

# SACH

SOUTH ASIAN COMPOSITE HERITAGE

FEBRUARY—APRIL 2013 ■ VOLUME—1 ■ ISSUE—30

## Editorial Board

Arshad Karim  
**Pakistan**

Kalipada Sarker  
**Bangladesh**

Dr. Richard Devadoss  
Cornerstone  
Chennai, **India**

Nobo Kishore Urickhimbam  
Centre for Social Development  
Manipal, **India**

P. Bala Murugan  
**India**

P. Lalitha Kumari  
Asmita Resource Centre for Women  
Secunderabad, **India**

Sharifa Sidiqqi  
**India**

Shruti Chaturvedi  
Institute for Social Democracy  
Delhi, **India**

Suramya Smriti Kujur  
CNI-SBSS  
Delhi, **India**

Coordination by  
Institute for Social Democracy  
New Delhi, **India**

E-MAIL  
sach\_heritage@yahoo.co.uk

WEBSITE  
www.sach.org.in

The Shahbagh movement has opened a new era in South Asian history of resistance against religious fundamentalism and their alliance with rightist forces historically. Bengal has been one of the biggest centers of this tradition. The ruling elites have always tried to disintegrate the social fabric of Bengal. First, Britishers divided Bengal in East and West and then once East Bengal became part of Pakistan, the ruling elites in West Pakistan kept on imposing their will on East Pakistan against the wishes of people. But this land always emerged victorious against all odds. The people of East Bengal (the then East Pakistan and now Bangladesh) fought for their rights, their culture, their language, religious fundamentalism and proved that religion and nation are two different things. Today when the dangerous Wahabism backed by Saudi Arabia is out to destroy the unity of people through guns and bombs, the Shahbagh movement rose to the occasion to challenge these religious fundamentalists. The Jamat-e-Islami which is the mother of Islamic fundamentalism all over South Asia is turning Bangladesh into a battle field. They are not only spitting venom against minorities and progressive forces in Bangladesh but are also defending war criminals such as Dilawar Hussain Sayeedi. One should not forget that Dilawar Hussain Sayeedi is responsible for massacre of thousands of patriotic Bangladeshis during liberation war of 1971. The Shahbagh movement has become a voice of all right thinking people. Once again someone like Kazi Nazrul Islam will emerge and speak like him to defend his/her mother land. For the moment we present what Kazi Nazrul Islam has said in 1920s.

## The Rebel (Bidrohi)

Original : Kazi Nazrul Islam / Translation : Sajed Kamal

Proclaim, Hero,  
proclaim : I raise my head high!  
Before me bows down the Himalayan peaks!

Proclaim, Hero,  
proclaim : rending through the sky,  
surpassing the moon, the sun,  
the planets, the stars,  
piercing through the earth,  
the heavens, the cosmos  
and the Almighty's throne,  
have I risen I, the eternal wonder  
of the Creator of the universe.

---

The furious Shiva shines on my forehead  
like a royal medallion of victory!

Proclaim, Hero,

proclaim : My head is ever held high!

I'm ever indomitable, arrogant and cruel,  
I'm the Dance-king of the Day of the Doom,  
I'm the cyclone, the destruction!  
I'm the great terror, I'm the curse of the world.  
I'm unstoppable,  
I smash everything into pieces!  
I'm unruly and lawless.  
I crush under my feet  
all the bonds, rules and disciplines!  
I don't obey any laws.  
I sink cargo-laden boats I'm the torpedo,  
I'm the dreadful floating mine.  
I'm the destructive Dhurjati,  
the sudden tempest of the summer.  
I'm the Rebel, the Rebel son  
of the Creator of the universe!

Proclaim, Hero,

proclaim : My head is ever held high!

I'm the tempest, I'm the cyclone,  
I destroy everything I find in my path.  
I'm the dance-loving rhythm,  
I dance to my own beats.  
I'm the delight of a life of freedom.  
I'm Hambeer, Chhayanat, Hindol.  
I move like a flash of lightning  
with turns and twists.  
I swing, I leap and frolic!  
I do whatever my heart desires.  
I embrace my enemy and wrestle with death.  
I'm untamed, I'm the tempest!  
I'm pestilence, dread to the earth,  
I'm the terminator of all reigns of terror,  
I'm ever full of burning restlessness.

Proclaim, Hero,

proclaim : My head is ever held high!

I'm ever uncontrollable, irrepressible.  
My cup of elixir is always full.  
I'm the sacrificial fire,  
I'm Yamadagni, the keeper  
of the sacrificial fire.  
I'm the sacrifice, I'm the priest,  
I'm the fire itself.  
I'm creation, I'm destruction,  
I'm habitation, I'm the cremation ground.  
I'm the end, the end of night.  
I'm the son of Indrani,

with the moon in my hand and the sun on my forehead.  
In one hand I hold the bamboo flute,  
in the other, a trumpet of war.  
I'm Shiva's blue-hued throat  
from drinking poison from the ocean of pain.  
I'm Byomkesh, the Ganges flows freely  
through my matted locks.

Proclaim, Hero,

proclaim : My head is ever held high!

I'm the ascetic, the minstrel,  
I'm the prince, my royal garb embarrasses  
even the most ostentatious.  
I'm Bedouin, I'm Chenghis,  
I salute none but myself!  
I'm thunder,  
I'm the OM sound of Ishan's horn.  
I'm the mighty call of Israfil's trumpet.  
I'm Pinakapani's hourglass drum, trident,  
the sceptre of the Lord of Justice.  
I'm the Chakra and the Great Conch,  
I'm the primordial sound of the Gong!  
I'm the furious Durbasa, the disciple  
of Vishwamitra.  
I'm the fury of fire, to burn this earth to ashes.  
I'm the ecstatic laughter, terrifying the creation.  
I'm the eclipse of the twelve suns  
on the Day of the Doom.  
Sometimes calm, sometimes wild,  
I'm the youth of new blood  
I humble even the fate's pride!  
I'm the violent gust of a wind storm,  
the roar of the ocean.  
I'm bright, effulgent.  
I'm the murmur of over-flowing water,  
Hindol dance of rolling waves!

I'm the unbridled hair of a maiden,  
the fire in her eyes.  
I'm the budding romance of a girl of sixteen  
I'm the state of bliss!  
I'm the madness of the recluse,  
I'm the sigh of grief of a widow,  
I'm the anguish of the dejected,  
I'm the suffering of the homeless,  
I'm the pain of the humiliated,  
I'm the afflicted heart of the lovesick.  
I'm the trembling passion of the first kiss,  
the fleeting glance of the secret lover.  
I'm the love of a restless girl,  
the jingling music of her bangles!  
I'm the eternal child, the eternal adolescent,  
I'm the bashfulness of a village girl's budding youth.

---

I'm the northern breeze, the southern breeze,  
the callous eastwind.  
I'm the minstrel's song,  
the music of his flute and lyre.  
I'm the unquenched summer thirst,  
the scorching rays of the sun.  
I'm the softly flowing desert spring  
and the green oasis!

In ecstatic joy, in madness,  
I've suddenly realized myself  
all the barriers have crumbled away!  
I'm the rise, I'm the fall,  
I'm the consciousness in the unconscious mind.  
I'm the flag of triumph at the gate  
of the universe  
the triumph of humanity!

Like a tempest  
I traverse the heaven and earth  
riding Uchchaishraba and the mighty Borrak.  
I'm the burning volcano in the bosom of the earth,  
the wildest commotion of the subterranean ocean of fire.  
I ride on lightning  
and panic the world with earthquakes!  
I clasp the hood of the Snake-king  
and the fiery wing of the angel Gabriel.  
I'm the child-diviner restless and defiant.  
With my teeth I tear apart  
the skirt of Mother Earth!

I'm Orpheus' flute.  
I calm the restless ocean  
and bring lethean sleep to the fevered world  
with a kiss of my melody.  
I'm the flute in the hands of Shyam.  
When I fly into a rage and traverse the vast sky,  
the fires of Seven Hells and the hell of hells, *Habia*,  
tremble in fear and die.  
I'm the messenger of revolt  
across the earth and the sky.

I'm the mighty flood.  
Sometimes I bring blessings to the earth,  
at other times, cause colossal damage.  
I wrestle away the maidens two  
from Vishnu's bosom!  
I'm injustice, I'm a meteor, I'm Saturn,  
I'm a blazing comet, a venomous cobra!  
I'm the headless Chandi,  
I'm the warlord Ranada.  
Sitting amidst the fire of hell  
I smile like an innocent flower!

I'm made of clay, I'm the embodiment of the Soul.  
I'm imperishable, inexhaustible, immortal.  
I intimidate the humans, demons and gods.  
I'm ever-unconquerable.  
I'm the God of gods, the supreme humanity,  
traversing the heaven and earth!

I'm mad, I'm mad!  
I have realized myself,  
all the barriers have crumbled away!!

I'm Parashuram's merciless axe.  
I'll rid the world of all the war mongers\*  
and bring peace.  
I'm the plough on Balaram's shoulders.  
I'll uproot this subjugated world  
in the joy of recreating it.  
Weary of battles, I, the Great Rebel,  
shall rest in peace only when  
the anguished cry of the oppressed  
shall no longer reverberate in the sky and the air,  
and the tyrant's bloody sword  
will no longer rattle in battlefields.  
Only then shall I, the Rebel,  
rest in peace.

I'm the Rebel Bhrigu,  
I'll stamp my footprints on the chest of god  
sleeping away indifferently, whimsically,  
while the creation is suffering.  
I'm the Rebel Bhrigu,  
I'll stamp my footprints  
I'll tear apart the chest of the whimsical god!

I'm the eternal Rebel,  
I have risen beyond this world, alone,  
with my head ever held high!

---

\* Refers to the *Kshatriyas*; see *Parashuram* in Glossary.

