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Facing up to Sanghi Terror Modules and Fascist Design

Recent revelations following investigation into the Malegaon blasts have given a serious jolt to our complacent and commonsensical political notions. Contrary to the commonsense impression that the Sangh Parivar specialises only in communalism leaving the business of terrorism to other ideological schools, we now know that the Sangh represents a lethal convergence of both communalism and terrorism. Similarly, if we thought that the business of governance would steadily take the BJP away from its fascist ideological roots, we have once again been proved wrong. The way the BJP has jumped to the rescue of the Malegaon blast accused makes it clear that however much the BJP may speak the language of 'development' and 'governance', the power and legitimacy it earns in the process will always be employed to the hilt to advance its ideological agenda.

The BJP had already chosen terrorism as its key election agenda for 2009. Now that investigation has begun revealing a different face of terrorism and the Sangh has come under the scanner for its dangerous role, the BJP has started twisting the agenda. It has started crying foul that Hindus are being framed in India. This is yet another glaring example of the characteristic hypocrisy of the BJP and the Sangh. To question the conduct of the police or investigative agencies in case a Muslim is arrested amounts to sedition in their book. Custodial torture and fake encounters are invested by the Sangh and BJP with a halo of gallantry as long as the victims are Muslim. The same forces, however, begin to cry foul the moment some 'swami' or 'sadhvi' or some army official comes under the scanner.

The expression 'Hindu terrorism' is a vintage RSS coinage. 'Hindu terrorism' is as much a misnomer as is 'Islamic terrorism' or 'Muslim terrorism'. We should call a spade a spade and give the Malegaon blasts and similar terrorist acts the name they deserve: 'Sanghi' terrorism. And instead of remaining confined to, and content with, the official trajectory of investigation and trial, the democratic opinion of the country must resolve to become more active and vigilant to thwart the fascist danger that underlies the Sangh-sponsored or Sangh-inspired terrorist network.

The Malegaon investigations have refreshed the public memory on some nearly forgotten names of the 'Hindutva pantheon'. We thought Savarkar and Munje were merely early 20th century characters who had not left behind any active legacy. How sorely mistaken we were! We now know that Abhinav Bharat formed originally by Savarkar has been resurrected a hundred years later and its president Himani Savarkar, daughter-in-law of the Savarkar family and daughter of Gopal Godse, brother of Nathuram Godse, boldly advocates the blasts-for-blasts principle on the lines of the bullets-for-bullets principle propounded by Maharashtra's Congress Home Minister.

We knew that Munje, political guru of RSS founder Hedgewar, was greatly fond of Mussolini and Hitler and took pride in 'independently conceiving' in India what Mussolini did in fascist Italy or Hitler in Nazi Germany. But we thought Munje's legacy was also buried with Mussolini and Hitler. Yet now we know that the Bhonsala Military Academy set up by Munje in Nashik to promote 'military regeneration' of Hindus way back in 1937 is very much alive and kicking. A new branch called Bhonsala Military School was opened in 1996 in Nagpur and the BMA-BMS network has been

systematically schooling people for admission into NDA and the armed forces. Lt-Col Prasad Shrikant Purohit, a key blast accused and a serving Intelligence Corps officer of the Indian Army is a product of the BMS and the NDA. The implications of this systematic penetration of the armed forces by deeply indoctrinated elements belonging to the Sangh and the wider network of 'Hindutva' are not difficult to imagine.

The Savarkar-Munje-Hedgewar-Golwalkar school of Hindutva was unabashed in its open praise of fascism and the ideals of "militarisation of Hinduism" and "Hinduisation of India". Those were the days when fascism had begun baring its fangs in Europe and had yet to be completely exposed. Today fascism remains widely discredited and hated across the world and fascists in India can no longer afford to speak the direct language that a Munje or Golwalkar could use so openly. Fascism in contemporary India has to perforce hide itself behind the discourse of 'governance' and a majoritarian interpretation of nationalism.

