

Proletarian Era

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Organ of the SOCIALIST UNITY CENTRE OF INDIA
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Stand By Earthquake Victims

- TOLL MAY CROSS 60,000 AND ONE LAKH STILL UNDER DEBRIS
- SPECTRE OF STARVATION HAUNTS SURVIVORS ● HECTIC POLITICS BUT LITTLE RELIEF AND RESPITE ● GUJARAT SUCI VOLUNTEERS PLUNGED INTO RELIEF WORK ● SUCI MEDICAL TEAMS RUSHED TO THE STATE

Comrade Nihar Mukherjee, General Secretary, SUCI, expressing serious concern over the Gujarat earthquake in a press statement on 27th January, 2001, said :

"The most devastating earthquake in India and the neighbouring country is unprecedented. The worst affected area is the Gujarat state of India where more than 8000 people already reportedly died and no body knows how many are on the brink of death. The Central Committee condoles the death and expresses heartfelt sympathy for the families who have lost their kith and kin.

Both the central and state governments have miserably failed to take prompt action it deserves, let alone tackling the situation on war footing. In spite of tall talks, the military is yet to be employed barring a few pockets. Rescue and relief operations are yet to be geared up even after two days. Considering the magnitude of death and devastation the Central Committee urges the union government to declare it as a "National Calamity".

The Central Committee has already instructed all its units and mass organisations across the country to mobilise their resources and collect money, winter garments, babyfood and medicines and bend all their energy to stand by those who need relief, rehabilitation with utmost care and attention. The party has instructed all units to send medical teams with lifesaving drugs within a day or two and plunge into massive collection and send the same latest by 15 days.

Filthy Kumbha Mela Politics

World media have taken particular interest in the Hindu religious fair, Maha Kumbha Mela, currently going on in Allahabad at the confluence of the rivers Ganga and Yamuna. Especially focusing on the nude parades of Naga sadhus and their equally repulsive rituals, the media have most elaborately publicised the vulgarity of such superstitious practices still prevailing here. There is enough reason for the right thinking citizens of this country to feel shame for these dark spots in the life of the people, and this shame cannot be wiped off by counter-argument that right to nudity has been accorded legal sanction in one western country at least, or that nudity is practised as a cult by sections of people in many western countries.

The point is not that. The point is that nudity has been a religious cult with Naga sadhus since ages and it thrives in this society, along with a web of religious and social superstitions and bigotry, even at this entry into the twentyfirst century because the political forces with whom lay the onus of carrying to completion the social-cultural transformation of the society, during the independence movement and after, were compromising with both imperialism and religious obscurantism, and abjectly failed in their historical role. Secondly, in this era of total degeneracy of the bourgeois culture, endless perversion and aberration is gripping every bourgeois society and this drives many practisers of nudism from other countries to flock in the Kumbha melas or other similar occasions to enjoy

'freedom' in degradation. These occasions provide especial commercial interest to the world media to cater to millions around the world, and it is said that a British media giant is spending Rs 7 crore to cover 'interesting sights' of the current Maha Kumbha Mela.

In this era of all-out crisis and degradation of the bourgeois system, nothing can remain, and nothing remains, outside of the naked and heinous struggle for pelf and power among the parliamentary parties. In a few months' time election to some legislatures will take place, and election to state assembly of Uttar Pradesh will follow, within which Allahabad falls. The bourgeois parties, in particular the BJP and Congress, have plunged into the mire of reaping poll dividends, exploiting the religious sentiments



Born : 22 April, 1870 Died : 21 January, 1924

"Take the fundamental laws of modern states, take their administration, take the right of assembly, freedom of the press, or "equality of all citizens before the law" and you will see at every step evidence of the hypocrisy of bourgeois democracy with which every honest and class-conscious worker is familiar. There is not a single state, however democratic, which has no loopholes or reservations in its constitution guaranteeing the bourgeoisie the possibility of dispatching troops against the workers, of proclaiming martial law, and so forth, in case of a "violation of public order", and actually in case the exploited class "violates" its position of slavery and tries to behave in a non-slavish manner."

— LENIN

*The Proletarian Revolution And
The Renegade Kautsky*

of the millions entering the mela site every day. With the blessings of the ruling class, and in collusion with the police and administration, and deploying money and muscle power the BJP and its allies did succeed to perpetrate a hoax on the people and secure governmental power at the Centre and a few states at the last polls. But all their policies and measures in every sphere, designed to subserve the ruling class to help it tide over its all-pervasive crisis by passing all burden onto the people, have exposed the anti-people and pro-capitalist class character of the alliance, inevitably leading to widespread disaffection and discontent among people at large. All who have carefully studied the recent utterances and actions

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SEMINAR IN CALCUTTA**‘Challenges Before Leftism’**

A seminar was held on 18 December at the Calcutta University Centenary Hall organised by the CPI-ML (Liberation) on the occasion of second death anniversary of Comrade Vinod Misra, the late General Secretary of the party. The topic of the seminar was ‘Challenges before leftism today.’ Our party the SUCI and other left parties were invited to participate in the seminar. Comrade Provash Ghosh, member, Central Committee and West Bengal State Secretary represented our party.

Comrade Debashis Dutta, the secretariat member of the West Bengal State Committee, CPI, said in his address, if in India a change of the present situation is to be brought about, there is no other way than to unite the left forces. Congress is deposed from power, but we, the lefts could not replace them, the right forces have managed to grip the opportunity. This is because we have failed to get united. The Left Front of West Bengal is to be expanded by removing its shortcomings and this needs discussion and mutual exchange.

The Forward Bloc leader, Comrade Jayanta Ray said, at present the best friend of the US imperialism in India is the BJP-led NDA government. Today US imperialism is the greatest enemy of the people of our country as well as the lefts. To fight it is the greatest challenge before the lefts today.

Comrade Provash Ghosh, said, there were two currents in the anti-imperialist freedom movement of our country — one was the compromising current, which was rightist, reformist, constitutionalist, under the ideology of Gandhism. The other was the struggling uncompromising current that comprised the nationalist revolutionaries, the socialists, the democrats and those who believed in Marxism. These forces together were called the leftists. The glorious victory of the Soviet Union against fascism in the Second World War led by great Stalin, the remarkable advancement of liberation struggles in China and Vietnam and such other movements generated a surging emotion for Marxism-Leninism and communism among our people. And from then on people began to consider those parties lefts who called themselves Marxists. However, which force was truly Marxist, and which was not, whose strategy was correct and whose wrong — whatever claim one might make in this regard, the toiling people and history will finally decide.