---

# Shahbagh no imperialist conspiracy, Mr Umari

*Subhash Gatade*

INDIA

*GUWAHATI : The echo of the Shahbagh protest in Bangladesh was heard about 200 miles away here on Sunday with citizens, under the banner of Janamat, expressing solidarity with protesters in that country. Janamat, a Guwahati-based socio-cultural body which organised the solidarity meet here, said that the issue raised by the Shahbagh protesters is relevant to India in general and Assam in particular because both the countries' secular and democratic fabrics are threatened by communal forces.*

*Solidarity meet in city for Shahbagh protest  
TNN April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2013, 09.35AM IST*

*Representatives of different Gonojagoron Mancha across the country on Friday suggested spreading its activities to grassroots level to aware people about its demands. They urged all to be united to fight against Jamaat-Shibir and move forward with a view to realising their demands ...Around 300 representatives from 167 gonojagoron manchas from seven divisions attended the daylong representative conference at Senate Bhaban of Dhaka University to express their views and suggestions to strengthen the movement. Imran H Sarkar, spokesperson for the Gonojagoron Mancha, announced a mass rally at Mymensingh on May 18<sup>th</sup> and a grand rally at Projonmo Chattar in Dhaka on May 31<sup>st</sup> at the end of the conference.*

*(The Daily Star, May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2013)*

Maulana Syed Jalaluddin Umari, President of Jamaat-e-Islami Hind, (Born in 1935), seems to be a learned man, at least that's what his biographical details tell us. Elected for the second time as Ameer (President) of the Jamaat he is known to have 'authored more than thirty books' and is 'considered an 'authority on human rights in general, and women and Islamic family system in particular'. Interestingly, despite his long innings in social-political life and exposure to the outside world his understanding of some crucial developments in this part of the subcontinent seems to be at variance from what can be said as a general consensus around the issue.

The manner in which he and the organisation he leads reacted to the recent

developments in Bangladesh, the emergence of what is known as Shahbagh movement - the spontaneous movement initiated by youth seeking 'exemplary punishment to the war criminals' and banning of 'politics based on religion' - is an indicative of this disconnect between what Maulana Umari and the organisation he leads thinks and what actually happened.

As everybody knows the question of trial of 'war criminals' in Bangladesh's liberation struggle still remains unsettled, despite the fact that it has been a longstanding demand of the Bangladeshi people who faced genocide at the hands of Pakistani army. The support rendered to them in this venture by local activists of Jamaat-e-Islami belonging to then East Pakistan is another ignoble aspect of this whole episode. The way post-liberation history of Bangladesh unfolded itself, where one witnessed assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman, towering leader of the liberation struggle and the first Prime Minister of the newly independent country, followed by coups and a period of instability, this important task could not be addressed. Yes, time and again there were attempts at the non-official level to underline and emphasise this unfinished task : e.g. way back in 1992, an organisation led by Jahanara Imam (called Shaheed Janani - mother of martyrs) called 'Ekattorer Ghatak-Dalal Nirmul Committee' had held mock public trial of people accused of war crimes in a People's Court. The immediate context of having this trial was that Gulam Azam, whose citizenship was revoked by Sheikh Mujib, was elected as the Amir of the Jamaat-e-Islami. The High Court, however, in 1993 restored his citizenship which was later upheld by the Bangladesh Supreme Court in 1994.

These attempts received a boost when Awami League under the leadership of Sheikh Haseena returned to power (2009) and set up an International War Crimes Tribunal to try some leading activists of Jamaat-e-Islami, Bangladesh and Bangladesh Nationalist Party as part of fulfillment of its electoral promise. Critics also see it as an attempt to claim legacy over the historic struggle for liberation. A War Crimes Fact Finding Committee in April 2010 published a list of 1597 suspects. As far as evidence to be presented during

---

the trial, the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act 1973 states: "A Tribunal shall not be bound by technical rules of evidence; and it shall adopt and apply to the greatest possible extent expeditious and non-technical procedure, and may admit any evidence, including reports and photographs published in newspapers, periodicals and magazines, film and tape-recordings and other materials as may be tendered before it, which it deems to have probative value." (As cited in Julfiqar Ali Manik, "The Trial we are Still Waiting For", Forum, *Daily Star*, 3 (12), December 2009, <http://www.thedailystar.net/forum/2...>)

The flashpoint of this three month old youth led movement became the 'lenient punishment' meted out to Vice President of Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh, Abdul Quader Mollah, who was given life sentence on February 5<sup>th</sup> in spite of his proven guilt of the heinous crimes that he had committed. He was proven guilty on five counts out of six charges that were brought against him, including murdering more than 300 people. The photo of this man emerging from the court, smiling and making a Victory sign, so infuriated the youth that they gave a call on social network to gather at the historic Shahbagh Square. Rest is now history. (5<sup>th</sup> Feb. 2013)

As has been written elsewhere, the uniqueness of the Shahdbagh movement - as hundreds of thousands of people from all walks of life converged in this important part of Dhaka and continued to demonstrate for weeks together - was that though it was principally initiated by those youth who run online blogs, and none of whom had actually witnessed the actual genocide, it quickly witnessed the participation of other classes. People could see the repetition of 'Tahrir Square' in Dhaka, but not many could foresee that it went much beyond. Undoubtedly, by taking lead in this historic movement and persisting against heavy odds, the youth of Bangladesh were trying to carry forward the forgotten legacy of all those unnamed martyrs who sacrificed their present for a better future for the people of Bangladesh - a future free of religious extremism, a future guaranteeing a life of dignity to everyone.

### **What a time to be in Dhaka!**

I am in Dhaka right now.

Being here at this moment, in Shahbagh (Projonmo Chottor, as it is now called) and on the streets with activists from the Gonojagoron Mancha – young people, academics, veterans of the liberation

movement, singers, artists, writers, professionals and thousands of ordinary people – is a unique and inspiring experience.

The similarities and differences with the Delhi mobilisation are striking. There is the same exhilarating sense of reclaiming public space. The same energy and camaraderie, the same feeling of security and freedom. All kinds of unexpected encounters and conversations that leave one feeling both elevated and humbled. Hearing women and men who were part of the liberation war talking about their experiences. The "mashaal" rallies every evening – overwhelming when one is walking in the middle of it, and spectacular on TV, like an unending ribbon of light snaking down the streets.

Of course, this being Bangladesh, there is also a lot of very good music and poetry! The greats are singing on the streets. I feel so privileged to be here.

But this is a far more politically aware and focused movement than what happened in Delhi – it is an out and out confrontation with the Jamaat and Hefazat-e-Islam, which calls itself "a people's movement" in defence of Islam. And of course BNP is right in there stirring the pot and trying to skim off whatever they can.

This confrontation has been simmering for a long time and most people I'm talking to are glad it came now, when the young people are mobilised in force on the issue of punishment of war criminals...

(Excerpts of a write-up  
by Ms. Kalyani Menon Sen,  
[www.kafila.org](http://www.kafila.org), 8<sup>th</sup> April 2013)

Forget words of appreciation for this historic churning in our neighbourhood, and the youth's resolve to set right 'historical wrongs' happened more than four decades ago and their attempts to bring to book the 'war criminals' who were responsible for indiscriminate killings of innocents - which included people belonging to different faiths or political outlook - and rapes of women, during the struggle for liberation, ; forget the fact that people on this part of the border had once played a very supportive role for their struggle, Maulana Umari had nothing but scorn for these young fighters and it appeared that he was trying every way to sanitise the crimes of the Bangladeshi

---

Jamaatis. He lamented : *“the death sentence for popular leader of Bangladesh Jamaat Islami Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and renowned religious leader and speaker Maulana Dilawar Husain Sayeedi by the ruling Awami League-appointed war tribunal. While terming the conviction as cruelty and injustice, Maulana Umari demanded Bangladesh government to revoke the sentence against Sayeedi and all leaders of Jamaat Islami, rescind the cases and release them. He said this punishment is the worst example of devaluing the nation’s most caring and concerned Jamaat and its people. Those who have observed international affairs and politics know well that Bangladesh Jamaat Islami did great service to the nation in the field of religion, politics, economy and social welfare...(<http://bdinn.com/news/jamaat-e-islami-hind-demands-release-of-bangladesh-jamaat-leaders>)*

The glorification of Jamaatis in Bangladesh did not end at that. And this despite the fact that all historical evidence pointed to the contrary, which again and again underlined the criminal role played by them during the war of liberation.

...On 20 June 1971, Ghulam Azam at a press conference at Lahore Airport said, “With support from many non-Muslims in East Pakistan, Sheik Mujib intends for secession. (Pakistan) Army has uprooted almost all miscreants from East Pakistan and now there is no power which can challenge the dominance of the army”.

...On August 12<sup>th</sup>, 1971, Azam declared, “the supporters of the so-called Bangladesh Movement are the enemies of Islam, Pakistan, and Muslims”.

...On 5<sup>th</sup> August 1971, Matiur Rahman Nizami (then head of Al Badr) said “Allah entrusted the pious Muslims with the responsibility to save His beloved Pakistan. (But) when the Muslims failed to solve the political problem in a political way, then Allah saved His beloved land through the (Pakistan) army”.

(Courtesy : Daily Prothom Alo, 11<sup>th</sup> January 2012, a compilation of statements based on what was published in Jamaat’s own newspaper The Daily Sangram in 1971)

The facts regarding the bloody period which accompanied Bangladesh’s emergence have been recounted n number of times. It need be noted here that Bangladeshi authorities claim that as many as 3 million people were killed in this struggle, while news outlets like BBC have quoted the figures in the range of 3,00,000 to 5,00,000 for the estimated death toll as counted by independent

researchers, whereas an official Pakistan government investigation after the debacle of 1971 - under the Hamoodur Rahman Commission after ‘acknowledging its mistakes’ itself had put the figure as low as 26,000 civilian casualties. Even if for arguments sake we focus on the figures presented by Pakistani government, it also boils down to hundreds of civilian deaths daily during that tumultuous nine month period in 1971.

Should not we call such deaths ‘genocide’?

In fact, the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (CPPCG) is quite explicit about it. Article 2 of this convention defines genocide as *“any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: killing members of the group; causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life, calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; [and] forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.”*

It would be opportune here to remind Maulana Umari, that the first one to make such charge happened to be Anthony Mascarenhas, a noted Pakistani journalist, himself. In fact, his write-up in ‘Sunday Times’ (London) created great sensation during that period and let the outside world know what is happening in then East Pakistan. Perhaps, Mr. Umari and his colleagues at Jammam Islami Hind would be crestfallen to know that even Archer Blood, the then US consul-general in Dhaka - while his government was actually supporting Pakistan then - had used the “dissent channel” of the US department of state to protest against American support for Pakistan during this crisis. In his telegram, Blood had written, “the much overused term ‘genocide’ is precisely applicable in this case”...(The Shame of Kolkata, Sumit Ganguly, 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013, Asian Age).