Countries like Italy and Germany that had to bear the brunt of full-blown fascism in the first half of the 20th century have succeeded in purging fascism out of their system, but in India fascism continues to draw its sustenance right from within the system. Even as the saffron camp makes a relentless clamour for a hard state to curtail whatever democratic space exists within the system, fascism's parasitical spread depends very much on the generosity and patronage showered by the state. From the demolition of Babri Masjid and the subsequent anti-Muslim carnage to the 2002 genocide in Gujarat, the Indian state has always treated communal fascist campaigns with kid gloves.

Apart from the umbrella of the state, we must also reckon that the Sangh brigade and other saffron forces have over the years built up a massive propaganda network, employing the most diverse and modern means and methods to run systematic hate campaigns against all their chosen targets ranging from the minorities and socially weaker sections to the whole spectrum of progressive and consistent secular democratic forces. Depending on the context and convenience, the targets may vary in different regions - it may be migrant youth and workers in Maharashtra, Christians in Orissa and Karnataka, Muslim youth in UP and the rural poor in Bihar.

There can be no mistaking the fact that the present juncture of deepening economic crisis and uncertainty is particularly conducive for the spread of fascist forces. Everywhere they can be seen trying to channelize mass discontent along sectarian lines. The convergence of aggressive communalism, sectarian regional frenzy and terrorism makes for a potent fascist arsenal. The modules of Sanghi terror are nothing but embryonic modules of fascism. Instead of relying on the state and the political will of the so-called saner elements within the ruling classes, progressive democratic forces must meet every instance of fascist assault by unleashing the widest possible popular initiative and mass struggles and holding the state accountable in every possible way.

AIPWA Demands Justice for Tapasi

The West Bengal unit of AIPWA demonstrated before the Chandannagar court in Hoogli district when the Tapasi murder case was being heard. After the verdict was pronounced, it brought out a militant procession in Kolkata on 18 November demanding that the Chief Minister of West Bengal should resign owning moral responsibility for the heinous crime committed by his party-men whom his government had all along been trying to protect; and that the culprits should be awarded capital punishment rather than life sentence that usually means nothing more than a 14-year prison term. The procession culminated in a street meeting on Chowringhee Road which was addressed by

comrades Gita Das, Mina Pal, Chaitali Sen and others.

AIPWA Condemns BJP's Double Standards Towards Custodial Torture & Violence Against Women

AIPWA demands investigation into Sadhvi Pragya's complaint of custodial torture and gendered abuse. If there is any truth to the allegations, it is a serious and condemnable matter, and those responsible must be punished. Custodial violence and violations – be it in the case of Sadhvi Pragya or be it Kauser Bi (who was raped and killed by Gujarat police after she witnessed the fake encounter of her husband Sohrabuddin) – ought to have no place in a democracy. At the same time, it is clear that the BJP, Shiv Sena and Sangh Parivar's approach to custodial violence and violence against women is marked by blatant double standards.

The BJP, Shiv Sena and Sangh have a right to demand protection of the human rights of the Malegaon blast-accused. But why did these groups maintain approving silence when Kausar Bi was murdered by the Gujarat police? Or when the Orissa police refused to protect the Kandhamal nun from rape by Sangh goons? Or when the innocent Muslim men falsely accused in Mecca Masjid blasts were subjected to brutal torture and sexual abuse in police custody?

AIPWA is opposed in principle to draconian POTA-model laws like MCOCA. But the BJP, which raised a clamour in favour of such laws, finds the taste of its own medicine quite bitter. The BJP has always defended the use of rape as a weapon by the Sangh brigades against women of the minorities. The BJP's position – that a Sadhvi deserves security and dignity because she is sacred while a Muslim or Christian woman can be raped by Sangh brigades to punish their religion – reeks of shameful double standards.

Gouripore Jute Mill: Workers fight for their legal PF dues

The indefinite hunger strike and dharna of the workers of Gouripore Jute Mills, in front of the Provident Fund Office, Titagarh, North 24 Parganas, which started on 10.11.2008 was temporarily deferred on the 3rd consecutive day i.e. 12.11.2008 after the PF Dept. gave some specific assurances and initiated steps for disbursement of the PF/Pensionary dues to the workers of the said mill.