Pointing to the two phases of the left movement from the 50's to the present day, Comrade Provash Ghosh said that in the first stage of the left movement, i.e., in the 50s and 60s, whatever might have been the level of understanding of Marxism, and whatever the differences on the questions over character of the Indian state, the stage of revolution, its strategy, tactics, etc., there was more or less a common urge to strengthen democratic movements in workers-peasants' movements, mass movements, the movement of students and youth, etc. Countless movements swept West Bengal as well as other parts of the country. That was a time, when despite differences among ourselves there was a current of mass movement in the country; and no left party could even think of joining a government or form one on their own.

Then after two successive United Front Governments and particularly after 1977, when

the present Left Front government came to power, started the second phase of leftism, which is still continuing. In this second phase two distinctly different trends emerged in the left movement. One is totally election oriented politics — government formation, cabinet formation, and anyhow protecting the government, and moves to join the central power after enjoying state power and to achieve it an all-out effort to compromise with this or that force in whatever way, on the one hand. On the other, this trend is undermining the importance of movement and class struggle even while playing the same despotic role as the bourgeois parties do to crush mass movement and class struggle.

As opposed to this, the other trend lays the strongest emphasis on class-struggle, mass movement, workers'-peasants' movement and the movement of students and youths. So while considering the topic : ‘the challenges before leftism’ the first thing to probe is: which sort of challenge stands before these two different currents of left movement? If it means to stabilize the existing government and to appease the foreign and national capital for this purpose and therefore to suppress the class-struggle and mass movement; or with an eye on election compromising with communal enemy under cover of fighting the Congress autocracy or compromising with a known autocratic force, only raising slogans against communal forces, and just for that enter into combination-recombination, adjustment-readjustment, etc., — if one means challenges in this context — then it demands a particular consideration. Those who think from this viewpoint will plan according to their perception and face the challenge. The proposal of third front has come chiefly on the basis of this idea which does not conform to our conception.

Comrade Ghosh said, in our country ‘secularism’ has become a very commonplace term on everybody's lip. In fact, ‘secularism’ is based on ‘non-recognition of any supernatural entity,’ that is politics, society, education, social life, etc., will remain separated from spiritual and religious ideas: religion is a personal affair and one may or may not follow it, which is his/her personal wish. But now, new interpretations are being dished out — which means anybody opposing BJP is secular. The very parties like DMK, Telugu Desham, Akali Dal, once the friends of the so-called secularists, are now in the government with the BJP. The Congress had provoked communal riots umpteen times, it had got the Babari Masjid unlocked. How this very Congress prepared the ground for the rise of BJP is known to all. Is this Congress secular? Or can Laloo Prasad Yadav and his likes uphold the flag of democracy. Combination with such forces is made only in election interest, the only objective is to grab governmental power. All these led to a great loss for left movement.

Comrade Ghosh said, this is our fraternal criticism, not intended to injure anybody. In the past we were united, organised joint movements. Again we shall have to build up unity. But unity should have a principled basis. Unprincipled unity is very harmful. What should be the basis of unity, with what objective, and whom to strengthen by this unity — all these are very important questions. Bourgeois parties contest in the elections to serve and safeguard capitalism. Should we do the same? True, a Marxist party also contests elections, but how, Lenin showed us. A Marxist party contests elections until that revolutionary situation when it can seize the state power, as long as people willingly or unwillingly are trapped in the electoral process. The Marxists use parliamentary forum to free people from electoral illusion; they do so not to suppress the class struggle and democratic movement, not to diminish its fervour; they join Parliament to strengthen and intensify it.

Comrade Ghosh continued : it is our view that the leftists may also form a government, but its direction too should be to strengthen class struggle and democratic movement. In that case if the government gets toppled, so be it. This will rather expose the character of bourgeois state and parliamentary democracy. Again in the process of struggle if victory can be achieved government will be formed again. Attacks may come again. But all this will only strengthen democratic movements. Is it possible to save left movement by clinging to power by any means while destroying democratic movement? Has it ever been possible? What is the experience? When the lefts had only two MLAs or just 10 MLAs in the past there were waves of movement in West Bengal. Students and teachers felt ashamed to even utter the name of Congress. Now after 23 years' rule of Left Front government how could West Bengal come to this sorry state? What is the answer? Has this sad situation come about suddenly, by itself? Why has leftism and the great ideology of communism been maligned? Here in West Bengal Shyama Prasad Mukherjee could make inroads, but how could rightist forces raise their ugly head today? All these must be taken into consideration. MLAs, ministers have increased, but has leftism been fortified? Rather it has weakened. Keeping the left parties in power the bourgeoisie has used it cunningly against leftism. Just as the parties of Second International were used, against which Lenin had to wage a bitter struggle. The shrewd bourgeoisie of Europe knew that once they would be tied to ministerial power, these parties could be made to work against working class revolution on the plea of ‘changed situation’ while chanting Marxism. This could not be done by any other bourgeois party. They were trapped in this ploy. This did great harm to the working class movement in Europe. Lenin had to fight it and formed the Third International and lay bare the revolutionary understanding of Marxism.

Here, too, we have come face to face with the same crisis. Just see, it has come out in today's paper that the Left Front Chief Minister had said, ‘There should not be any militant workers’
(Contd. on page 3)

“Challenges Before Leftism”

(Contd. from page 2)

movement in West Bengal. But I say, let alone militant workers' movement there is no workers' movement as such even. There were waves of movements in the 50's and 60's in West Bengal, do we see it today? What deadly attacks the owners are launching today, but is there any workers' movement? Its backbone is shattered. In this situation the bourgeoisie are bargaining and threatening — 'no protest, no movement!' Whatever possibility is there to stand up against this, that, too, cannot be allowed. The owning class is extracting the promise that the workers won't struggle. They could do this, because we are sorry to say, the only consideration of those in power is to anyhow stay in power. This attitude is disastrous. For this, great harm is done to the country. So if unity is considered from this point of view, it will develop, but this unity is to intensify class struggle and strengthen the democratic movement, not to weaken it or destroy it.

Comrade Ghosh said, "What is the challenge before us today? Today religious fundamentalism, spiritualism and communalism alarmingly are raising their ugly head in our country. The Congress, too, practised these things and still is doing the same in the guise of pseudo-secularism, while BJP is doing this nakedly. They are changing text books, destroying reasoning and rational mind in the entire country. It is a terrible blow for progressive, scientific and Marxist thinking, a big challenge in the field of ideology. After the fall of the Soviet Union and East European socialist states, attacks against Marxism have increased throughout the world. In this background these portend grave danger. Hence, ideological battle should be sharpened against fundamentalism. Only through election fundamentalism cannot be combated. It needs a strong country-wide movement on the burning problems on the edifice of higher ideological-cultural struggle. They are destroying the democratic unity of the people on the questions of caste, religion, etc., which must be resisted. They have resorted to black Act against postal strike. They are unleashing fascist attacks on people. Severe onslaughts are coming down from all directions today. You all are aware how terrible economic attacks are ravaging the workers, the peasants and common people. The urgent need is to build up powerful movements of the workers, peasants, students and youths. This is the only way to really fight fundamentalism and reactionary forces, and this must be carried out. Unity is necessary on the basis of programmes of movements, not on the basis of election. This would be a unity of those forces who want to unite keeping class struggle and mass movement in view and if election comes, we shall have to fight elections on this basis, whether a government can be formed or not. That is, movement and class struggle is a must. Today's challenge should be taken up on this line, otherwise we have to suffer further loss unnecessarily, as we did in the past.