It is clear that Mr. Umari does not want to look at facts of the case , nor the genocide which took place and the heinous role played by the Bangladeshi Jamaatis and wants to reduce the whole question to alleged ‘different views’ between Bangladesh Jamaat Islami and Shiekh Mujiburrahman during the 1971 conflict in East Pakistan, which according to him ‘..cannot be called a crime’. Naturally when lakhs of Bangladeshis agitated on streets demanding punishment to leaders of the Jamaat he was singing paens to the ‘.great service to the nation in the field of religion,

---

*politics, economy and social welfare*' which Jamaat rendered. And referring to the war crimes tribunal was alleging that '*due to political differences,*' Jamaat leaders are being implicated in false cases and are being awarded even death sentences which was '*against the Islamic and democratic values.*'

Not to be left behind the press release issued on behalf of Jamaat-e-Islami, Hind urged "...[o]ur Government here to impress upon Dhaka to abolish the so-called War Crimes Tribunal and stop atrocities on Jamaat-e-Islami and other Islamic organisation." It is important to note that "On prosecution of leaders in Bangladesh, Jamaat Secretary (Media), Ejaz Ahmed Aslam said: *What is going on in Bangladesh is part of larger international conspiracy to suppress Islamists all over the world. It is not in the interest of Bangladesh and the Muslim community.*" (Posted on 02 March 2013 by Admin\_markaz, <http://jamaateislamihind.org/eng/monthly-press-confrencethe-continued-injustice-to-indian-muslims-their-demonization-and-discrimination-against-them>).

It appears that the Jamaat people in India have not properly thought over this label 'international conspiracy' in their hurried efforts to sanitise the acts of Jamaatis of Bangladesh. Do they want to say that all those people who poured out on streets of Bangladesh, and who are still continuing with their movement in very many ways, to pressurise the government to ensure exemplary punishment to the 'war criminals' were paid agents of the imperialists? Do they want to say that demanding justice in case of deaths of all those people who were martyred during Bangladesh's war for liberation is dancing to the tunes of the imperialists? In fact, by stalling further enquiries in the war crimes, Jamaatis here, indirectly seem to serve the agenda of the erstwhile occupiers of Bangladesh and their imperialist masters.

## II

Abdul Bari had run out of luck. Like thousands of other people in East Bengal, he had made the mistake - the fatal mistake - of running within sight of a Pakistani patrol. He was 24 years old, a slight man surrounded by soldiers. He was trembling because he was about to be shot...

..."General Yahya Khan's military government is pushing through its own 'final solution' of the East Bengal problem. 'We are determined to cleanse East Pakistan once for all of the threat of secession, even if it means the killing of two million people and meeting the province as a colony for 30

years', (Genocide : Anthony Mascarenhas, Pakistani Journalist, The Sunday Times, 13<sup>th</sup> June 1971).

To be fair to Maulana Umari, it can be added that neither he nor for that matter Jamaat-e-Islami, Hind were alone in denouncing this historic movement. Many Muslim leaders and their organisations were found to be vying with each other to stigmatise the protests knowing fully well that majority victims of genocide undertaken by the Pakistani army to suppress national aspirations of the Bangla people belonged to the same *Umma* (community) they seem more concerned about. The other prominent organisations which either maintained silence or opposed the 'war crimes tribunal' included : *All India Muslim Majlis-e Mushawarat, All India Milli Council, All Bengal Minority Youth Federation, West Bengal Sunnat Al Jamaat Committee* etc.

Kolkata could be seen as an epicentre of this anti-Shahbagh protesters. All Bengal Minorities Youth Federation and the dozen odd Muslim outfits had held a 'one lakh strong demonstration' there on 30<sup>th</sup> March to protest against the verdict of the 'war crime tribunal' against Jamaat-e-Islami's leaders and demanding stepping down of Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Haseena. The participants in the well attended demonstration had come from different parts of West Bengal. According to them the actions of the Bangladesh government was not only 'anti-Islam' but 'anti-humanity' as well. The organisers of the demonstration said that if their demands are not met then they would appeal to the Indian government to sever all ties with Bangladesh. The city had witnessed a more violent demonstration by the same forces earlier albeit with lesser participation of people.

There was a similar demonstration held in Karachi in the second week of March led by the Jamaat-e-Islami (Pakistan) 'to protest the indictment of Jamaat-e-Islami (Bangladesh) war criminals of 1971 and the treatment of its activists by the Bangladesh government, judiciary and the police in the aftermath of the Shahbag movement against the Islamists in Dhaka.'. Leaders of many Islamic countries especially President of Egypt and Prime Minister of Turkey are reported to have written letters to their Bangladesh counterparts expressing their 'displeasure' over the war crimes tribunal. Few other Islamic countries have through informal channels also 'requested' the Bangladesh government to 'go slow' on the trials or ensure that 'violations of human rights' does not take place. Wittingly or

---

unwittingly all such 'protests' or 'displeasures' about 'danger to Islam' or 'danger to humanity' or alleged concern over democratic rights violation which the ongoing trials have allegedly provoked make one thing very clear.

Interestingly, echoes of Shahbagh could be heard in far off UK as well which witnessed daily events in solidarity with Shahbagh. (The youth of Shahbagh: A Bengali spring? Ansar Ahned Ullah 15<sup>th</sup> February 2013. [www.opendemocracy.net](http://www.opendemocracy.net)). In fact, on one of those days there was a direct confrontation between Bengali Muslim secularists and Islamists in East London. A number of young Bengali bloggers from London had called for a peaceful demo in Aftab Ali Park, Whitechapel in solidarity with Shahbagh movement. (8<sup>th</sup> February 2013) And when the young bloggers went there at the scheduled time, they found to their surprise that UK Jamaat-e-Islami activists had reached there in large numbers and forcefully occupied the sacred Shahid Minar. The standoff between the two groups continued for eight hours. During and at the end of the event Islamists pelted the secular gathering with eggs and stones, abused the women folk and physically attacked a number young bloggers and hospitalised them. No arrests by the police followed.

From Dhaka to London, from Cairo to Riyadh, it is not difficult to understand why Jamaat-e-Islami-Hind and many other Muslim organisations from this side of the border, as well as their counterparts in other countries felt so agitated and threatened over the Shahbagh movement and were going all out to defend the indefensible. It is also a marker of the large network established by the various communitarian Muslim organizations the world over and the influence they have on policies of different Muslim majority nations.

Their immediate interest was definitely to lessen the pressure on the Bangladeshi Jamaatis who were facing bad times inside Bangladesh, put on the defensive by the youth led uprising demanding capital punishment to the war criminals of 1971 coupled with the actions of the Awami League government against its leaders. A press release issued by the Bangladesh Jamaat Islami itself (<http://www.jamaat-e-islami.org/en/newsdetails.php?nid=NzU0>) on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2013 described how ' [t]he leadership of Jamaat is either in jail or is living in fear of arrest.'

Its Ameer (i.e. President) is in jail. There are warrants of arrest issued against the Acting

Ameer and he is now in hiding. The party's Secretary General is in jail. The two people who were subsequently appointed (one after the other) to replace him have also been arrested and are now in jail. The third person appointed is now avoiding arrest in fear of custodial torture. Of the 7 Assistant Secretary Generals, 6 are in jail. 12 of the 16 member Executive Committee have been arrested. Of the 6 City Ameers in the 6 metropolitan cities, 2 are in jail, while the remaining 4 are in hiding.

At the grass-root level, the situation is far worse. 54 of the District Ameers in the 64 districts of Bangladesh have been arrested. The rest have warrants of arrest issued against them. All of the sub district (or Upazilla) Ameers in the 493 Sub Districts of Bangladesh have warrants issued against them and are now in hiding.

They could also foresee that if the Shahbagh experiment for banning religion and religious organisations from politics - led by the seculars and democrats - succeeds in a country which is fourth largest in the world as far as Muslim population is concerned (160 million, 90 percent Muslims) then it can definitely start a chain reaction in other Muslim majority countries as well and then it would be extremely difficult for the forces of political Islam of various hues to suppress the democratic aspirations of the people there.

Today it might be the case that people in many of the Muslim majority countries are veering around the idea of giving more space to Islam in governance but it has not been the case earlier. In fact, during the 1960s, the predominant ideology within the Arab world was infact pan-Arabism which de-emphasized religion and emphasized the creation of socialist, secular states based on Arab nationalism rather than Islam. And in many other newly independent countries, with a significant population of Muslims which had their own genesis in leading anti-colonial struggles, there was still more space for running governments on secular principles.

Undoubtedly, in an atmosphere of growing religiosity and faith based practices the world over, where one witnesses increasing intrusion of faith and religion in matters of governance as well as societal functioning, the Shahbagh movement offers not only the Muslim majority countries but the rest of humanity as well not only a beacon of hope but a promise that things can be changed for the better.

---

# The Muslim League Story

*Prof. Salil Misra*

INDIA

The Muslim League story from 1937 onwards is quite hazy. All that is generally held and documented is that stung by the Congress refusal to accommodate two Leaguers in the UP ministry, Muslim League launched a massive offensive against the Congress government, successfully generated a fear psychosis among Muslims about their fate in a “Hindu” state and reaped a rich harvest by becoming a mass organization by 1939. Partition, it is argued, was a logical consequence of this phenomenon. That the process of Muslim League becoming a mass organization could not possibly have been so smooth, without its own problems and complexities and entirely determined by what happened in 1937, is proposed to be demonstrated in this chapter.

Constructing the Muslim League story is no easy task. There do not exist many autobiographies (Khaliquzzaman is one of the very few to have attempted one), memoirs, private papers and recorded interviews of League leaders, at least not in India. Presumably many of them would have migrated to Pakistan after 1947. There exist very few authoritative works on Muslim League focusing on the organization, its composition, different stands within it, and its political ideological development. Regional case studies are even more scarce. The all-India, homogeneous character of Muslim League, devoid of any regional variations, has been readily assumed, even though not stated explicitly.

For a good account of the public activities of Muslim League, British government records, the League’s official publications and newspapers provide useful data. But a more comprehensive study of the organization must await the unearthing of more material. Two other important sources of information on Muslim League are biographies of Jinnah, and general works on communal politics. Given the

Jinnah-centred focus of the studies on the League, he occupies as important a place in the works on Muslim League as the League does in his biographies. This is also indicative of the role that he played, or is assumed to have played, in the political development of Muslim League. The narratives on communal politics also provide a comprehensive coverage of the League activities. The Muslim League story in UP in the 1930s has to be extrapolated from these diverse sources.

