

The Genocidal Pogrom in Gujarat: Anatomy of Indian Fascism

The Workers' Militia and its Opponents

To struggle, it is necessary to conserve and strengthen the instrument and the means of struggle – organizations, the press, meetings, etc. Fascism threatens all of that directly and immediately. It is still too weak for the direct struggle for power but it is strong enough to attempt to beat down the working-class organizations bit by bit, to temper its bands in its attacks, and to spread dismay and lack of confidence in their forces in the ranks of the workers.

Fascism finds unconscious helpers in all those who say that the “physical struggle” is impermissible or hopeless, and demand of Doumergue the disarmament of his Fascist guard. Nothing is so dangerous for the proletariat, especially in the present situation, than the sugared poison of false hopes. Nothing increases the insolence of the Fascists so much as “flabby pacifism” on the part of the workers’ organizations. Nothing destroys the confidence of the middle classes in the working class as temporizing, passivity, and the absence of the will to struggle.

Le Populaire and especially **l’Humanité** write every day: “The united front is a barrier against Fascism”; “the united front will not permit”; “the Fascists will not dare”; etc. These are phrases. It is necessary to say squarely to the workers, Socialists, and Communists: do not allow yourselves to be lulled by the phrases of superficial and irresponsible journalists and orators. It is a question of our heads and the future of socialism. It is not that we deny the importance of the united front. We demanded it when the leaders of both parties were against it. The united front opens up numerous possibilities but nothing more. In itself, the united front decides nothing. Only the struggle of the masses decides. The united front will reveal its value when Communist detachments will come to the help of Socialist detachments and vice versa in the case of an attack by the Fascist bands against **Le Populaire** or **l’Humanité**. But for that, proletarian combat detachments must exist and be educated, trained and armed. And if there is not an organization of defence, i.e., a workers’ militia, **Le Populaire** and **l’Humanité** will be able to write as many articles as they like on the omnipotence of the united front but the two papers will find themselves defenceless before the first well-prepared attack of the Fascists.

We propose to make a critical study of the “arguments” and the “theories” of the opponents of the workers’ militia who are very numerous and influential in the two working-class parties.

“We need mass self-defence and not the militia”, we are often told. But what is this “mass self-defence” without combat organizations, without specialized cadres, without arms? To give over the defence against Fascism to unorganized and unprepared masses left to themselves would be to play a role incomparably lower than the role of Pontius Pilate. To deny the role of the militia is to deny the role of the vanguard. Then why a party? Without the support of the masses, the militia is nothing. But without organized combat detachments, the

most heroic masses will be smashed bit by bit by the Fascist gangs. It is nonsense to counterpose the militia to self-defence. The militia is an organ of self-defence.

“To call for the organization of a militia”, say some opponents who, to be sure, are the least serious and honest, “is to engage in provocation.” This is not an argument but an insult. If the necessity for the defence of the workers’ organizations flows from the whole situation, how then can one not call for the creation of the militia? Perhaps they mean to say that the creation of a militia “provokes” Fascist attacks and government repression. In that case this is an absolutely reactionary argument. Liberalism has always said to the workers that by their class struggle they “provoke” the reaction.

The reformists repeated this accusation against the Marxists, the Mensheviks against the Bolsheviks. These accusations reduced themselves, in the final analysis, to the profound thought that if the oppressed do not baulk, the oppressors will not be obliged to beat them. This is the philosophy of Tolstoy and Gandhi but never that of Marx and Lenin. If **l’Humanité** wants hereafter to develop the doctrine of “non-resistance to evil by violence”, it should take for its symbol not the hammer and sickle, emblem of the October revolution, but the pious goat which provides Gandhi with his milk.

“But the arming of the workers is only opportune in a revolutionary situation, which does not yet exist.” This profound argument means that the workers must permit themselves to be slaughtered until the situation becomes revolutionary. Those who yesterday preached the “third period” do not want to see what is going on before their eyes. The question of arms itself has only come forward because the “peaceful”, “normal”, “democratic” situation has given way to a stormy, critical and unstable situation which can transform itself into a revolutionary as well as a counter-revolutionary situation.