Finally he said, like in the whole world Marxism is under attack in our country too. We should not disgrace the nobility of Marxism in petty party interest. The role and conduct of the leaders and the rank and file should be tuned in

this way. If instead of struggle based on reasoning and logic, blindness, domineering attitude, muscle power, clashes and murders etc., are being resorted to for the sake of petty party interest and to anyhow expand party base and capture votes, then this would become a weapon in the hands of the bourgeoisie to create anti-Marxist anti-communist bent of mind among the people. This is what is going on today. Hence, we should be alert and conscious on this score.

Comrade Anil Biswas, West Bengal State Secretary of the CPI(M), said: the discourse that we started today does not end today. I hope it will recurrently take place among ourselves.

He said, our sovereignty and national independence are at stake today. Democracy or fascism — this is the most important question at this moment. We may have differences regarding the ultimate objective, but what should be our immediate aim? That is to dethrone the central BJP government. Is it possible to build up the third front only with the left forces?

Regarding the views of the SUCI he said, with days passing our differences are widening, but it is a matter of hope that unity sometimes is strengthened through differences. The question of principle-based front is being discussed here. It is also being said, we are turning constitutionalists in parliamentary democracy. One should keep in mind that after the fall of the Soviet Union, in the whole, the left current has taken a different turn. Election does not necessarily mean dependence on constitution, it is a big political struggle. We shall have to take up election as a struggle, without a dream to be ministers.

He said, in order to depose this (NDA) government it is the essential task of the lefts to unite those bourgeois political parties or those forces who are fighting autocracy, communalism or desiring to uphold the banner of secularism. Or else, history will not forgive us.

Regarding class struggle and militant workers' movement he said, the Communist Party of South Africa, too, is urging that workers should sacrifice and thus should advance

industrialisation to save South Africa first. Industry is declining today. At present the monopolists themselves are out to destroy the industry. If there are no industries having workers, if society is full with lumpen proletariats, then whatever else they may do, the lumpen proletariat cannot bring about revolution. In order to prepare the ground for revolution the organised working class should be further organised, and enriched with political consciousness. To accomplish this, more and more organised industries should be established here. For this, even if for a time being the working class must sacrifice. We should do this not only in the interest of the state, but also in the class interest and for advancement of the class. This is why, I say, this seminar is so important. The lefts today should be united more and more.

He said, in 1969 we raised the very slogan of class-based front. Later, we have had it changed into a wider platform. So, we have to learn from mistakes. We should not commit any such mistake so that the present democratic structure itself in India might collapse. The biggest challenge before the lefts at this moment is to save the country. Once the country is saved, its democracy could also be saved and if democracy is saved the lefts can advance in future. Once the lefts are able to march ahead unitedly, the country will taste complete emancipation. It has no alternative.

In conclusion, the President of the seminar, Comrade Kartik Pal, Secretary, CPI-ML (Liberation), West Bengal State Committee, said: Many debatable matters have come up, hopes for unity have also been expressed. Today, in India let our slogan be: Red resistance to Saffron aggression. Do not the attacks unleashed on the working class today, bring wider scope for creating a new tide of movement? Should not we make use of this advantage to advance movement ahead or should we rein in the class struggle lest capital fly at the face of intense movement. Many such questions have come up. Come, let us carry forward consciously the left unity which is developing today in the arena of class struggle in India.

CPI (M) Murders Two SUCI Activists In West Bengal

Comrades Provas Baidya and Prafulla Baidya, two active workers of our party, also brothers, were brutally murdered on 20th January last by the CPI(M) at Bele-Durganagar, under Kultali Assembly segment of 24 Parganas district, West Bengal. People observed 12 hour bandh in Kultali demanding arrest and punishment of the murderers. Markets, stalls and shops, government offices — all remained closed.

In the evening of 20th January, two CPI(M) workers called them away from their home and at night a group led by a CPI(M) panchayat member murdered our comrades. Next morning our comrades' bodies were found in a deserted dispensary. The news spread and common people burst into indignation. Road blockades were organised in protest. Comrade Probodh Purkait,

SUCI MLA, led the blockades.

'Protest Day' was observed throughout West Bengal on 24th January.

This followed close on the heels of the brutal murder by CPI(M) of three other comrades, Hasem Sardar, Zakir Sardar, active party workers, and Manirul Sardar, a supporter on last 26th December in Jaynagar, District 24 Parganas, which had caused similar outrage among people and protest demonstrations.

This are CPI(M)'s latest murders of our activists and supporters in South 24 Parganas district, where it had killed over 100 leaders and cadres, including Comrade Amir Ali Haldar, member West Bengal State Committee of our party, in a bid to destroy our stronghold in that district.

RAMJANMABHUMI-BABARI MASJID ISSUE

No Civilised Society Condones Demolition of Historical Monuments

Much confusion was created after the comment of the Prime Minister on 6th December last — the black day — that the demolition of Babari Masjid is an “expression of national sentiment”. Everybody knows what he said at first. He said that he made this comment very consciously. But later when he was pressed from various quarters, particularly from the partners of the NDA, he shamelessly said that this comment was a ‘slip of tongue’. Whatever contradictory statements were made by the Prime Minister, it has to be admitted that the VHP, inspired by the way the Prime Minister raked up the issue, boldly announced on 20th January that all obstacles on the construction of the Ram Mandir would be overcome within 12th March 2002. We fail to find any language to condemn all these comments of the Prime Minister.

It is also to be noticed that the BJP leaders, confronted with various questions from different quarters, are, on the one hand saying now, that no one had demolished the Babari Masjid — it had collapsed automatically! On the other, the Prime Minister says that the demolition made by the Kar Sevaks is “an expression of national sentiment”. Then what is correct? All these contradictory statements cannot be true at the same time. Again, to absolve the leaders some of them are saying that none of these leaders were present at the site at the time of demolition. But Vajpayee is asserting that they went there to protect the Masjid by controlling the mob fury. Then what is the truth in this respect?