## CRISIS

If Jinnah was hoping that the immediate post-election period was going to be one of consolidation for Muslim League in UP, he would certainly have been disappointed. In spite of having done well at the polls in UP, Muslim League found itself facing the grim prospects of divisions in its own ranks and being dismissed by the British government and Congress. Instead of bringing about any consolidation, the post-election developments were to witness a phase of crisis for Muslim League in UP which was to last through the year.

As has been pointed out earlier, the political existence of Muslim League depended, at this stage, largely upon being granted the status-both by the British government and Congress-of an organization representative of Indian Muslims. This acknowledgement was particularly crucial for Muslim League because such a status did not flow from the election results and could therefore not be assumed. In other words, in spite of performing well at the polls in UP, there was nothing in the election results at the all-India level which even remotely imparted the much needed and desperately sought position to Muslim League. Unfortunately for the League, this acknowledgment did not come about immediately after the elections. The Uttar Pradesh Governor Harry Haig did not make the League’s participation a precondition for ministry formation. This amounted to an

---

official acknowledgment of Congress's capacity to represent Muslims and thereby fulfilling the constitutional obligation of "adequate minority representation" provided in the instrument of instructions in the Act. The British, needless to say, did not do it out of any love for Congress. Faced with the grim possibility of the constitution not taking off the ground, Haig would not want to do anything to delay or jeopardize the prospects of the formation of the Congress ministry by questioning Congress's credentials in providing the "Muslim" component to the ministry. On the contrary, the Congress decision to accept office must certainly have brought him relief. During the elections Muslim League had not been the government's favoured party—that position belonged to the NAPs. Linlithgow had been apprehensive of the League's capacity to whip up communal frenzy. About Jinnah also, there was general apprehension and distrust in the British government around 1937. Haig, on his part, saw no reason to elevate Muslim League to the status of the spokesman of Muslims—Jinnah's ultimate objective. So, if the British government did not bestow upon the League the status of a representative Muslim organization, which it did not at this stage, and if Congress also did not concede the same, which it did not and could not without surrendering its claim to be a secular organization representing all Indians irrespective of religion, caste and province, there was little Muslim League could do to save itself from political oblivion.

This was not all. Muslim League's crisis was not confined only to the indifference shown to it by the other principal actors in the political arena. The opposition by the Shia Political Conference and the formation, in Lucknow, of Azad Muslim League in opposition to All India Muslim League tended to suggest that not all Muslims of UP, at this stage, showed an inclination to rally behind Muslim League. The weekly note of the UP Intelligence reported that Azad Muslim League, formed with the objective of countering Muslim League and expressing solidarity with Congress, seemed to be gaining influence among the poor Muslims of UP. Upon

Jinnah's arrival in Lucknow for the annual session of Muslim League, Azad Muslim League staged a black flag demonstration of about 50 people. This led to a minor clash between the followers of the two Leagues. Desertion to Congress by Muslim Leaguers such as Suleman Ansari and Sadiuddin Khan added to the crisis of Muslim League in UP.

That Jinnah's dictates would not be followed blindly by some UP Leaguers became clear when seven members of the Muslim League Parliamentary Board requested Jinnah to respond favourably to the offer made by Rajendra Prasad to renew talks with Jinnah held earlier in 1935. Pressure to arrive at a settlement with Congress also came from outside the province. M.A.H. Ispahani, a businessman and Muslim League from Bengal close to Jinnah, requested him to give "best consideration" to the Rajendra Prasad formula and impressed upon Jinnah that "I will certainly welcome a settlement that is honourable and dignified." Jinnah's response was, however, evasive.

Pressure kept mounting on Jinnah, accompanied by threats of resignations. Jinnah's plight had been compounded by a loss of prestige on account of his alleged use of the Quran and his cries of "Islam in danger" during the Bundelkhand by-election. It was felt that he no longer retained his earlier nationalist approach and that he had started moving towards extreme communalism. This meant a loss of some of the liberal support that Jinnah had enjoyed so far. The media too became increasingly critical of him.

Perhaps the biggest blow that struck the UP League was a comprehensive defeat at the Bijnor-Garhwal in Rohilkhand and Kumaun divisions, respectively, Hafiz Ibrahim, the then Muslim League candidate, had been elected unopposed. Subsequently he resigned from Muslim League to join Congress and was made a minister in the Congress government. Since then he had become the main target of attack by Muslim League. Maulana Hasrat Mohani, in a speech, accused Hafiz Ibrahim of being a party to the prohibition of cow slaughter. In the face of fierce opposition by Muslim League,

---

Hafiz Ibrahim resigned his seat and decided to seek re-election from the same constituency, this time on a Congress ticket.

The Bijnor by-election, because of its nature, became a trial of strength between the two parties. Supporters of Muslim League and Congress often clashed with each other during the election campaign. A bomb was thrown at a Congress procession canvassing for Hafiz Ibrahim. Green flags were unfurled and religious appeals were made by both the sides. Non-Muslims also addressed the gatherings from the Congress Side. Local Leaders like Pandit Anusuya Prasad, provincial leaders like Mohan Lal Saksena and all-India leaders like Nehru gave their active support in what had become the real test of popularity among Muslims. From the Muslim League side Jinnah made passionate appeals for Muslim unity. The degree of hostility displayed towards each other during the election campaign was unprecedented. A Congress worker was stabbed by a Muslim Leaguer. Disturbed by this deterioration in public standards, Nehru complained of the stabbing to Nawab Ismail Khan, a known anti-imperialist and a Congress sympathizer within Muslim League. Ismail Khan replied that "the (League) volunteer in question has sufficient provocation to justify the act". In their election speeches Muslim Leaguers emphasized that Congress wanted to suppress and eliminate Urdu, would stop tazia processions from being taken out, would forcibly stop cow slaughter, and would force Muslims to wear dhotis instead of pyjamas. They also levelled charges against Congressmen of bribing the Ulema. Shaukat Ali was reported to have said in one of his election speeches that local officials like Tahsildars and Patwaris and influential Hindu landlords (who were not Congressmen) were not only campaigning for the Congress candidate but also threatening Muslim peasants to vote for Congress. Nehru complained that he was accused of snatching and tearing off a flag bearing *Allah-O-Akbar* on it in Najibabad town in district Bijnor.

Congressmen, too, did not lag behind. The intelligence report noted an increase in "rowdiness by some Congress workers" during

the election campaign. A Muslim League meeting in the town of Najibabad ended in chaos while in Bijnor a League meeting was disrupted by Congressmen who threw stones at the dais and did not allow anyone to speak. Ismail Khan complained to Nehru that Ahrar leaders made passionate religious speeches verging on "obscenity and vulgarity". According to the *Star of India*, a pro-Muslim League paper, cries of *Allah-O-Akbar* were heard at the Congress election meetings; Congress volunteers wore green clothes and inscribed *Allah-O-Akbar* on the tri-colour flag.

The results were a shattering blow to Muslim League. Hafiz Ibrahim, The Congress candidate, won the election getting 77.57 percent of the votes as against a mere 22.43 percent by his Muslim League rival, Maulvi Abdus Sami. Muslim Leaguers attributed the Congress victory to the use of religious symbols and the efforts of the Jamaitul-Ulema-i-Hind, branded by Leaguers as "a brand of unscrupulous and irreligious rogues". Jinnah acknowledged the demoralization that had set in the UP League :

*The United Provinces has its difficulties because they (Muslims) have not got a band of leaders who could work together and keep up sustained efforts and unfortunately there is not a single man of outstanding position there who could command the respect and the confidence of the people generally. Anyhow this movement will throw up men and United Provinces will soon come into its own. There is nothing to despair. Loss of one or two elections is not going to make the slightest difference. It seems a temporary disappointment and we cannot always win.*

The Bijnor-Garhwal election was a significant one not only because it led to further deterioration in the Congress-League relationship but also because it crystallized and reinforced the prejudices held by the leaders of the two organizations against each other. Nawab Ismail Khan was convinced that a lot of the political hooliganism in evidence was a product of the "advent of democracy" that had been "let loose" in the country as a result of Congress accepting office. What made this democracy

---

even more dangerous was the fact that Congress had chosen to grab power all by itself and used their majority status in the legislatures to treat Muslim League with utter contempt. This, along with the anti-League propaganda carried on even by non-Congress Hindus, had, according to Ismail Khan, convinced Muslims that the Congress government “virtually means a Hindu Government”. Ismail Khan informed Nehru: “The patience of the Mussalmans is well nigh exhausted and if they, therefore, hit back, it may be occasionally below the belt. You should not feel greatly horrified.” This was how he sought to explain the Muslim League aggression displayed during and after the elections.

Nehru found it inexplicable that Congress and Muslim League, essentially political rivals, should be seen and treated as representing Hindus and Muslims, respectively. Communal propaganda and activities created an atmosphere which was detrimental to the growth of healthy politics. “This seems to me a great disservice to any community and to the nation for progress comes through the development of a political mentality in a group. Nationalism is *obviously a higher ideal than communalism in so far as politics is concerned*” (emphasis added).

The Bijnor-Garhwal election is also important in as much as it closed certain channels of communication which had existed between Nehru and those League leaders who had previously been sympathetic to Congress. Nehru’s admiration for Ismail Khan’s nationalism and the latter’s “profound respect” for Nehru’s “sincerity of purpose and honesty of profession” had prompted them to write to each other to explore the areas of differences and remove misunderstandings. At the end of the correspondence they discovered that as leaders of the two organizations they had very little in common. The differences between Muslim League and Congress were not based on any political misunderstanding, but on their past record, different ideological approaches and perceptions of politics and indeed very different political trajectories charted out for the future. Episodic commonalities could not wish

away these differences. Muslim League was a growing organization and had changed very rapidly from 1934 onwards. It was not (as some Congressmen may have imagined) drifting involuntarily but marching very consciously towards extreme communalism. Nehru’s reference to nationalism obviously being a higher ideal than communalism would have made little sense to the League leadership.

To return to Bijnor election, apart from the election defeat, the Muslim League leadership was also encountering problems in setting up branches. It was reported that the efforts to organize branches of Muslim League in Jhansi district met with considerable opposition from local Muslims. *The leader* was convinced that a “definite rupture” in the UP League was imminent. It also reported that for the Bulandshahar by-election, to be held in December, the League was not able to organize regular election work as most of their supporters had “deserted the field by joining the Congress”. If any further proof of a disintegrating League was needed, it was provided in Meerut where the district conference of the Jamaitul-Ulema-i-Hind, held on 30 October, was attended by 4,000 Muslims. The Muslim League meeting, held the next day, attracted only 200 to 300 Muslims. In what could be termed as the first round of the battle between Congress and Muslim League, the former had clearly emerged the winner.