Gouripore Jute Mills was shut down in the year 1997, rendering nearly 5,000 workers jobless. None of the workers of this mill have received their PF/Pension benefits and gratuity till date. The workers approached all the concerned officials: their PF Board of Trustee Members (BOT) who owed allegiance to BMS, local CPI(M) MLA, and leaders of other unions for disbursal of their hard earned PF/Pension funds. Barring BCMF (AICCTU), all the other union leaders refused to cooperate with the workers on the pretext that PF/Pension benefits are not disbursed to the workers of the closed mills. CPI(ML) leaders of North 24 Parganas and BCMF started organising these workers, stood firmly by them. The Gouripore Mazdoor Baachao Manch (GMBM) was floated, and workers cutting across all the Trade Unions joined in thousands. All the other unions soon lost all their relevance, and this forum gradually emerged as the real fighting platform, which reflected their aspirations. BCMF and GMBM worked in tandem organised numerous programmes in different forms with their single demand of PF/Pension disbursal forthwith.

The BOT took no initiative for payment of dues; the PF department remained a silent spectator; demonstrations and meetings with PF officials bore no fruit. BCMF pressurised the PF department

to initiate the process for cancellation of the Exemption granted as per the PF laws, and after a couple of months, with active intervention from the AICCTU, the Central PF Dept. issued order for cancellation of the exemption category on 12 May 2008 and sent it to the appropriate authority, Govt. of West Bengal to issue a notification on this regard.

The hollowness of the 'Do it now' slogan raised by the CM of West Bengal couple of years back, to initiate work culture within the Govt. officials, stands totally exposed when it took a few months by the Labour Dept. of the West Bengal just to issue a cancellation notification. On 7 August 2008, finally, the Labour Dept. issued the Govt. notification of cancellation of the BOT of Gouripore.

The workers then demanded that after cancellation of exemption, the BOT stands null & void, and the onus lies upon the PF dept. to immediately disburse the workers' PF/Pension dues. The leadership of the BCMF were told that as the fund and all necessary documents still lie with the BOT, they are not in a position to disburse the same. Some casual actions taken from the PF dept. to recover the fund and documents was in vain, and the BOT in active collusion with the local CPI(M) MLA openly challenged the PF dept. and refused to submit. An unholy nexus between a section of PF officials-CPI(M) MLA-BOT members-local goons was the biggest hindrance for PF dues recovery.

An astonishing fact was revealed, after pressurizing the PF dept., that the PF dept. does not possess any documents of the workers of this closed mill! The workers went for and indefinite hunger strike and dharna from 10.11.2008 onwards. Thousands of workers with red flags & banners, posters assembled in front of the PF office, Titagarh, raising slogans demanding their legitimate dues. Seven retired workers, namely, Chotelal Sau (age 70), Basudev Burman (66), Subol Burman (73), Badri Ram (85), Shivalak Ram (65), Gouranga Das (66) and Ramji Sau (66) started their indefinite hunger strike, accompanied by 37 workers on relay hunger strike. The next day, a considerable section of women and their family members joined them. Massive propaganda was organised in the adjacent areas inhabited by the jute workers. Trade Union leaders of RSP and SUCI had attended and expressed their solidarity.

On that day, in the evening, agitating women blocked and gheraoed the PF office without warning. The entire police force was taken aback and stood helpless. The leadership gave an ultimatum that if the highest PF authority fails to convene a meeting and start a meaningful dialogue by 12 noon on 12.11.2008, the PF office would be gheraoed and shut down for an indefinite period.

At this stage, on 12.11.2008, the Additional PF Commissioner, Eastern Zone convened a meeting with the leadership. The Regional Commissioner-II of the SRO, Barrackpore was severely criticised and censured for the SRO's criminal negligence and casual attitude; a section of the corrupt PF staff were suspended summarily; all the power henceforth vested with the SRO-Barrackpore was seized and a high power committee, comprising a number of PF Officials, under the direct supervision of APFC was formed, and in a few cases, legal action was initiated. Workers agreed to this resolution and the struggle ended with victorious slogans.