From the display and reports on electronic media and those published at the time in different newspapers and magazine, and also from photographs published then, it was clear how the Masjid was demolished. Those who watched the television had witnessed all those events. Advani instructed the Kar Sevaks to close all roads leading to the Masjid side, and to sit down on the roads so that the CRPF could not come to that site. On the other side, Uma Bharati had been raising the slogan with gusto, “Ek dhakka aur do, Babri Masjid tor do” (give another blow, demolish the Babari Masjid). When the Kar Sevaks were engaged in demolishing ‘Sannyasini’ Uma Bharati was seen overwhelmed with ecstasy. Still it is said that these leaders did not go to the site, or even if they had gone, they were there only to control the mob. Can the Prime Minister deny now that the programme of Shila Pujan undertaken by the VHP throughout the country and then Advani’s Ram Rathayatra spread communalism throughout India? There is no reason to think that the public memory is so short to forget these events.

Vajpayee has said that he will accept the verdict of the court. It is known to all that every government of the country will have to abide by the verdict of the court. It is being mooted that out-of-court settlement can be arrived at through exchanges and discussions between the two communities. After that this shrewd political leader denied that the Mandir would be constructed at the disputed site; it might be constructed at any place in Ayodhya, he said. The people of the country are not so fool as not to understand all these comments by the Prime Minister. In this country, particularly in Ayodhya, there are so many big and small temples — many more may also come up. No question has been raised on that. The question is whether the Ram Mandir can be constructed on the site where the Babari Masjid stood. People cannot be befooled

by such trickery for many days. Truth cannot be hidden by such trickery. Even if the verdict goes in their favour through legal intricacies, it cannot be accepted in a civilized society.

It is a big question whether it is under the jurisdiction of the court to decide the Mandir issue. What is legitimate on the anvil of social, cultural and political outlook is the main issue to be decided. Besides, the neutrality of the court is also in question. There is a saying in jurisprudence — justice delayed is justice denied. The incident took place in 1992, and that is being tried today, i.e. after 8 years. Many things happened during this long interval. In the mean time, Surajbhan, one of the witnesses, who was going to Delhi from Benaras for presentation of many important documents which contained incriminating evidences about the involvement of top leaders of the BJP in demolition acts before the Liberhan Commission, was very mysteriously murdered. Everybody knows that in our country many a witness can be manipulated by money power and muscle power. Particularly those in power have many means to manipulate the witnesses. In such a situation, can the verdict of the court determine the truth?

It is being said that both the communities, Hindus and Muslims, can arrive at an out-of-the-court settlement. But the question is : is it an issue involving only the Hindus and Muslims so that it can be settled among them? The Babari Masjid was a 500 year old historical monument. Be it a Masjid or a Mandir, or whether there were regular namaaj or not, it was a national property. Had any one any right to demolish it? There had never been any offering of any puja in the Konarak Mandir; there are many such temples where there had been no offering of pujas for a long time. Has anyone any right to demolish those structures for that reason? We consider ourselves to be a civilized nation. Many even claim that our nation is the greatest in the world — our ancient civilization has no parallel. Actually incident of the demolition of the Babari Masjid has made us hang our head in shame in the comity of nations, and this cannot be denied in any way that religious fanaticism has brought about such degradation that instead of feeling any shame a sense of pride pervaded in demolishing our old historical monuments. Is it any stamp of greatness?

The Egyptians are believers in Islam, so they do not worship idols. Even making any idol is prohibited in their religion. But the government of that country has been very carefully preserving the ancient pyramids and statues of their country. They think that all these are their national treasure. Iraq and Iran are Muslim dominated

countries. The governments of these countries are very carefully preserving the ancient monuments including many statues. The USA, ‘the friend of India’, has, however destroyed many of them through bombing. Indonesia is the biggest Muslim populated country in the world. But this country is preserving the ancient Hindu temples. The tales of the Ramayana are engraved on the walls of a vast Hindu temple at Barabudar in Kampuchea. It is presumed that Vajpayee visited that temple. But has he learnt any lesson from that? Many statues of Buddha have been discovered in Afghanistan; these are indeed very beautiful. The people of the entire world know them to be Greco-Indian art because of the unique admixture of Indian and Greek sculpture in those statues. The government has been preserving them very carefully despite the people there being Muslims. It is, however, not known what the Talibans are doing now. The people of Greece and Rome are Christians. But the ancient idols there are well-protected. In the barbaric or in the middle ages such type of instance might occur. But can it happen today in the civilized society? During the British rule the British government preserved the ancient temples and mosques of our country. The museums in India were set up by the British government. Many ancient idols are preserved there. Man is not immortal. But his creation in a particular age gives him inspiration to advance further. It cannot but be admitted that all these historical monuments carry the message of ancient civilization. We can have a glimpse of the ancient Indian civilization four thousand years ago after the discovery of the Harappa-Mahenjodaro. Similarly ancient history and cultural heritage of Egypt, Middle East, Babylon, China and India could not have been known if all the historical monuments and ancient relics were destroyed.

The BJP and the Sangh Parivar are claiming that there was a temple in Ayodhya 500 years ago on the birth place of Rama; a mosque was erected at the same place by demolishing that temple. So the Hindus have the right to construct a Ram Mandir there by demolishing that mosque. The Ramayana is an epic. It is not a history. So Rama is not a historical figure. An epic cannot be depicted as history. Besides, the ‘Ramcharit Manas’ composed at that time upto Tulsidass has not indicated the place of birth of Rama or the existence of that temple. If it be true according to the Sangh Parivar that Rama was a historical figure and his place of birth was at the site where the Babari Masjid stood, why had not these been referred to in the Ramayana composed by Tulsidasa? All renowned historians and archaeologists have confirmed that there was previously no temple at the Babari Masjid site. But even if the claim of the Sangh Parivar is taken as true for argument's sake then can anybody have any right to construct Ram Mandir by demolishing that historical mosque, or can that be supportable? On the same plea the Buddhists can claim that all Buddha temples many of which were converted into Hindu temples should be

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Sanctions On Afghanistan: The Real Objective

