

The Genocidal Pogrom in Gujarat: Anatomy of Indian Fascism

The Main Enemy is at Home

Statement on Recent Nuclear Explosion at Pokhran by Govt. Of India, by INQUILABI COMMUNIST SANGATHAN, (Indian Section of the Fourth International).

Gone are voices of discord. Gone are the criticisms over corruption, over even the Babri Masjid destruction. Congress and Janata, Samajwadi Party and various regional parties, all are tripping over each other's feet in their bid to hail the shiny, new-found national unity in the aftermath of the bomb-blast at Pokhran. National security has become the watchword, with which the Vajpayee government, and the RSS-BJP family, are now seeking to mobilise public opinion. For a whole month, the bourgeois media has been criticising defence Minister George Fernandes for having attacked China and damaged attempts at normalisation of relations. Those same scribes and editors are now competing with each other to praise Fernandes for having prepared public opinion. And this wave of chauvinistic nationalism has drawn in the major parties of the Indian left.

Constantly looking at bourgeois and petty bourgeois public opinion, whose approbation has become their life's blood, the CPI and the CPI(M) have done no more than slightly distanced themselves after the second round of explosions, and even then, after taking a bow in the direction of the scientists, and after ensuring that their bourgeois allies will not be too upset by their criticisms.

National security, yells Vajpayee. National security, screeches the Organiser. National security, agrees happily Mulayam Singh Yadav, ex-defence minister, spurious socialist, and a supposedly major rival of the BJP. National security, agrees the Congress, going on to assert that not the BJP, but the Congress is the real father of the Indian nuclear denture. Finally, national security, mumbles the shame-faced left. Yet, who is threatening whom, and whose security will the nuclear explosions safeguard?

For the Indian working class, the answer is clear. Even as the nuclear devices were exploded, Maoist activists were being murdered again in Bihar by the Ranvir Sena, having close connections with the BJP. Striking nurses in Delhi were threatened with eviction, arrest, the application of the Essential Services Maintenance Act, and any number of repressive measures. Delhi University teachers, on strike a short while back over demands for a better pay-structure and additional benefits, were threatened with pay cuts for the period of strike.

The blood of Shankar Guha Niyogi, slain trade unionist of Madhya Pradesh, is in the hands of people well-protected by the BJP. Although the BJP did not get a clear majority by itself, and hence had to formally tone down its programme, the fascist agenda was never given up. And one part of that agenda has always been jingoistic nationalism. Such a nationalism on one hand threatens peace in the region. On the other hand it is a weapon in the hands of the ruling class to ideologically break working class solidarity. A threat of war is always a good weapon. It whips into a frenzy the petty bourgeoisie, and even layers of the working class. It isolates the class conscious vanguard.

It gives the regime legitimacy in leading attacks on working class standards of living, and into attacking and seeking to smash trade unions. In the case of the BJP, in such attacks it will also have the assistance of the mass organisations of fascism that have been built up over the years. Already, the Prime Minister, the Finance Minister, the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, and other such persons have warned that sanctions must be faced with determination. No doubt, for Indian capitalism, the determination is there, for they were, in the person of Rahul Bajaj, quite upbeat. They are determined that this time the costs must be passed on to the working class, and that trade union protected, hard-earned rights of the workers must go. At the current juncture, after the sanctions begin to bite, every struggle by the working class to maintain its standard of living will be branded a treasonous activity. Every major strike will face, not only state action, but the organised violence of the fascist forces.

And are India's securities, sovereignty, truly threatened? By whom? Can Pakistan really invade and dismember India? Had there been no sustained history of repression in Kashmir, had there been no systematic violation of the democratic rights of the Kashmiri people, had their right of self-determination not been trampled underfoot, no less than West Pakistan had done with the people of then East Pakistan (later Bangladesh), Pakistan would have been able to do nothing in that region.

Moreover, what are nuclear weapons supposed to do? No imaginary line on a map will stop radioactive fall-out. A nuclear bomb dropped in Lahore or Karachi will also affect Indians, quite apart from the fact that Pakistan may retaliate in kind in such a case. Is it the sovereignty of India vis-a-vis USA that is sought to be demonstrated? Then it is only a farcical and token sovereignty. Internationalization of capital has meant that the sovereign state plays a very limited role in many crucial areas. Neither India, nor any other country, can ignore the WTO or the international financial institutions.