[Editor’s Note: “*The Third Period*”. According to the Stalinist schema, this was the “final period of capitalism”, the period of its immediately impending demise and replacement by soviets. The period is notable for the Communists’ ultra-left and adventurist tactics, notably the concept of social-fascism.]

This alternative depends above all on whether the advanced workers will allow themselves to be attacked with impunity and defeated bit by bit or will reply to every blow by two of their own, arousing the courage of the oppressed and uniting them around their banner. A revolutionary situation does not fall from the skies. It takes form with the active participation of the revolutionary class and its party.

The French Stalinists now argue that the militia did not safeguard the German proletariat from defeat. Only yesterday they completely denied any defeat in Germany and asserted that the policy of the German Stalinists was correct from beginning to end. Today they see the entire evil in the German workers’ militia (**Rote Front**). Thus from one error they fall into a diametrically opposite one no less monstrous. The militia in itself does not settle the question. *A correct policy is necessary*. Meanwhile the policy of Stalinism in Germany (“social fascism is the chief enemy”, the split of the trade unions, the flirtation with nationalism, putschism) fatally led to the isolation of the proletarian vanguard and to its shipwreck. With an utterly worthless strategy no militia could have saved the situation.

It is nonsense to say that in itself the organization of the militia leads to adventures, provokes the enemy, replaces the political struggle by physical struggle, etc. In all these phrases there is nothing but political cowardice.

The militia, as the strong organization of the vanguard, is in fact the surest defence against adventures, against individual terrorism, against bloody spontaneous explosions.

The militia is at the same time the only serious way of reducing to a minimum the civil war which Fascism imposes upon the proletariat. Let the workers, despite the absence of a “revolutionary situation”, occasionally correct the “papa’s son” patriots in their own way and the recruitment of new Fascist bands will become incomparably more difficult.

But here the strategists, tangled in their own reasoning, bring forward against us still more stupefying arguments. We quote textually: “If we reply to the revolver shots of the Fascists with other revolver shots”, writes **I’Humanité** of October 23 (1934), “we lose sight of the fact that Fascism is the product of the capitalist régime and that in fighting against Fascism it is the entire system which we face”. It is difficult to accumulate in a few lines greater confusion of more errors. It is impossible to defend oneself against the Fascists because they are “a product of the capitalist régime”. That means we have to renounce the whole struggle, for all contemporary social evils are “products of the capitalist system”.

When the Fascists kill a revolutionist or burn down the building of a proletarian newspaper, the workers’ are to sigh philosophically: “Alas! Murders and arson are products of the capitalist system”, and go home with easy consciences. Fatalist prostration is substituted for the militant theory of Marx, to the sole advantage of the class enemy. The ruin of the petty bourgeoisie is, of course, the product of capitalism. The growth of the Fascist bands is, in turn, a product of the ruin of the petty bourgeoisie. But on the other hand, the increase in the misery and the revolt of the proletariat are also products of the sharpening of the class struggle. Why, then, for the “Marxists” of **I’Humanité** are the Fascist bands the legitimate product of capitalism and the workers’ militia the illegitimate product of the Trotskyists? It is impossible to make head or tail of this.

“We have to deal with the whole system”, we are told. How? Over the heads of human beings? The Fascists in the different countries began with their revolvers and ended by destroying the whole “system” of workers’ organizations. How else to check the armed offensive of the enemy if not by an armed defence in order, in our turn, to go over to the offensive?

I’Humanité now admits defence in words, but only in the form of “mass self-defence”. The militia is harmful because, you see, it divides the combat detachments from the masses. But why then are there independent armed detachments among the Fascists who are not cut off from the reactionary masses but who, on the contrary, arouse the courage and embolden the masses by their well-organized attacks? Or perhaps the proletarian mass is inferior in combative quality to the declassed petty bourgeoisie?