The fact that the UN Security Council has imposed further comprehensive economic sanctions on Afghanistan has been received with dismay by all who have seen the futility and cruelty of such sanctions on the ordinary people of various countries subjected to this treatment before. The Council, led by the US and Russia, has imposed these sanctions ostensibly to secure the extradition of Osama bin Laden, accused by the US of masterminding terrorist attacks on US embassies in Africa and of aiding rebel fighters in Chechnya. India too has enthusiastically supported the sanctions on the grounds that the Taliban is at the root of cross-border terrorism in Kashmir. Bin Laden and the Taliban are admittedly the targets of this Council initiative, presented as part of the 'global fight against terrorism'. The sanctions, however, are taking effect against the ordinary people of Afghanistan, a people who are already ravaged by decades of conflict earlier, and now by the medieval fundamentalist outlook of the ruling Taliban. UN bodies and the UN Secretary General too have all but openly expressed their dissatisfaction with the latest Council move, correctly predicting the humanitarian tragedy and vitiation of peace efforts in Afghanistan that will inevitably follow. If nothing else, the bitter experience of Iraq and Yugoslavia show that national sovereignty is an objective fact in international relations and not to be trifled with. Neither economic nor military attacks against sovereign nations by imperialist coalitions, however formidable, lead to quick and desirable regime changes that they so simply-mindedly desire with complete disregard for the will of the people of victim nations. The game of dubbing nations as 'rogue states' ('states of concern', in the latest dissimulatory diplomatese), equating nations with particular regimes and leaders, and then violating international law under the pretext of protecting peace, democracy and human rights has been played out once too often in the post-Cold War period for anybody to be fooled yet again.

The question then is, why again in Afghanistan? The ostensible reason of fighting terrorism does not stand up to the simplest scrutiny by anyone who has the faintest acquaintance with the recent history of Afghanistan. That the Soviet misadventure in Afghanistan came in handy for the US to finance and arm various Afghan warlords and fundamentalist groups, spawning in the process individuals like Osama himself, is obscured by the anti-terrorist rhetoric today. It is equally well-known that the sudden rise of the Taliban, its capture of Kabul and the brutal elimination of a progressive but beleaguered government there, was with covert American support to counter other warlords who were unacceptable to the US establishment. In short, the phenomenon of Osama and the Taliban, having served US interests at one point of time, has outlived its utility. The backers of these groups knew all along that they practised a dangerous brand of fundamentalism and were anti-American in their rhetoric, but they played a useful role in the larger scheme of imperialist domination of the region. Hence today, the hurt pride of an imperialist power subjected to terrorist attack is only subterfuge to hide another larger purpose.

The key to the actions of the US, Russia and India is oil-rich Central Asia. "Energy security" has long been a part of the Pentagon lexicon and the richest oil reserves worldwide automatically figure on the US oil security map. The term has now gained currency among Indian foreign policy-makers and security analysts who are aligning themselves with American imperialism on this subject. At stake are planned overland oil pipelines from the Central Asian nations and Iran to Indian ports. Afghanistan is the weak link in the grand scheme for the exploitation of Central Asian oil in which American multinationals, Indian business tycoons (Dhirubhai Ambani had a 30 minute meeting with Clinton on this subject during the latter's Indian visit) and the Russian government are important stakeholders, the former too backed by their respective governments. If the security of pipelines is to be guaranteed, Afghanistan needs to be ruled by a regime that will do business with the stakeholders in a reliable and pliable way. The Taliban does not enjoy the confidence of these

stakeholders and is to be replaced. The Taliban has been approached with both carrot and stick. Already subjected to American missile attacks once on targets purported to be Osama's bases, an action that was not condemned by the Indian Government and was tacitly supported by the BJP, speculation was rife after the bomb attack on the USS Cole at Aden that another missile raid was imminent. At the height of the Kandahar hijack crisis, the NDA government attempted to do business with the Taliban by whitewashing its role in the hijack and trying to break its dependence on Pakistan. Washington maintained a studious and complicit silence during these negotiations. It now appears that the principal imperialist stakeholders in Central Asia have together trained their guns on the Taliban. While sanctions on Afghanistan have been strengthened, in particular, an arms embargo on the Taliban, external military support continues to the Northern Alliance of warlord Ahmed Shah Masood that is engaged in a deadly conflict with the Taliban.

A logical question that arises is as to the Russian motive in joining hands with the US given the fundamental conflict of interest between the two over Central Asia. The restoration of capitalism in the former Soviet Union has made Russia a full-fledged imperialist player eager to convert the Soviet-era ties with the Central Asian republics into big brotherly domination. The republics for their part are always manoeuvring to

escape the embrace of Moscow by hobnobbing with European powers and America. But Russia is a severely circumscribed imperialist power, shackled by its unique crisis-ridden brand of 'robber capitalism' that has weakened it economically and made it dependent on imperialist aid. The relentless eastward expansion of NATO clearly has Russia as its main target. The covert strategy of military encirclement of Russia was also revealed during the bloody Chechnyan conflict. Russia has been seeking full imperialist domination of Chechnya from the period of Yeltsin's brutal military campaign. The edge to the more recent military invasion came from the Russian perception that American covert agencies and American client states in West Asia were masterminding an armed campaign by Muslim rebels against Russian interests from Chechnya. The Taliban was seen as a key player in this plot. Given its beleaguered status on the economic and military fronts, Russia is running along with the perception that the US has lost control over the Taliban and is now seeking to eliminate it, a development that will bring relief to Moscow on the military front. If the Taliban were to be muzzled, would Russia and the US then jointly and peacefully exploit Central Asia? Such an idea goes against the very grain of imperialism. The Russian congruence of interests with the US is at best tenuous and temporary, beneath it lies the fierce enmity of two imperialist powers vying for exclusive supremacy over one of the richest oil reserves in the world.

What clearly emerges is that the people of Afghanistan have become pawns in imperialist power games aimed at securing resources, markets and geo-strategic bases. The women and children of Afghanistan in particular have suffered enormously through the long years of conflict and the medieval rule of the Taliban. It is an incontrovertible lesson of history that only the people of a sovereign nation can organise themselves to solve their political and economic problems. External well-wishers can at best play a supportive role to an internal progressive force. Going by their track record, the main interlocutors in Afghanistan seek only to pour oil on troubled waters to secure their own advantage. The world watches with horror as UN agencies pull out of a war-ravaged and currently drought-affected country. Peace movements world-wide need to question the imperialist-sponsored sanctions and alert the public of the dubious intentions behind them. The internal political situation of Afghanistan needs to be carefully studied and the most progressive forces identified and supported.

Greeks March Against NATO

Massive demonstrations rocked Greece in mid-January as thousands of people from all walks of life, including workers, students, intellectuals and peace activists, young and old, took to the streets to protest against NATO crimes and Greece's role in this Alliance, in Athens, Thessalonika and other major towns. In Athens a group of soldiers in uniform marched with the rest shouting: "American - murderers!" "NATO out of the Balkans", "In Kosovo they die from leukaemia, we won't fight for USA/Germany" and "Greek soldiers are not for sacrifice, bring

them back from Yugoslavia."