Nothing short of worldwide workers' struggles, culminating in workers' revolutions, can do that. No, ultimately what is being sought is far more sinister. Indian capitalism, rallying behind a fascist-militarist tendency, wants to strengthen the state power against its own most mortal enemy, the Indian working class. That the economy of India is not yet like Jamaica or Sri Lanka, that significant sections of the working class still get substantial cost-of-living increase neutralisation, that struggles like the bank employees struggle have politically blocked certain moves in the direction of liberalisation rankle. The sovereign state is now urged to exercise its mind in this direction.

So is there no foreign policy dimension at all? No, there is. It is the attempt by the Indian bourgeoisie to attain big-power status. Gujral tried to be a nice guy. That got India no promise of a permanent seat in the UN Security Council. So now the long-cherished RSS vision of an armed, combative India, dominating Asia from Kabul to Singapore, is being picked up by large sections of the military, the bureaucracy, and the bourgeoisie, and is being fed to the middle class public opinion by the paid "opinion-makers".

This big power status means, India will get to dominate neighbors like Pakistan, so long as the direct US interests are not crossed. This is the meaning of Vajpayee's message to Clinton. At the same time, this is bound to raise tension in the region, and create a local arms race, involving India, Pakistan and China.

With Vajpayee now practically echoing Fernandes on identifying China as the main enemy, India is virtually declaring that India wants a CTBT renegotiations that will place India on par with China.

Given the fact that China already has a declared stockpile of 300 nuclear arms, and the further fact that producing the warheads is only a small part of the total cost of weaponisation, the indications are grave. They tend to suggest a willingness on the part of the government of India to rush in for missile production at a very high rate, to enter into a contest with a country with three times the wealth of India and with a faster rate of growth. Once again, this can be done. Hitler rearmed Germany at a breathtaking pace. The USSR kept up with the USA for many years despite a weaker economy.

But the cost is very high, and it will inevitably fall on the working class, while for an interim period, of quite significant duration, militarization can offer large profits, and a major area of investment, for Indian capital, which can make up for the sanctions. At the same time, the United States shows its usual hypocrisy. This is the only country to have actually used the atom bomb, and the first country to test the hydrogen bomb and make the neutron bomb. In the war against Iraq, the USA, despite its vaunted accuracy, has killed many civilians, indicating a deliberate will.

This country has fought more destructive wars than any other country since World War II. For the capitalist rulers of the USA to assert that sanctions are intended to ensure that nasty weapons do not fall into wrong hands begs the question - what gave them the idea that their hands are the right ones? The imperialist butchers of Korea, Vietnam or Iraq have no moral right to dictate terms to any other country. Indeed, the government of India is well aware of this sentiment in India. Like Nehru and Indira Gandhi before them, the current rulers want to exploit the legitimate anti-imperialist feelings of the mass of people for their nefarious ends. US threats, sanctions, all these will be used to consolidate the RSS-BJP position, just as the savagery of the second Gulf War has actually strengthened rather than weakened the power of Saddam Hussain.

Taking the foregoing into consideration, we take the following stand :

* We condemn the testing of nuclear devices by the government of India, just as we have condemned every testing of nuclear devices;

* We warn the working class and all the toiling people of India, and the entire sub-continent, that in every case, it is not the neighbouring country, but the ruling class at home, that constitutes the main enemy;

* We are not able to congratulate the scientists involved. On the contrary, it is our belief that by contributing to the further damage of the environment, by contributing to a new nuclear arms race, for the sake of personal wealth, "glory" or misplaced nationalism, these scientists stand convicted of crimes against humanity. Even before 1945, scientists, like those in Germany, had resisted the pressure to help out their regime. And since Hiroshima and Nagasaki, every scientist who takes the side of nuclear war-mongers, anywhere in the world, does so knowingly, and cannot be absolved of his or her personal responsibility for that;

* We urge the working class, including the left parties, the trade unions, and all other organisations, to unite against the nationalist hype and for class demands;

* We call on all democratic people, all those who want peace and amity in the sub-continent, to unite to fight for the immediate signing by the government of India of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty with no further negotiations;

* We condemn the imperialist hypocrisy of sanctions. We call on our class brothers and sisters in the imperialist countries, above all in the USA, to oppose sanctions. Nuclear weapons are unsafe in any hands, and the revolutionary proletariat must oppose nuclear weapons. But they must do so through methods of proletarian class struggle and proletarian internationalism, and oppose every ruling class attack on the proletariat anywhere. Nationalism in India, and US claims to keep the world safe, are both ideologies that will only weaken the working class.

* We condemn every strategy of so-called national security that will actually jeopardise the lives of millions of ordinary Indians by opening them up for retaliatory nuclear attacks.