Hopelessly tangled, **I’Humanité** finally begins to hesitate: it appears that mass self-defence requires the creation of special “self-defence groups”. In the place of the rejected militia special groups or detachments are proposed. It would seem at first sight that there is a

difference only in the name. Certainly the name proposed by **l'Humanité** means nothing. One can speak of "mass self-defence" but it is impossible to speak of "self-defence groups" since the purpose of the groups is not to defend themselves but the workers' organizations. However, it is of course not a question of the name. The "self-defence groups", according to **l'Humanité**, must renounce the use of arms in order not to fall into "putschism". These sages treat the working class like an infant who must not be allowed to hold a razor in his hands. Razors, moreover, are the monopoly, as we know, of the Camelots du Roi [French monarchists grouped around Charles Maurras' newspaper, *Action Française*, which was violently anti-democratic] who are a legitimate "product of capitalism" and who with the aid of razors have overthrown the "system" of democracy. In any case, how are the "self-defence groups" going to defend themselves against the Fascist revolvers? "Ideologically", of course. In other words: they can only hide themselves. Not having what they require in their hands, they will have to seek "self-defence" in their feet. And the Fascists will in the meanwhile sack the workers' organizations with impunity. But if the proletariat suffers a terrible defeat, it will at any rate not have been guilty of "putschism". This fraudulent chatter, parading under the banner of "Bolshevism" arouses only disgust and loathing.

During the "third period" of happy memory, when the strategists of **l'Humanité** were afflicted with barricade delirium, "conquered" the streets every day and stamped as "social fascist" everyone who did not share their extravagances, we predicted: "The moment these gentlemen burn the tips of their fingers, they will become the worst opportunists." That prediction has now been completely confirmed. At a time when within the Socialist Party the movement in favour of the militia is growing and strengthening, the leaders of the so-called Communist Party run for the hose to cool down the desire of the advanced workers to organize themselves in fighting columns. Could one imagine a more demoralizing or more damning work than this?

A Workers' Militia Must Be Built

In the ranks of the Socialist Party sometimes this objection is heard: "A militia must be formed but there is no need of shouting about it." One can only congratulate comrades who wish to protect the practical side of the business from inquisitive eyes and ears. But it would be much too naïve to think that a militia could be created unseen and secretly within four walls. We need tens and later hundreds of thousands of fighters. They will come only if millions of men and women workers, and behind them the peasants, understand the necessity for the militia and create around the volunteers an atmosphere of ardent sympathy and active support. Conspiratorial care can and must envelop only the *technical* aspect of the matter. The *political* campaign must be openly developed, in meetings, factories, in the streets and on the public squares.

The fundamental cadres of the militia must be the factory workers grouped according to their place of work, known to each other and able to protect their combat detachments against the provocations of enemy agents far more easily and more surely than the most elevated bureaucrats. Conspirative general staffs without an open mobilization of the masses will at the moment of danger remain impotently suspended in mid-air. Every working-class organization has to plunge into the job. In this question there can be no line of demarcation between the

working-class parties and the trade unions. Hand in hand they must mobilize the masses. The success of the people's militia will then be fully assured.

“But where are the workers going to get arms?” object the sober “realists”, – that is to say, frightened philistines – “the enemy has rifles, cannon, tanks, gas and aircraft. The workers have a few hundred revolvers and pocket knives.”

In this objection everything is piled up to frighten the workers. On the one hand, our sages identify the arms of the Fascists with the armament of the state. On the other, they turn towards the state and demand that it disarm the Fascists. Remarkable logic! In fact their position is false in both cases. In France the Fascists are still far from controlling the state. On February 6 they entered into armed conflict with the state police. That is why it is false to speak of cannon and tanks when it is a matter of the *immediate* armed struggle against the Fascists. The Fascists, of course, are richer than we. It is easier for them to buy arms. But the workers are more numerous, more determined, more devoted, when they are conscious of a firm revolutionary leadership.

In addition to other sources, the workers can arm themselves at the expense of the Fascists by systematically disarming them.

This is now one of the most serious forms of the struggle against Fascism. When workers' arsenals will begin to stock up at the expense of the Fascist arms depots, the banks and trusts will be more prudent in financing the armament of their murderous guards. It would even be possible in this case – *but in this case only* – that the alarmed authorities would really begin to prevent the arming of the Fascists in order not to provide an additional source of arms for the workers. We have known for a long time that only a revolutionary tactic engenders, as a by-product, “reforms” or concessions from the government.