The APFC again convened a meeting with the leaders on 19.11.2008 and informed that their dept. have in the meantime recovered the fund of Rs. 10 crores. Some legal action have been expedited, and the workers are hopeful to get their PF/pension soon.

AICCTU Takes up cudgels for Tramway Workers

The Calcutta Tramways Company Bus Drivers-O- Karmachari Samiti (CTCBDKS), the newest union

(an affiliate of AICCTU) in the Calcutta Tramways Company (1978) Ltd, an undertaking under the Government of West Bengal, has created ripples among the staff and workers in the CTCL. This is yet another expression of rapid erosion of confidence-level of CITU, AITUC and INTUC unions among tram workers.

For over a decade, over 200 bus drivers in CTC were kept as casual/contract workers. But for the emergence and activism of CTCBDKS, 69 of them would not have been in substantive employment. They now get Rs 10,000 a month (excluding PF and other statutory receivables) as they are now on the permanent roll.

Casual bus drivers used to get Rs 60 a day (on days of work only). Sustained agitation by the CTCBDKS caused a raise of Rs 10 (effective from 10 months back, although arrear payment is yet to be disbursed). Ever since these bus drivers were recruited, they have been victims of calculated repression: deprived of casual and earned leave, even leave due to illness or medical grounds. Normal benefits like PF, gratuity, ESI and uniform allowance or annual allocation of free uniforms are all denied.

The tendency to deprive CTC workers - not bus drivers alone - is not new, although CTC chairman Rajdeo Goala is a national working committee member of CITU and a member of Kolkata district secretariat of CPI(M). He is also the president of CITU-affiliate in CTC. Last year, bus drivers were paid ex-gratia of Rs 1000. The CTCBDKS leadership "moved the Labour Commissioner of West Bengal and drew the attention of the latter of the rules in vogue to compel the reluctant CTC management to pay Rs 3500 as bonus to every CTC staff/worker", said CTCBDKS president Dibakar Bhattacharya. "We have demanded that the management pay Rs 2500 for the previous year", he added.

Bus drivers previously were denied of casual leave. Now they get eight days' CL every year with full pay.

In ditching CTC workers - not bus drivers alone- the company stops no where, a CPI(M) senior leader at the helm notwithstanding. Some of the gross violations of workers' rights include: ESI dues of about Rs 70 lakhs; keeping PF money which is but workers' money at the CTC, instead of depositing the same to the Regional PF Commissioner (workers not apprised of where and how much of PF money is invested); CTC authorities remaining aloof when bus drivers have to incur the cost of legal expenses and attending courts for violation of traffic laws, and get victimised by traffic police; treating drivers injured in accidents as laid-off workmen during the period on convalescence; and leaving them to bear the cost of treatment.

Nonetheless, Comrade Dibakar warns against any complacency about instances of success. "We have achieved some but the volume of unachieved is mammoth. We have to wage struggle demanding criminal prosecution by the PF and ESI authorities for deceiving workers. CTC chairman and directors as also concerned executives ought to be issued non-bailable arrest warrants as per rules and practices. Another deliberately vindictive decision by the Left Front government is promulgation of an ordinance, if a person is run over by the CTC, CSTC or government-run transport bus, the police will lodge a case against the concerned driver under Section 304 of the Indian Penal Code. This is highly unethical. Culpable homicide doesn't mean murder. There are many such burning issues which we have to take on."

Inaugural Conference of Jharkhand Krantikari Visthapit Sangharsh Morcha

The first ever Conference of Jharkhand Krantikari Visthapit Sangharsh Morcha (Jharkhand Revolutionary Struggle Front for the Displaced) was held on 2nd November 2008, at Shahid Dukhu-Kanhu sabha sthal (Khelachandi grounds). The martyrs for the cause of displaced were remembered and the 500 delegates attending the Conference paid rich tributes to them. The strength of women delegates from displaced villages was significant.