## INITIAL CONSOLIDATION

The end of 1937 began to offer glimpses of the possible consolidation of Muslim League in UP. To be more precise, it was the Lucknow session of Muslim League held in October 1937 that initiated a phase of political strengthening for Muslim League, even though there were significant overlaps between the phases of crises and consolidation. The Lucknow session was a landmark in Muslim League politics because it facilitated a coming together of different groups within Muslim League and diverse strands in Muslim communal politics under the umbrella of Muslim League. It was also at the Lucknow session that the agenda of the League was articulated fairly sharply. The session was

---

referred to as the “opening of another glorious chapter of Muslim history in India” by *Star of India*, a newspaper from Calcutta which functioned as a spokesman of the “Muslim viewpoint” in politics. Haig called it a declaration of war against Congress and the pioneer accused Jinnah of leading his community back to the barren fields of isolation.

There was much about the Lucknow session which signified a definite consolidation for Muslim League. In a nutshell, it was at the Lucknow session that the League took a decisive leap forward in two directions—anti imperialism and anti-Congressism. The two stands were linked together through communalism that is to say, both were motivated and fostered essentially by communalism. This meant that the Lucknow session set in motion the process of Muslim League transforming itself into a definite, uncompromising, communal organization. All these were to have implications in the years to follow.

### OVERCOMING DISSENSIONS

This consolidation occurred at many levels. First, there was a tiding over of internal dissensions. As has been pointed out earlier, in spite of the best efforts of Jinnah to achieve unity in the ranks, Muslim League remained divided among broadly three strands which could be identified as loyalist, exclusivist and anti-imperialist. Although the three had agreed to come together under the League umbrella, each refused to merge its identity with the other. Each strand was also working towards transforming Muslim League in its own direction.

The loyalists, mainly landlords, some of whom (like Chhatari and Yusuf) had temporarily abandoned Muslim League before the elections and had received a setback afterwards, were now trying to explore ways of either returning to the League fold or trying to forge ties with it. The exclusivists, or the followers of Jinnah (like Zahirul Husnain Lari) were trying to push Muslim League ahead as a communal organization without coming close either to Congress or the British Government, wanting to remain more or less equidistant from both. The third group—anti-imperialists—

consisted of Congress sympathizers such as Wazir Hasan, Suleman Ansari, Ali Zaheer, Khaliquzzaman and Nawab Ismail Khan on the one hand, and anti-Congress Leaguers like Shaukat Ali and Maulana Hasrat Mohani on the other. They were also called the “left-wingers” within Muslim League. This strand had expressed dissatisfaction with the slogan of “full responsible government” and had favoured the adoption of a sharper and more unambiguous expression of anti-imperialism. Some of them also worked towards cooperation with Congress. When that did not come about, most of the Congress sympathizers—except Khaliquzzaman and Ismail Khan—joined Congress, thereby weakening this strand within Muslim League.

Jinnah had resisted the change in the creed of Muslim League, but Lucknow provided an opportunity for the convergence of these various strands. The creed of the League was, therefore, changed to “full independence” at the Lucknow session. This must have pleased those desirous of independence. Moving the resolution, Hasrat Mohani explained that the new creed of Muslim League was “full independence” and not “complete independence” (as in the Congress resolution at Lahore in 1929) because “its interpretation by the Congress had made it meaningless”. The independence resolution also contained a clause regarding the safeguarding of rights and “interest” of Muslims. This, explained Hasrat Mohani, had been done to satisfy the moderates. It was for the same reason that there had been no reference to the severance of the British connection. “It was possible within the terms of the resolution to remain within the British fold, if necessary.”

Anti-imperialists and moderates were not the only ones to be pleased. Chhatari expressed satisfaction at the new turn that Muslim League had taken and promised support: “I can assure the Muslim public that every member of the Independent Party wholeheartedly agrees with the supports the policy and programme of the League.” Why did the loyalist landlords feel so agreeable towards the change in Muslim League in an anti-British direction? Perhaps it was the clarification made by Hasrat Mohani regarding

---

the possibility of achieving independence within the British fold. Or, more likely, it was their perception that they desperately needed the support of Muslim League as an ally in the Legislative Assembly against the Congress government. Congress had already threatened to implement their agrarian programme. Muslim League's anti-imperialism could, therefore, be put up with so long as it did not bring the League closer to Congress. The manner in which the Lucknow session proceeded must have been reassuring to Chhatari as it completely ruled out the possibility of any proximity between the League and Congress.

Indeed if there was one theme which dominated the session, it was that of anti-Congressism. A resolution strongly condemned the Congress government for imposing the "positively anti-Islamic anti idolatrous" song, *Bande Mataram*, on Muslim. Jinnah's presidential address concentrated almost entirely on attacking Congress. He was emphatic that "No settlement with the majority is possible..." he accused the Congress leadership of double standards: "Those who talk of complete independence the most mean the least (of) what it means." He charged Congress with alienating Muslims by pursuing a policy "which is exclusively Hindu..." Pointing the finger almost directly at Nehru, Rajendra Prasad, and Gandhi, Jinnah declared:

*The Congress High Command speaks in different voices. One opinion is that there is no such thing as Hindu-Muslim question and there is no such thing as Minorities' question in the country. The other high opinion is that if a few crumbs are thrown to the Mussalmans in their present disorganized and helpless state, you can manage them. They are sadly mistaken if they think that the Mussalmans can be imposed upon... The third opinion is that there is no light to be seen through the impenetrable darkness; but as the Congress goes on acquiring strength and power so the past promises of the blank cheques remain unfilled and unsigned.*

Interestingly Congress was no longer rebuked for its economic radicalism or socialism but for being a Hindu party which, on becoming a government, had ushered in a

"Hindu Raj".

What made Jinnah so bitter against the organization of which he had been a member till 1920? Was it a part of his new strategic design or did he simply feel let down by Congress? Was he retaliating against Congress for making overtures to Muslims or was he merely stating the truth when he accused Congress of being a Hindu party and government? The question of Congress having become a Hindu force requires detailed elaboration and will be taken up later. But the other questions can be examined here. Jinnah could not possibly have been upset about Congress refusing to cooperate with Muslim League (as he pointed out in his speech), because, as has been shown earlier, Jinnah himself did not want it and did all he could to stop Khaliqzaman from reaching out to the Congress leadership. It is therefore more likely that he was reacting adversely to the Congress decision to launch the Muslim mass contact programme. His attitude may also be seen as a reflection of the general deterioration in the Congress League relationship during the two by-elections. More importantly, Jinnah's new mood was indicative, not so much of hurt as of initiating a new strategy. His priorities of bringing about Muslim unity have been spelt out earlier in the previous chapters. That he had not been successful in it may have also conveyed to him the futility of pursuing open-ended politics. Clearly it was not enough to bring Muslims of different shades and opinions to a common platform. They had also to be homogenized through the instrumentality of a defined ideology powerful enough to accommodate Muslims from diverse political streams. In other words, strong communalism would have appeared to Jinnah as the only instrument with which to unite both the loyalists and the anti-imperialists. Such a strategic design demanded redefining not only the League's agenda but that of Congress as well. Congress had to be declared a Hindu organization which was, therefore, essentially incapable of representing Muslims.

*Courtesy—A Narrative of Communal Politics Uttar Pradesh, 1937-39*

---

# The death of Hugo Chávez, and the trend of hi-tech assassinations in global politics

*Peter Baofu*

PRAVDA

Hugo Chávez, the Socialist president of Venezuela for 14 years, died on March 05, 2013, after having courageously fought against cancer in the last few months. Media reports superficially stated “heart attack” as the cause. But a troubling question is, who killed him? This question is not rhetorical, since its answer points to the trend of hi-tech assassinations in contemporary global politics.



## I. HISTORICAL CASES

In the last few years alone, quite a number of prominent individuals who opposed the policies of some powerful states on the world stage had been targeted for hi-tech assassination, which often leaves no trace behind and can kill the victim silently (often in a slow and painful death), and this kind of silent killing becomes an increasingly preferred form of very sophisticated assassination by some powerful states in our time — unlike the crude use of shooting by an assassin in the older days.

For illustration, just consider some controversial cases of both successful and unsuccessful hi-tech assassinations in the past 2 decades, as shown below:

1. Cristina Kirchner, current president of Argentina, with thyroid cancer in 2011
2. Ollanta Humala, current president of Peru, with cancer in the gut in 2011
3. Hugo Chávez, former president of Venezuela, with prostate Cancer in 2011
4. Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, former president of Brazil, with cancer of the larynx in 2011
5. Nestor Kirchner, former president of Argentina, with colon cancer in 2010
6. Fernando Lugo, former president of

7. Paraguay, with lymph cancer in 2010
8. Evo Morales, current president of Bolivia, with cancer in the nasal cavities in 2009
9. Dilma Vana Rousseff, current president of Brazil, with cancer in the lymphatic system in 2009
9. Alexander Litvinenko, former Russian secret service officer, with polonium-210 poisoning in 2006
10. Yassar Arafat, former chair of the PLO, with brain hemorrhage in 2004
11. Khaled Meshaal, the leader of the Hamas, with the poisonous shutdown of the brain in 1996

Of course, there can be other examples, so the ones above are illustrative, not exhaustive. At first glance, all these cases seem isolated incidents, but, upon closer examination, reveal a growing and disturbing trend of hi-tech assassinations in contemporary global politics, in that all these individuals with the diseases were major opponents of the policies of some powerful states.

For example, the first 8 cases above (cases #1-8) involve some recent leftist opponents of American intervention in South America. This led Mr. Chávez to thus wonder, back in 2011, “Would it be so strange that they [in the U.S.] have invented the technology to spread cancer and we won’t know about it for 50 years?” and then added: “I don’t know but...it is very odd than we have seen Lugo affected by cancer, Dilma when she was [presidential] candidate, me, going into an election year, not long ago Lula and now Cristina....It is very hard to explain, even with the law of probabilities, what has been happening to some [leftist] leaders in Latin America. It’s at the very least strange, very strange,” as reported by Tom Phillips on December 29, 2011.

His friend Fidel Castro in Cuba, who himself had survived hundreds of hi-tech assassination attempts by the U.S. in the past half of a century,

---

therefore gave him some advice: “Chávez, take care. These people have developed technology. You are very careless. Take care what you eat, what they give you to eat...a little needle and they inject you with I don’t know what.”