Ten percent of the 1500 strong Greek contingent of officers and men serving in the NATO run KFOR force in Kosovo, have signed petitions asking to return to Greece. At the same time, the co-ordination committee of parents of soldiers serving in the Greek army, set up during the Balkan War, have published a call for the withdrawal of Greek troops from Kosovo, among others, and demand the withdrawal of all NATO troops from the Balkans.

Source : *The New Worker*, 19 January, 2001

Victory of Students' Movement In West Bengal

North Bengal University

This year North Bengal University (NBU) authority published degree course part I results very hastily. This resulted in mass fail. Even meritorious students failed. Thus out of 5494 examinees from 15 colleges only 434, i.e. less than 10 per cent students passed.

AIDSO built up a strong sustained movement demanding re-evaluation of the results of the unsuccessful students. On 27th November 2000 a deputation met the Vice-Chancellor and on 29th students' strike was called in North Bengal. SFI and Chhatra Parishad, the latter, the student wing of Congress, opposed it. Yet there was total strike. The VC then declared the formation of a review committee and promised further steps on the basis of the committee's report. He also informed the AIDSO that the review committee would submit its report on 7th December, 2000. The VC called AIDSO to meet him on 15th December.

On the said day a students mass deputation was led to the VC. Comrade Sanjay Bhattacharya, member, AIDSO, WB state secretariat, along with students' representatives of different colleges met

the VC, who informed :

1. Another 20 per cent students have passed as recommended by the Review Committee
2. All students can demand review of their answer scripts
3. All colleges will receive marksheets by December
4. Marksheets, full of mistakes are sent for corrections
5. From January 2001, observers' teams will visit the colleges.

This total success generated high enthusiasm among the student community there.

Medical College, Calcutta

Recently, through a notice, the Calcutta University brought ahead the examination of 1st year and 2nd year MBBS by one month and three months, respectively. This creates big pressure on the students studying a difficult subject like the MBBS. Also the university authority, for a mere 650 students of its five medical colleges, takes two long months to provide results of every examination of MBBS. Although the process to

evaluate answer scripts ends with the practical (examination), two months are taken alone to prepare the tabulation sheet.

Over two hundred students of four medical colleges in Calcutta marched to the VC in a procession protesting this anti-student decision and unscientific system. But the VC was busy. The students at once started a sit-in demonstration and refused to withdraw till the VC met them. Finally, the VC consented. Comrade Dr. Sajal Biswas, Convenor, AIDSO medical unit and Comrade Chandan Mondal, final year MBBS student, met the VC and discussed the matter. The VC ultimately conceded the demand to hold examination as previously scheduled.

On 13th December 2000 last a meeting was held between AIDSO representatives, led by Dr. Sajal Biswas, and Examination Controller, Calcutta University. The meeting decided to postpone 1st and 2nd MBBS examination for 15 days and 2 and half months respectively. The authority also conceded to publish results within one month after examination and to give reasonable gap between two examinations.

This victory caused enthusiasm among the students.

Karnataka Unit of AIDSO Launches Education Movement

The Karnataka State Committee of the AIDSO has taken up cudgels to fight the anti-education policies of the state government. The students' community and people at large have responded enthusiastically to the call of the movement.

On 5 January 2001 AIDSO held a press conference at Press Club, Bangalore. There student leaders exposed the Karnataka University Bill which is a death blow to the university autonomy and democracy. Though the Bill already has been referred to the joint select Committee owing to protests from academicians, professors and students, the threat of the proposals looms large over the people. The proposals go as follows: a. The government takes the right to appoint vice-chancellors. According to this Bill the government will, through the governor, take complete control over the appointment of the VC, and seeks to do away with elections to the

university bodies, under pretext of keeping politics out of it, thus destroying the very autonomy of the university.

At the press conference the AIDSO leaders also exposed the recommendations of the task force formed by the government. The following are its disastrous recommendations :

Adoption of schools by NGOs and industrialists : Instead of releasing adequate funds for the ailing government primary schools the report appeals to the NGOs and industrialists to adopt them (48,716 schools). It means the doors of learning are permanently closed to the poor, as has been the case with hundreds of medical and engineering colleges.

Appointment of teachers : The report says that one teacher for one class is an ideal condition. Even going by this report the government should appoint a minimum of 1 lakh extra teachers!

Astonishingly the report suggests the government to immediately fill up only 10,000 teachers posts.

Community participation - Scheme towards making education a responsibility of the panchayat : Panchayats being bankrupt organisations themselves, giving them the responsibility of education means they cannot even run the schools, far less can they pay the salaries of the teachers. This ultimately amounts to either closing down the these government schools or handing them over to money-hungry private people.

At the Press conference, AIDSO called upon the students, academicians, parents and all education loving people to fight these policies lock stock and barrel.

Protest Day Against Fee Hike Victory Achieved

On 16th January 2001, students' community of Karnataka, at the call of the AIDSO, observed State Wide Protest Day against fee hike in degree colleges. This day was characterised by processions, demonstrations, dharnas and other forms of protest, held in Bangalore, Bellary, Raichur, Dharwad, Davangere, Mysore, Gulbarga and other districts of the State apart from students delegation, led by AIDSO district leaders, meeting the concerned authorities.

The state level delegation of AIDSO met the education secretary Smt. Malathi Das. After detailed deliberations the government authority promised to issue directions to the Commissioner for College Education for refunding extra fees collected from 2nd and 3rd year degree students. She also assured that she would place the demand of withdrawal of fee hike for 1st year degree students, to the government.



Protest demonstration against fee hike in Bangalore on 16.1.2001

Criminality of US-led NATO Exposed

Depleted Uranium Used in War Causing Cancer

The European political scene has been stirred up as senior officials of the French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese and Belgian governments have admitted that soldiers who served in Kosovo are dying of leukaemia at an abnormally high rate. It is now officially admitted that increased morbidity and cancer rates among soldiers is linked to the use of Depleted Uranium (DU) shells used by the US military during its bombardment of Yugoslavia. A wave of revulsion now grips the ordinary citizens of Europe and the US as the truth unfolds that imperialism waged war on its own soldiers even as it exposed hapless civilian populations to the horrors of radioactivity.

DU is the latest in a long line of horrendous new weapons tested on victim nations. The Vietnam War had seen the widespread use of napalm and Agent Orange, a defoliant that finally caused cancer and other health problems among American soldiers themselves.

The US-based anti-imperialist group, the International Action Center, led by former US Attorney General, Ramsey Clark, has carried on a courageous and relentless campaign against the use of DU for over 5 years. Much of the information available to the public about DU today is due to the books, videos and material disseminated by the Center. Depleted Uranium is a by-product of the process of uranium enrichment that is done either for nuclear fuel or weapons production. Since its density is more than 1.5 times that of lead, it has been used for the manufacture of armour-piercing shells that can disable tanks. On impact, it generates millions of burning particles of radioactive uranium oxide, which are carried far and wide by wind and water. When inhaled or ingested, these particles get lodged in the lungs or other vital organs of the body and continue to emit radiation as well as chemically poison the body. DU has a half-life of billions of years.

