the bandh further underlines the undeniable truth that had there been a sustained organized campaign by the lefts, the traditional forces to which people desire to find to stand by them for developing movement on problems of their life and livelihood, had there been a serious prolonged ideological-organizational efforts to give exposure to the BJP designs, people's voice would have risen to higher pitch and the bandh would have been further vigorous to make the ruling party further unnerved. For them it would not have been enough with providing mere on-screen justification for the most unreasonable, shameless rise in costs of petro-products, hitting people on all walks of their life.

Here we present a few photographs on the bandh, its preparation and execution, from among the reports so far received.



All India Protest Hartal: In Rohtak, Haryana [Top] and Mumbai



All India Protest Hartal : Bihar [left], Odisha [centre] and Kolkata.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF : PROVASH GHOSH