On the day of Chávez’s death, Vice President of Venezuela, Nicolas Maduro, said in an address to the nation that “there’s no doubt that Commandante Chávez’s health came under attack by the enemy,” in that “Chávez’s cancer was an ‘attack’ by his enemies” (meaning the U.S.), as reported by Tracy Connor for NBC News on March 06, 2013. Then, General Jose Ornella, head of Venezuela’s presidential guard, “echoed the concern of Vice President Nicolas Maduro that some sort of foul play was involved in Chávez’s cancer. ‘I think it will be 50 years before they declassify a document (that) I think (will show) the hand of the enemy is involved,’ he said. The general didn’t identify who he was talking about [or what the classified document was exactly], but Maduro suggested possible U.S. involvement...,” as reported by Fabiola Sanchez for the Associated Press on March 06, 2013.

Shortly after the death of Chávez, Kurt Nimmo wrote on March 6, 2013: “For the naysayers who dispute that the CIA was responsible for the cancer death of Hugo Chávez, note the device in the following video. It is a dart gun developed in the 1970s (or possibly earlier) by the CIA. In the video, the weapon is described as inducing heart attacks. Cancer is not mentioned. However, we know that the CIA used Dr. Alton Oschner, the former president of the American Cancer Society, to run covert cancer research for the agency.” If they could invent devices like this back in the 1970s, just imagine how much more they could do now in the 2010s!

In addition, Lubov Lulko wrote in January 05, 2012 that there were different technologies to inflict cancer on opponents, like “alpha radiation, electromagnetic waves, or chemicals” which can “cause emergence and development of cancer,” as part of the larger efforts by some powerful states to “invent new kinds of biological, chemical and electronic weapons” to kill their enemies.

Then, case #9 on the list (above) has to do with the assassination of Alexander Litvinenko by the Russian government under Putin, since “upon his arrival to London, he [Litvinenko] continued to support the Russian oligarch in exile, Boris Berezovsky, in his media campaign against the

Russian government” under Putin, and “the main suspect in the case, a former officer of the Russian Federal Protective Service (FSO), Andrei Lugovoy, remains in Russia,” and “subsequent investigations by British authorities into the circumstances of Litvinenko’s death led to serious diplomatic difficulties between the British and Russian governments,” as reported in an article on Wikipedia.

And cases #10-11 on the list (above) has to do with the Israeli involvement, for the critics, in the assassination of Yassar Arafat, former chair of the PLO, with brain hemorrhage in 2004, and of Khaled Meshaal, the leader of the Hamas, with the poisonous shutdown of the brain in 1996.

## II. SUCCESSES AND FAILURES

Hi-tech assassinations can be both successful and unsuccessful, of course.

On the one hand, the practice of hi-tech assassination has its own successes. For instance, in the above 11 illustrative cases, 4 attempts were successful, namely, the cases involving Hugo Chávez, Nestor Kirchner, Alexander Litvinenko, and Yassar Arafat.

On the other hand, there are failures, in 2 major ways, as explained below.

Firstly, some attempts (like the 9 cases as mentioned earlier) have not been successful, for the time being at least — and the most notorious one concerns case #11, when Israel unsuccessfully attempted to silently kill Khaled Meshaal (with poison), but “one of Meshaal’s bodyguards, Muhammad Abu Saif, had chased the two Mossad agents who had carried out the operation and, with the help of a passing Palestinian Liberation Army officer, later captured them,” and “the failed assassination proved to be one of the greatest fiascos in the history of special operations, and a pivotal moment in the rise of Hamas,” and it had also humiliated Binyamin Netanyahu, the Israeli prime minister at the time (1996-1999) and also now (since 2009), since he was forced not only to provide “the antidote and the nature of the [toxins] used against Meshaal,” but also “to release the founder of Hamas [Sheikh Ahmed Yassin] from jail in a prisoner exchange deal,” as reported by Al Jazeera World on January 30, 2013.

And secondly, even the killings of the opponents do not necessarily bring the results as

---

intended. For instance, the death of Nestor Kirchner has not made Argentina more pro-American; on the contrary, it only brought his widow Cristina Kirchner into power, who has sided with Chávez instead. The death of Yassar Arafat has not brought peace to the Middle East, nor has it made Israel safer from the Hamas, as the two sides recently had another military clash in December of 2012. The death of Alexander Litvinenko has not silenced the opposition against the presidency of Vladimir Putin; on the contrary, the opposition has grown even stronger nowadays, from 29% of the vote in the presidential election in 2004 to 37% of the vote in 2012. And the death of Hugo Chávez has made him a martyr in the eyes of his supporters, both at home and abroad, for his dual achievements (and visions) to give the poor (long treated with contempt and abused by the aristocrats in the region) a voice in the public sphere and to stand up against “yankee imperialism” for South American independence as a larger integrated bloc.

Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, former president of Brazil, eloquently wrote about Chávez in *The New York Times* on March 6, 2013, the day after his death: “No remotely honest person, not even his fiercest opponent, can deny the level of camaraderie, of trust and even of love that Mr. Chávez felt for the poor of Venezuela and for the cause of Latin American integration.”

At home, “Chávez’s social campaigns, especially in the areas of public health, housing and education, succeeded in improving the standard of living of tens of millions of Venezuelans,” as Mr. Lula wasted no time to point out.

Abroad, “Mr. Chávez was instrumental in the 2008 treaty that established the Union of South American Nations, a 12-member intergovernmental organization that might someday move the continent toward the model of the European Union. In 2010, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States leapt from theory to practice, providing a political forum alongside the Organization of American States. (It does not include the United States and Canada, as the O.A.S. does.) The Bank of the South, a new lending institution, independent of the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank, also would not have been possible without Mr. Chávez’s leadership. Finally, he was vitally interested in fostering closer Latin American ties with Africa and the Arab world,” as Mr. Lula thus praised

him.

But this does not mean that Mr. Chávez has no faults of his own making. On the contrary, as Lula thus criticized him: “One need not agree with everything Mr. Chávez said or did.... There is no denying that he was a controversial, often polarizing, figure....” And, for his enemies, especially those in the corporate world of big-business capitalism, Mr. Chávez can be regarded as a curse from hell.

Yet, for all those countless folks who completely crowded the streets of Caracas on March 06, 2013 and waited for many hours only in order to bid him farewell when his coffin passed through in a military procession, with many crying and mourning, and some even stayed into the night to see his body at the Fort Tiuna military academy — his death has made him larger than life in their hearts and minds, to the point that, as Lula aptly put it, “his ideas will come to inspire young people in the future, much as the life of Simón Bolívar, the great liberator of Latin America, inspired Mr. Chávez himself.”

Already, “within hours of Hugo Chávez’s death, makeshift altars were going up in homes and on street corners around Venezuela with candles, photos and offerings for the late president. Weeping beside his coffin, supporters are likening him to independence hero Simon Bolivar and even Jesus Christ. Ministers quote his words and precepts in reverential tones,” as reported by Andrew Cawthorne on March 8, 2013. And Chávez’s body will be “embalmed” and be “permanently displayed” inside “a glass tomb” at a military museum in Caracas, as reported by the Associated Press on March 07, 2013.

This then is the best thing that his enemies have done to him: his painful and untimely death makes him a martyr for his followers both at home and abroad, in the present and in the future.

## CHRONOLOGY

**November 24, 1948**—Overthrow of Rómulo Gallego from the Acción Democrática party (AD), leading to dictatorship of Marcos Pérez Jiménez.

**January 23, 1958**—Pérez Jiménez’s dictatorship falls as a result of a military uprising supported by the *Funta Patriótica nacional* led by Fabricio Ojeda and the members of which include representatives of the then clandestine Venezuelan political parties AD, *Comite de Organization Politica Electoral Independiente* (COPEI), and the

---

Venezuelan Communist party (PCV). The PCV was the most active in the popular uprising that overthrew the dictatorship.

**October 31, 1958**—The Punto Fijo Pact is signed by Rómulo Gallegos, Rómulo Betancourt, Rafael Caldera, and Jovito Villalba. This pact controlled the Venezuelan political system and provided for the AD and COPEI parties to share power. The URD also participated in the meeting but without any significant results for the party. As a result of their participation a group led by Luis Miquilena and José Vicente Rangel broke away.

**December 1958**—Democratic elections result in Rómulo Betancourt becoming president.

**May 4, 1952**—The Carúpano and Puerto Cabello rebellion includes civilian and military members of the opposition. Admiral Pedro Medina Silva, the first public leader of the Armed Force for National Liberation-National Liberation Force (FALN-FLN), leads the uprising.

**1959-62**—The rise of the guerrilla movement FALN-FLN and its adoption of armed struggle influenced by the PCV. Weaknesses under the leadership of Douglas Bravo lead to splits. Guerrilla leaders under Teodoro Petkoff form the Movement toward Socialism (MAS), as a rejection of the traditional parties, the communist party, and armed struggle.

**December 17, 1982**—The Bolivarian Revolutionary Movement 200 (MBR 200) is born. In the Samén de Güere four captains (Felipe Acosta Carlos, Jesús Urdaneta Hernández, Rafael Baduel, and Hugo Chávez Frías) swear an oath.

**February 2, 1989**—Carlos Andrés Pérez takes office as President.

**February 16, 1989**—IMF structural adjustment programme implemented.

**1989**—Neoliberal economic reforms: floating interest rates; increased taxes on public services; public salaries increase 5 percent; the progressive elimination of import tariffs; 4 percent reduction in the budget deficit; labour weakened to make work force more flexible. Executive decree allows foreign companies to remit 100 percent of their profits to their base country. Inflation reaches 80.7 percent, real salaries decrease by 40 percent, unemployment reaches 14.0 percent and 80.42 percent of the country is living in poverty.

**February 27-28, 1989**—El caracazo, the popular explosion in response to an increase in gas

prices, is put down by the army. An estimated 5,000 people are killed according to human rights organizations. Militarization of life across the country. Curfews imposed on several cities.

**December 4, 1989**—Direct elections of governors, mayors, and representatives with a 60 percent abstention rate. The richest States elect leftist or independent candidates. Militants from the Causa R party are elected to key posts: Andrés Velásquez as governor of the State of Bolívar and Clemente Scotto as mayor of Caroní.