According to Sara Flounders, Co-director, International Action Center, US airplanes dropped 6 lakh kilograms of depleted uranium in the Gulf War. (*Workers World*, Jan. 18, 2001) This material has contaminated vast areas of Iraq, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Medical reports from Iraq indicate a manifold increase in cancers, immune diseases and birth defects. In addition 120,000 of the 697,000 US soldiers who participated in the ground invasion of Iraq suffer from what has been called Gulf War Syndrome: that include respiratory, liver and kidney dysfunctions, memory loss, low blood pressure, headaches, fever etc. and birth defects in their children. It is now widely suspected that DU is at least a contributory cause to the Syndrome. 500 British Gulf War veterans have died and 5000 are ill with diseases including leukaemia.

The US Government itself admits to having fired 10000 DU rounds during the Bosnian conflict in 1995 and 31000 rounds during the Kosovo conflict in Yugoslavia in 1999. There is official talk about 112 sites hit in Kosovo by DU shells, but according to sources, so wide and indiscriminate was their use, that some US officials claim, they have no idea what locations may be contaminated or how many. The United Nations tested 11 and found unsafe radioactivity levels in 8 of them. A May 2000 UN report warns

that the entire water supply in Kosovo may be so contaminated as to be unfit for consumption. But the local population has been totally unaware. Thus, a UN enquiry headed by Mr. Pekka Haavisto, former environment minister of Finland, reported: "We were surprised to find some radiation in the middle of villages where children were playing — a year and a half later. People had collected ammunition shards as souvenirs and there were cows grazing in contaminated areas which means the contaminated dust can get into the milk." (*The New York Times* quoted in *The Statesman*, 8.1.2001) Thousands, if not lakhs, of people and children all over the former Yugoslav republics are now at risk or already ill.

DU ammunition is still being stored, tested and used in US bases in Okinawa (Japan), South Korea, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, thereby posing not only a threat to the local population but a global threat. Despite mounting calls for the destruction of these weapons, and the resolutions adopted by United Nations Human Rights Tribunal (1996 and 97) that included DU weapons among "weapons of mass and indiscriminate destruction incompatible with international humanitarian or human rights law", the US Government is maintaining a criminal silence. But what more could be expected of US imperialism that wages war even on its own people, and which has so far strenuously denied any link between the chronic illnesses of its Gulf Veterans and DU use, though US Army documents show that the generals understood the danger of using DU in the Gulf War. Rather, to cover up its monstrous crime against humanity the Pentagon and the then US State Secretary have denied there is any serious danger from DU weapons.

The use of DU has now become a thorny issue of conflict between the US and its imperialist allies in the Iraq and Kosovo conflicts. The Portuguese, Spanish and Italian Governments have publicly announced and launched internal enquiries into the medical effects of DU. The Belgian Government has sought to bring the issue on the agenda of European Union Defence Ministers' meetings. Russia has called for an international conference on the medical and ecological impact of the use of DU to be held under the auspices of the UN and the Organisation of Security and Co-operation in Europe. Even the UN War Crimes Tribunal, set up with US funds and dependent on NATO for its operations, has been compelled to announce that if evidence mounts from various independent investigations, it would launch its

own enquiry.

The British Government, following in the footsteps of US imperialists, continues to maintain a blatantly dishonest stance that the medical effects of DU are yet to be proven. Since the initial British reports warning against DU appeared ten years ago, both Labour and Conservative parties are complicit in the cover-up. The report by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, which has been available in the library of the House of Commons had warned of significant radioactivity from spent DU shells and had said, "The problem will not go away and should be tackled before it becomes a political problem created by the environmental lobby." So low is the credibility of the British Government on the issue that the British War Veterans' Association is sending medical samples of its members abroad for investigation since most British laboratories receive some amount of Government assistance.

It should however be understood that the current misgivings of European Governments over DU are dishonest expressions of concern. The ill effects of DU were public knowledge from the days of the Gulf War and NATO briefings during the Kosovo conflict admitted to its use under media questioning. In short, these Governments were fully aware of the dangers of DU and are guilty of aiding the US in the creation of an ecological and medical catastrophe, not sparing their own soldiers in the process. If DU has come on these Governments' agenda, it is solely due to the hard work of anti-imperialist and anti-war groups in shaping public opinion. There is a lesson in this for similar groups all over the world. Long years of seemingly unrewarding work suddenly pays dividends and the initially unresponsive people rally behind the cause of peace and anti-imperialism.

The US and its allies have used the excuse of nuclear proliferation and possession of weapons of mass destruction to attack and impose sanctions on developing countries. The imperialists must now be beaten with their own stick. The anti-imperialist movement must seize the initiative and broaden the public campaign against DU.

Victory in Anti-Obscenity Movement, Gulbarga

College level convention against obscenity was held on 9th January 2001 at Government Junior College and Women's Polytechnic.

On 10th January a protest demonstration was held in Super Market and an effigy was burnt. The protesters was addressed by Comrade Nagammal, President AIMSS, Gulbarga District Committee. Later on the AIMSS submitted a memorandum demanding immediate action against obscene posters and obscene literature.

Due to the protest, within 3 hours many bookstalls were raided and obscene books were seized by the police.

Ramjanmabhumi-Babari Masjid Issue

(Contd. from page 4)

given back to them. But they have made no such claim. Many such incidents happened in the middle ages, but these are incompatible today. Two thousand years ago Jesus Christ was crucified for his 'crime' of preaching his religion. Socrates was forced to take his life for preaching his ideas. But are such things compatible today when we are upholding the values of democracy, socialism and secularism? If someone, in the middle age had erected a mosque by demolishing a Hindu temple, even then can anyone have any right today to construct a temple at the same site by demolishing mosque?

Once Bimbisara was imprisoned by his son Ajata Shatru after enthroning himself. Bimbisara died in prison. He was Buddhist whereas his son was a Hindu. Aurangzeb imprisoned his father Shah Jahan at the Agra Fort after capturing the throne in Delhi. Despite that the Muslims considered him to be religious. But are all these compatible in the civilized society today? Michael Madhusudan Dutta, the great Bengali poet of the Renaissance period, though born in a Hindu family, embraced Christianity in the later period. Had his father or the Hindus of that period ostracised him for that reason? Similarly Madhusudan Das, famous as the father of modern Orissa, embraced Christianity. Was he punished in any way for that reason? No, it could not happen then because of values of modern age. Are the Sangh Parivar and the BJP going to establish the medieval social system in the country? Then what is the difference between them and Ayotallah Khomeini of Iran and the Taliban of Afghanistan? They have to provide answers to all these questions.