Inaugurating the Conference Com. Subhendu Sen, Central Committee member of CPI(ML), said that the displacement of tribal and poor Jharkhandi people has been taking place in the name of Industrialisation and development, whereas no real development and modernisation of Jharkhand can take place by ignoring the thousands of the displaced people and their struggle for their rights cannot be suppressed by any repressive measure.

Addressing the Conference, Party leader and MLA from Bagodar Com. Vinod Singh mentioned that no prominent political parties in the State have ever raised the question of displaced masses with any importance. He made an appeal and called for different organisations of the displaced people to come under one umbrella of Jharkhand Krantikari Visthapit Sangharsh Morcha. At many places where the displaced are offered jobs in return of their land are also subjected to various terms and conditions like a required diploma or something like this. He called for launching movement to legislate pro-displaced laws and for ensuring punishment to the management officials who force unlawful conditions on the displaced people.

The Conference was also addressed by the General Secretary of Centre of Steel Workers Devdeep Singh, CPI(ML) State Committee member Bhuvaneswar Kewat, Baijnath Guarain of Janwadi Visthapit Mahapanchayat, Bhola Thakur of Kishan Mazdoor Sangh and Gopal Das of Plant Attendant Visthapit Sakshatkar Sangh apart from many other leaders and speakers. The Conference was presided over by Com. Bihari Mahato and was conducted by Com. Yudhisthir Gaurain. Com. Kamaldeo Prasad gave the vote of thanks.

OBITUARY

Comrade Venkanna : Comrade Narra Venkateswara Rao, popularly known as Buggapadu Venkanna, 42, passed away on 13 November 2008 from a cardiac arrest. Comrade Venkanna joined our party in March 2008. His forefathers migrated to Warangal Mulugu forest area from Krishna District after the withdrawal of the Telangana armed struggle. His father also was an active revolutionary leader who worked with the Chandra Pulla Reddy group of CPI(ML). At the age of 15 Comrade Venkanna joined a squad led by Comrade Dharmanna, a popular veteran leader and close associate of CPR. Later he joined CPI(ML) Janashakti where he worked for many years. After joining our party he worked to activate his old base among tribals, taking up the land question. He played a key role in organising the AIALA State Conference at Khammam. Comrade Venkanna is survived by his wife Vijaya who is a member of the AIPWA State Executive.

Long Live Comrade Venkanna!

Comrade Murali : Comrade Gunuganti Murali, 32, of Kerchapalli village of Nalgonda district, died an untimely and accidental death due to electric shock at his home on 12 November 2008. He began his revolutionary journey with attraction towards the PWG and joined as a squad member. Later he was associated with the Nagi Reddy faction (now known as the Kanu Sanyal faction) and worked as

in-charge of the youth wing Nava Yuvajana Sangam for quite some time. He joined our party four years back. Facing all the initial challenges in Telangana, Comrade Murali stood like a rock defending the party. He developed a good base among beedi workers and also among spinning mill workers and started AICCTU in Bhainsa town of Adilabad district. He was elected to the State Executive of AICCTU. In spite of threats to his life by the ex-PWG mafia leader Nayeem, Murali resolutely worked for the people as a CPI(ML) activist. CPI(ML) pays homage to Comrade Murali, a brave son of the Telangana soil.

Red Salute to Comrade Murali!

Comrade Ramji Rajbhar :Comrade Ramji Rajbhar, 50 passed away due to a sudden heart attack on 12 November. Comrade Rajbhar was a member of the Gazipur district standing committee and Secretary of the Bhadaura block. He joined the communist movement in 1997. Working initially in the Jamania block, he led the party in expanding our work to the Bhadaura block and mobilised rural poor in many struggles. His untimely death is deeply grieved by the party. A condolence meeting was held at the Bhadaura party office, where comrades including the UP State Secretary Sudhakar Yadav paid tribute to both Comrade Ramji Rajbhar as well as Comrade Ashok of Lokyuddh who also had just passed away. Comrade Rajbhar's funeral procession was attended by some 2000 local people who marched raising slogans promising to continue his struggle and realise his dreams.

Long Live Comrade Ramji Rajbhar!

P.S.

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