**January 1992**—National Teachers' strike.

**February 4, 1992**—Military rebellion led by Lieutenant Colonel Hugo Chávez. Chávez takes the San Carlos military barracks in Caracas but fails to take the Miraflores Palace and President Carlos Andrés Pérez gets away. Meanwhile rebels take Maracaibo (where Francisco Arias Cárdenas was), Valencia and Maracay, key Venezuelan cities. Chávez negotiates a surrender and addresses his companions in arms and the entire country on live TV from the Ministry of Defence. He utters the famous words "I take responsibility" and "for now" which catapult him forward as a national leader.

-The MBR 200 is reborn nine years after its creation.

**November 27, 1992**—Second uprising led by high-ranking officials from all three branches of the Armed Force. The rebels bomb the Miraflores Palace and the Ministry of the Exterior. Rear Admiral Hernan Gruber Odreman takes responsibility for the act. Generals Francisco Visconti, of the army, and Higinio Castro, of the air force, among others, participate. Freddy Bernal, then chief of the special police force and now mayor of Caracas, joins the movement.

**May 20, 1993**—President Carlos Andrés Pérez is impeached by the Supreme Court after being accused of misuse of public funds.

**June 5, 1993**—Ramón J. Velásquez leads the transition government. The electoral cycle begins and Chávez and the other military prisoners call for abstention; 52 percent of the electorate abstains and Caldera wins.

**November 4, 1993**—The candidate for the presidency of the Republic include: Rafael Caldera of the Convergencia party and supported by MAS; Andrés Velásquez of the Causa R party; Eduardo Fernandez of the COPEI party; and Claudio Fermin of the AD party. Chávez calls for abstention.

---

**March 26, 1994**—Caldera's government grants clemency to Chávez and the other military rebels who were still in prison.

**December 1994**—Chávez travels to Cuba.

**December 14, 1994**—The government intervenes to save fourteen banks. The Central Bank of Venezuela offers extraordinary auxiliary credits to support the banking system. Many banking institutions fail.

**1995**—Chávez travels the country with the slogan "Constitutional assembly now!"

**1996**—MBR 200 carries out a survey to see how people feel about electoral participation and whether Chávez should be a candidate.

**February 1997**—Causa R is divided- one group supports Andrés Velásquez and the other supports the Patria para Todos party under Pablo Medina.

**April 19, 1997**—MBR 200's national assembly decides to participate in the elections and to create a formal political party.

**October 21, 1997**—The Fifth Republic Movement (MVR) is formed.

**December 6, 1998**—Chávez wins the presidential election with 56 percent of the votes in the first round.

**December 1998**—Price of oil on the world market drops to \$7.60 per barrel. The external debt reaches US\$23.440 billion.

**February 17, 1999**—National Electoral Council calls a referendum on whether to hold a constitutional assembly.

**April 25, 1999**—The vote calls for a constitutional assembly and a transitional period begins. The Polo Patriótico alliance is formed as a unified front in the elections of representatives for the constitutional assembly. It is composed of MVR, PCV, PPT, and MAS.

**July 25, 1999**—In elections for the constitutional assembly, the Polo Patriótico wins 120 out of 131 seats. After the constitutional assembly is sworn in, Congress is dissolved.

**December 15, 1999**—The new Constitution is approved by a national referendum.

**July 3, 2000**—Hugo Chávez decrees an increase in the minimum wage to 144.000 Bolivares.

**July 30, 2000**—In the election of 2000, Chávez is re-elected President under the new constitution. In addition, 165 legislators are elected to the National Assembly; 23 governors, mayors, and other public officials are elected.

**October 30, 2000**—The Cuban-Venezuelan

Convention on oil is signed.

**January 2001**—Alí Rodríguez, the Minister of Energy, becomes Secretary General of OPEC.

**April 2001**—Chávez travels through Russia, Iran, Bangladesh, China, and Malaysia.

-Hugo Chávez participates in the third FTAA summit in Québec, Canada. Brazil and Venezuela oppose formalizing the FTAA in 2003.

**June 2001**—A coup attempt is detected and prevented.

**December 17, 2001**—Bolivarian Circles are sworn in. Chávez re-launches the MBR 200.

**April 11, 2002**—Coup led by right-wing political parties, business associations, and some high ranking military and labour officials. Pedro Carmona, president of Fedecámaras, names himself President of Venezuela and dissolves all of the branches of government. The coup plotters attack leaders of pro-Chávez groups. Pro-coup gangs attack the Cuban embassy in Caracas.

**April 12, 2002**—Isaías Rodríguez, the Attorney General of the Republic, announces on live TV that Chávez did not resign. Popular sectors and troops loyal to Chávez begin to mobilize against the coup.

**April 13, 2002**—The popular mobilization against the coup continues to grow. Various groups within the military declare their allegiance to Chávez. In Maracay, General Baduel, in charge of the parachute battalion, decries the coup. The people in the streets surround his barracks. In Caracas, the people surround Fort Tiuna and General García Carneiro joins them and puts his battalion in the service of the Chávez loyalists.

**April 14, 2002**—In the early morning hours Hugo Chávez returns to his post as President of Venezuela. Six officials of the Armed Force and Pedro Carmona are arrested in connection with the coup. Carmona is released to house arrest and a few weeks later he flees to Colombia where he is granted asylum.

**August 16, 2002**—In the Caracas district of El Valle there is a massive protest against the Supreme Court's decision which found there had been no coup.

**September 11, 2002**—Major protests against Chávez shut down several parts of Caracas.

**October 22, 2002**—Protest in the Plaza Altamira begun by fourteen military officers who come out against the government and are joined by more than eighty other officers. Hundreds of people form a solidarity network to support these

---

officers.

**November 11, 2002**—PDVSA workers in opposition to the government protest the politicization of the national oil company. Fedecámaras, the CTV and the dissident officers form the “National Reconstruction Pact” to “recover the liberty of the country” and to force Chávez to agree to a recall referendum.

**December 5, 2002**—Campaign to sabotage the oil industry begins. PDVSA’s production decreases by one million barrels per day. The Paraguaná refinery, which accounts for 72 percent of the national production, supports the strike. The El Palito and the Puerto La Cruz refineries continue operating but at 50 percent capacity.

**December 6, 2002**—Massacre in the Plaza Francia in the Altamira sector of Caracas: three killed twenty-eight wounded. Not clear who was responsible. Gas, becomes scarce all over the country. Domestic sales of gas are stopped. Forty wells close for twenty-four hours in the north of the Orinoco valley and in Punta de Mata in the southwest part of Maturín.

**December 7, 2002**—Chávistas organize a massive march for peace democracy and in support of the Constitution.

**December 9, 2002**—Chávez decrees the militarization of the petroleum industry and orders members of the Armed Force to not only provide security but also to operate the industry.

**December 19, 2002**—The Supreme Court declares the PDVSA workers’ strike illegal.

**December 20, 2002**—Massive opposition march in Caracas demanding Chávez’s resignation.

**December 2002**—Government supporters organize a rally at the PDVSA headquarters. The government retakes the Pilin Leon ship with 44 million litres of gas from strikers. Gas production is suspended. The opposition rejects the government’s proposal to end the strike. The navy takes control of the Moruy oil tanker. The president of PDVSA, Alí Rodríguez Araque, recognizes the collapse of the national petroleum industry. Hundreds of thousands of members of the opposition organize a protest to demand Chávez’s resignation.

**January 23, 2003**—Hundreds of thousands of people gather on Bolívar Avenue in Caracas to support the government.

**February 9, 2003**—Chávez announces that the oil coup has been defeated and the country is

on the way back to normal production.

**March 6, 2003**—Chávez appoints a new board of directors to PDVSA with Alí Rodríguez Araque as president.

**April 21, 2003**—Mission Barrio Adentro health programme begins.

**June 20, 2003**—Mission Robinson, the national literacy plan, begins.

**August 23, 2003**—Hundreds of thousands of Venezuelans gather on Bolívar Avenue in Caracas to celebrate the third anniversary of the Bolivarian government.

**February 27, 2004**—G-15 summit is held in Caracas in the midst of protests with tear gas. The opposition protest results in two deaths and twenty-one wounded. Opposition protestors attack the headquarters of the MVR and the Comando Ayacucho.

**February 29, 2004**—Massive march in support of Chávez.

**June 3, 2004**—The CNE announces that the opposition has enough signatures to initiate a recall referendum. Militant Chavistas who are convinced there was fraud involved in activating the referendum begin a series of spontaneous, violent protests in Caracas. Chávez accepts the CNE’s decision and calls on his supporters to begin mobilizing for the referendum.

**August 15, 2004**—the no vote (not to recall Chávez) wins the recall referendum by a margin of roughly two million votes.

**October 31, 2004**—Mayoral and gubernatorial elections across the country. Chávez supporters win the vast majority of offices.

**January 19, 2005**—The government expropriates the Venepal paper factory and hands it over to the workers for co-management.

**January 30, 2005**—President Chávez gives a speech at the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in front of a standing-room only crowd both inside and outside of the Gigantinho stadium.

**March 2, 2005**—President of Venezuela and Paraguay sign the Caracas Accords.

**May 1, 2005**—Chávez receives a massive workers’ march in support of the revolution at Miraflores Palace. The opposition workers in the CTV organize a small counter march.

**March 5, 2013**—Death of Hugo Chávez.

*CHRONOLOGY from  
Understanding the Venezuelan Revolution*

# The Death of Mythology

*Christopher Caudwell*

---

*...Continued from previous issue*

### III

Marx has explained how the division of labour demands a class of overseers, village headmen, managers of irrigation works, etc., whose supervision, as differentiation proceeds, gradually passes from administration of the social means of production to that special right or privilege known as ownership of them. The emergence of the ownership of the means of production, as an absolute right, distinct from elective administration of them as society's behest, marks a definite stage in the development of society, the stage of class society. These class divisions rend society in twain, and yet are the only means by which society can pass to higher stages of productive development until a stage is reached generating a class whose economic circumstances enable it to end classes.

The special role of the members of the ruling class as supervisors gives them the means of directing into their own lives all the goods produced by society, save for those needed to ensure the continued existence of the exploited class. Originally chosen as supervisors for 'intellectual' ability, their role, even when it becomes an absolute right and is therefore independent of mental capacity, yet demands primarily mental work, just as the working of the means of production demands primarily manual work. At the same time the privileged conditions and leisure afforded by consumption of the lion's share of the social product encourages the cultivation of thought and culture among this class, while the hard-driven and beastly condition of the other class discourages this culture.