In this context the heinous role of the Congress which is being certified as secular by many including the so-called communist parties like the CPI(M) and the CPI needs to be most particularly mentioned. Everybody knows that Rajiv Gandhi unlocked the disputed structure in 1986. After that when Narasimha Rao was the Prime Minister, the Ram Rath Yatra conducted by Advani throughout India spread the poison of communalism, and thousands of *Kar Sevaks* being encouraged by the Sangh Parivar went to Ayodhya to construct Ram Mandir by demolishing the Babari Masjid. The government at that time took no step to prevent them. And when the

Babari Masjid was being demolished, the CRPF came back half way from the site at Ayodhya. The Central government issued no instruction to the CRPF to protect the Babari Masjid. By all these actions and inactions the Congress-led Central Government was an indirect accomplice in the act of demolition of the Babari Masjid.

A nasty competition is going on among these bourgeois parties to gain mileage in electoral politics by playing upon the simple religious sentiment of the common people. In this game they are whipping up religious fanaticism to a new pitch to sow the seeds of communalism for creating a great communal divide and inciting fratricidal strife within the country. For achieving that objective they are demolishing old historical monuments without any prick of conscience. It is apprehended that one day the Hindu Taliban may even target on every pretext, our national monuments like Qutub Minar and Taj Mahal. For their ulterior motive they will not only destroy the great heritage of our country but also the unity and brotherhood of the Indian people much to the peril of the growth of democratic movement within the country. So it is time for all sane and

democratic minded people of the country to be aware of the great danger confronting the country. They must ponder over all these questions and come forward to resist the sinister design of the evil forces for maintaining unity of all Indian people irrespective of caste, creed and religion.

Comrade Nihar Mukherjee condemns compulsory subscription to RSS organ in Gujarat Schools

Comrade Nihar Mukherjee, General Secretary, SUCI, issued the following press statement on 19.1.2001 :

The BJP-led Gujarat Government's instruction to all secondary and higher secondary schools to read and subscribe compulsorily to the RSS weekly *Sadhana*, and that too at government expense is fascistic, aimed at total saffronisation of education. It reminds us of the dark days of regimented education by Hitler in Germany. We strongly condemn the decision and demand immediate withdrawal of the circular.

Maha Kumbha Mela

(Contd. from page 1)

of the BJP and Sangh Parivar leaders, especially Atal Behari Vajpayee's latest instigation of the temple issue at the Babari Masjid site, understand that the BJP has taken the calculated step to pander to the Hindu communal sentiments to conduct its electioneering at the approaching state Assembly polls. Uttar Pradesh's BJP government has spent Rs 120 crore to build the Maha Kumbha mela infrastructure and lure the people into believing that the party is for the people. Against this, the BJP government of the state claims paucity of funds as the reason for its total failure to maintain even minimal services in health, education, and housing. Even its employees are uncertain of regular payment of salaries.

On the other hand, Sonia Gandhi, the Congress President, has taken a 'half-dip' in the Ganga at the mela site to prove her credentials to 'half-a-Hindu' at least and give a rebuff to BJP's unrelenting denigration of her for her non-Indian origin. She braved the ice-cold waters of the Ganga to send a message to the masses of the majority religious community that they could ignore the BJP and should join the vote bank of the Congress under her leadership. In these public perpetrations, whether the BJP's or the Congress's, is there any concern for people's distress and sufferings, any shred of bondage with people's religious sentiments — let alone an element of motivation to free people from the hangover of religious superstitions? In the parliamentary game of winning elections anyhow, doing away with ethics, scruples and decorum by bourgeois standard even, these parties are openly and covertly and unabatedly pandering to the religious sentiments — once of the majority community's and once again of the minority community's, now to the Kumbha mela and now again to the Iftar party — with the object of winning elections and keeping the people divided. They are political vultures who thrive on people's

helplessness and bigotry. When a cyclone or a flood or an earthquake lays people dead by thousands, vultures prey on the dead flesh, and these political vultures prey on those still alive to tear them away to one side or another in order to grab votes. The same creatures are prying around for now at the Maha Kumbha mela site.

The sadhus at the mela have also joined the fray. Cosmic sacredness is not what many pine for any longer. Besides growing a habit of living well in the physical sense, some prefer to nurture ties with political leaders and parties in power. The BJP, through the Sangh Parivar's VHP-sponsored Dharam Sansad of sadhus, has evolved a decision in a section of the ascetics at the mela that the BJP-led central government is giving a time limit upto 12 March next year by when to remove all impediments to the construction of the Ram temple at the Bari Masjid site. The calculation is based on the idea of mobilising the majority Hindu community opinion in favour of the party at the ensuing Assembly polls, in Uttar Pradesh, while not antagonising the minority Muslim community by not 'agreeing' to VHP's demand before the polls for a firm date for construction of the Ram temple. But many religious leaders at the highest of hierarchy have connections with political lobbies. Through such liaison the Congress and Sonia Gandhi are engaged in weaning another section of the ascetics to their side to mount a counter campaign in the Hindu religious community. The same nefarious game of manipulating people's communal sentiments for winning polls finds a route here — dirtily designed, dirtily motivated and dirtily executed.

All this is one facet of the grand design of the bourgeois class and the bourgeois political parties to keep the masses disunited, powerless, helpless and 'resigned to fate'. It is imperative with the right thinking people to give full exposure to this design of the ruling class and its subserving parties who are ready to go to any length to grab governmental power.

CORRIGENDUM

In our last issue dated 15th January 2001 on Page 4, last column last paragraph under subheading 'Unequal Mahakali Treaty' please read the 2nd sentence as follows: Before the signing of this treaty Indian rulers managed to have a consensus among all the major political parties of Nepal ignoring the opposition and sentiment of the left and democratic parties and the people.

Also on page 8, 2nd column, under the subheading 'Indian Military Within Nepal' please read the 5th sentence as follows: Under public pressure roused by the initiative of left and democratic parties, all the political parties of Nepal are now crying, 'Kalapani is ours'.

On Page 7, 1st column (students conference), 2nd para, line 3, the name of the eminent mass leader of the parliamentary wing of Rashtriya Jana Morcha written as Comrade Krishna Bahadur Keshi, may please be read as Comrade Chitra Bahadur K.C., and line 6, the name Comrade Krishna Bahadur may please be read as Comrade Krishna Adhikari, similarly in para 5, line 2, Comrade Krishna Bahadur will be Comrade Krishna Adhikari.

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