But how to disarm the Fascists? Naturally, it is impossible to do so with newspaper articles alone. Fighting squads must be created. An intelligence service must be established. Thousands of informers and friendly helpers will volunteer from all sides when they realize that the business has been seriously undertaken by us. It requires a will to proletarian action.

But the arms of the Fascists are of course not the only source. In France there are more than one million organized workers. Generally speaking, this number is small. But it is entirely sufficient to make a beginning in the organization of a workers' militia. If the parties and unions armed only a tenth of their members, that would already be a force of 100,000 men. There is no doubt whatever that the number of volunteers who would come forward on the morrow of a “united front” appeal for a workers' militia would far exceed that number. The contributions of the parties and unions, collections and voluntary subscriptions would within a month or two make it possible to assure the arming of 100,000 to 200,000 working-class fighters. The Fascist rabble would immediately sink its tail between its legs. The whole perspective of development would become incomparably more favourable.

To invoke the absence of arms or other objective reasons to explain why no attempt has been made up to now to create a militia, is to fool oneself and others. The principal obstacle – one can say the only obstacle – has its roots in the conservative and passive character of the leaders of the workers' organizations. The sceptics who are the leaders do not believe in the

strength of the proletariat. They put their hope in all sorts of miracles from above instead of giving a revolutionary outlet to the energies pulsing below. The Socialist workers must compel their leaders to pass over immediately to the creation of the workers' militia or else give way to younger, fresher forces.

The Arming of the Proletariat

A strike is inconceivable without propaganda and without agitation. It is also inconceivable without pickets who, when they can, use persuasion, but when obliged, use force. The strike is the most elementary form of the class struggle which always combines, in varying proportions, "ideological" methods with physical methods. The struggle against Fascism is basically a political struggle which needs a militia just as the strike needs pickets. Basically, the picket is the embryo of the workers' militia. He who thinks of renouncing "physical" struggle must renounce all struggle, for the spirit does not live without flesh.

Following the splendid phrase of the great military theoretician, Clausewitz, war is the continuation of politics by other means. This definition also fully applies to civil war. Physical struggle is only "another means" of the political struggle. It is impermissible to oppose one to the other since it is impossible to check at will the political struggle when it transforms itself, by force of inner necessity, into a physical struggle.

The duty of a revolutionary party is to foresee in time the inescapability of the transformation of politics into open armed conflict, and with all its forces to prepare for that moment just as the ruling classes are preparing.

The militia detachments for defence against Fascism are the first step on the road to the arming of the proletariat, not the last. Our slogan is:

Arm the proletariat and the revolutionary peasants.

The workers' militia must in the final analysis embrace all the toilers. To fulfil this program *completely* would be possible only in a workers' state into whose hands would pass all the means of production and consequently also all the means of destruction, i.e., all the arms and the factories which produce them.

However, it is impossible to arrive at a workers' state with empty hands. Only political invalids like Renaudel can speak of a peaceful, constitutional road to socialism. The constitutional road is cut by trenches held by the Fascist bands. There are not a few trenches before us. The bourgeoisie will not hesitate to resort to a dozen *coups d'état* aided by the police and the army, to prevent the proletariat from coming to power.

[Editor's Note: Pierre Renaudel (1871-1935): Prior to WWI, socialist leader Jean Jaures' right hand man and editor of 'Humanite'. During the war, a right-wing social patriot. In the 1930s, he and Marcel Deat led the revisionist "neo-socialist" tendency. Voted down at the July 1933 convention, this tendency split from the Socialist Party. After the fascist riots of February 6, 1934, most of the "neos" joined the Radical Party, the main party of French capitalism.]

A workers' socialist state can be created only by a victorious revolution.

Every revolution is prepared by the march of economic and political development, but it is always decided by open armed conflicts between hostile classes. A revolutionary victory can become possible only as a result of long political agitation, a lengthy period of education and organization of the masses.

But the armed conflict itself must likewise be prepared long in advance.

The advanced workers must know that they will have to fight and win a death struggle. They must reach out for arms, as a guarantee of their emancipation.