This rapidly generates a position of increasing instability, like that which causes 'critical' vibration in engineering and in the world of Nature produces in certain species a flare-up of unfavourable adoptions—enormous crests, huge hides, colossal tails and huge protuberances. Like a snowball, the organism increases its own impetus to disaster.

In the same way, once the formation of classes due to division of labour passes a certain stage, the process of cleavage is accelerated. The

differentiation of the classes produces on the one hand an exploiting class more and more isolated from reality, more and more concerned with thought, with pleasure, with culture, and on the other hand an exploited class more and more isolated from thought, more and more laborious, more and more subject to circumstances.

This specialization of function, at first beneficial, eventually becomes pathological. Thought originally separated itself from action, but it only develops by continually returning upon action. It separated from action to guide it. Once from supervisors and leaders the exploiting class turned to mere enjoyers and parasites, thought has finally separated itself from material reality, and ossifies in a barren formalism or scholasticism. And once from partners and fellow-tribesmen the exploited class turns to mere slaves, action has finally separated itself from thought and becomes blind mechanism. This is reflected in the life of society as a whole by the decay of culture, science and art in formalism and Alexandrine futility, and the decay of economic production in inefficiency and anarchy. Egypt, China, India, the declining Roman Empire, are all examples of this degeneration.

This division of the undifferentiated tribe into a class of supervisors who exercise thought, and a class of workers who only work, is reflected by a similar dichotomy in religion and art. Religion and art cease to be the collective product of the tribe, and become the product of the ruling class who impose a religion just as they impose an act.

A tribe does not give orders to its members to work; their work naturally arises from the collective functioning of the group as a whole, under the pressure of tradition and religion whose genesis we have already examined. Any problem or job can only be solved according to the interests of the tribe as a whole because the tribe is a whole.

But when interests are divided, the ruling class orders the ruled. The relation is now coercive.

In the same way religion becomes dogma. As the class society forms, religion, which continues to function as a confused perception of society, produces a new and more elaborate world of phantasy but one now with a class structure. There is a supreme god in a monarchical society, or family of gods in an autocracy, or a pantheon in a

---

state such as Egypt formed by the syncretism of various developed class units already godded. There heavenly peers, scribes, priests and captains, corresponding to the division of the earthly ruling class.

Meanwhile the unequal division of goods and the opposed class interests have created an antagonism which divides society. There are outbreaks, rebellions and revolts which must be crushed. Absolute ownership of the means of production, not being thrown up as a natural response to the task confronting the tribe as a whole, is arbitrary, and depends therefore ultimately on violence. It is not made necessary by things and is therefore enforced by men. In the same way class religion, no longer expressing the collective adaptation of society, must be equally arbitrary. It becomes dogma. A challenge to it is a challenge to the state. Heresy is a civil crime.

The ruling class now seems to dispose of all social labour. With a highly-developed agricultural civilization a god-king is formed at the top of the pyramid, and he seems to wield all social power. The slave by himself seems very small compared with the might of social labour wielded by the god-king. In association the slave wields a tremendous power, the power of building pyramids. But this power does not seem to the slave to be his; it seems to belong to the god-king who directs it. Hence the slave humiliates himself before his own collective power; he deifies the god-king and holds the whole ruling class as sacred. This alienation of self is only a reflection of the alienation of property which has produced it. The slave's humility is the badge not merely of his slavery, but of the power of a society developed to a stage where slavery exists and yields a mighty social power. This power is expressed at the opposite pole to the slave by the divine magnificence of the god-kings of Egypt, China, Japan, and the Sumerian, Babylonian and Accadian city-states. In a syncretic empire like that of Rome, other religions can exist beneath the State cult of the worship of the Emperor. These local cults express local forms of exploitation on which Imperialist exploitation has been imposed, and only a challenge to the god-Emperor is a challenge to Imperial exploitation and therefore a crime in Roman law. As Marx, studying the phenomenon of religion, had perceived as early as 1844: 'This State, this society, produces religion-an inverted *consciousness* of the world-because the world is itself an *inverted world*. Of this world Religion is the general theory, its encyclopaedic compendium, its logic in popular form, its spiritual point *d'honneur*, its enthusiasm, its moral sanction, its solemn completion, its general consolation and

justification. It is the phantastic realization of man, *because* man possesses no true realization...Religious misery is at once the expression of real misery and a protest against that real misery.'<sup>1</sup>

As society, increasingly rent by this class division, enters on a period of failing economy like that of the declining Roman Empire, the goods produced become less and the share-out more and more coercive. Therefore religion too becomes more and more coercive, more rigid, more tremblingly alive to heresy.

At first the ruling class believes its religion, for differentiation from a primitive mythology has only just taken place. It endeavours therefore to appropriate for itself all the goods of religion, as it is already doing those of society. The best seats in Heaven are taken, or-as with the early rulers of Egypt and the aristocracy of Greece-the Elysian fields are monopolized by them. But as this ruling class is challenged by a restive exploited class, the exploiting class appeases it by sharing with it its own spiritual goods, for these, unlike material goods, do not grow less for being shared. Hence in Egypt immortality was gradually extended even to slaves; and mystery religions, in the decaying Empire, offered to the meanest the deification at first peculiar to the god-Emperor. Thus the increasing misery of the exploited class is reflected in the increasing loveliness of its after-life, provided it leads the good life-i.e. one obedient to its employers. The harvest of phantasy, which in tribal life is always eventually reaped, is for the majority in a class society postponed to a phantastic after-life, because the real harvest also is not consumed by the majority.

This increasing consciousness of the function of religion leads to scepticism on the part of the ruling class itself, which coercively enforces a religion it no longer believes in, and itself takes refuge in an elegant idealism or esoteric philosophy.

Beneath the official religion, which can no more be changed than the system of productive relations which has generated it, lurks a whole undergrowth of 'superstition' and 'legend'. This 'superstition' is simply the mythology of the people, playing its old collective role, but now regarded as something vulgar and ungentlemanly by the ruling class. This superstition itself bears signs that, although collective, its collectiveness is the emasculated homogeneity of an emasculated class. It has a childishness and servility which distinguishes it from the barbarian simplicity of the creations of an undivided society. Sometimes tolerated, sometimes condemned, this superstition shows the adaptive powers of mythology, but it is

---

now an adaption to the role of an exploited class and is tainted with the idiocy of exploitation. It is full of luck and gold and magic meals and lucky sons—all the fortune this class so conspicuously lacks. But it is genuine, and believed without the need for Faith, precisely because it is not coercively enforced but is the spontaneous production of a collective spirit, and, if not of an undivided society, at least of an undivided class. It is the poetry of religion at a time when religion itself ceases to be poetic. It is the art of the oppressed. Though it fulfils the function of poetry in adapting man's instincts to social life, it cannot be great poetry, for it is no lie that great poetry can only be written by the free. This poetry moves within the boundaries of wish-fulfilment. Its creators have too little spontaneity in their life to be greatly conscious of necessity. It is not therefore ever tragic poetry.

Tribal mythology was free and poetic because the undifferentiated economy of the tribe made its members' actions *relatively* free. This freedom was true freedom—the consciousness of necessity. The job demanded evidently such actions, and they were done spontaneously—the individual's consciousness of their necessity. Of course this freedom is only relative. It reflects the limited consciousness produced by a limited economy. The divisions of class society were necessary to break the soil for a deeper consciousness and a higher freedom. But still primitive freedom is freedom—such freedom as human society in that stage can know, a stage where, because the economy is undifferentiated, the limited freedom, like the limited product, is at least equally shared by all. Poetry or poetic mythology, fluid and spontaneous, grown in such soil.

In a class society the workers do their tasks blindly as they are told by supervisors. They build pyramids but each contributes a stone; only the rulers know a pyramid is being built. The scale of the undertaking makes possible a greater consciousness of reality, but this consciousness all gathers at the pole of the ruling class. The ruled obey blindly and are unfree.

The rulers are free in the measure of their consciousness. Therefore the exercise of art becomes more and more their exclusive prerogative, reflecting their aspirations and desires. Religion is ossified by the need of maintaining a class right and therefore art now separates itself from religion. Moreover, religion is already disbelieved by the ruling class because of its openly exploitive character. The ossification of religion and the growth of skepticism in a class society is therefore always accompanied by a flourishing of art, the art of the free ruling class. An art which

sucks into itself all the fluid, changeful and adaptive characteristics of primitive religion. Religion is now primarily an expression of class coercion, an expression of real misery and a protest against that real misery, while art is now the emotional expression of the ruling class. Sophisticated art of the exploiters sets itself up against the fairy tale and folk art of the exploited. Both flourish for a time side by side.

This stage itself is only transitory. For as the ruling class becomes more and more parasitic, and delegates increasingly its work of supervision, it itself becomes less free. It repeats formally the old consciousness of yesterday, yet the reality it expressed has changed. The class is no longer truly conscious of reality, because it no longer holds the reins, whose pressure on its hands guided it. The exercise of art, like the exercise of supervision, becomes a mechanical repetition by stewards and servants of the forms, functions and operations of the past. Art perishes in a Byzantine formality or an academic conventionality little better than religious dogma. Science becomes mere pedantry—little better than magic. The ruling class has become blind and therefore unfree. Poetry grows in no such soil.

The exploited class too, as this occurs, become more exploited and more miserable. The decay of economy, due to the decay of the ruling class, produces a sharper and more bitter exploitation. The cleavage between the rulers and the ruled makes the life of the ruled more mechanical and slavish, and unfree. A peasant or small landholder economy changes to an economy of overlords and serfs. To produce even 'folk' art and 'superstition' a limited spontaneity is necessary. Unlike a class of nomads, small-holders or burghers, a class of slaves has no art. The still essential function of adaptation is now performed for men's minds by a religion whose fixed dogmatism and superstitious faith expresses the lack of spontaneity of the ruled and their diminished consciousness.

Such collapses are not necessarily complete, for between the ruling class and the class which bears the brunt of the exploitation, other classes may develop, in turn to become the ruling class as a result of a revolution. Ossified religions are challenged by heresies which succeed precisely because they express the interests of another class formed secretly by the development of economy and soon to supersede the old. Such heresies are fought as what they are—a challenge to the very existence of the ruling class.

*To be Continued...*  
*Courtesy—Illusion and Reality*

*Published by : INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL DEMOCRACY, New Delhi*  
*for*  
*Peace in South Asia*

**IN PARTNERSHIP WITH :**

**Al-Bilal Falahi Tazeem Wajawana**  
Vill-Thana District Malakand,  
Kahber Pakhtunkhwa Pakistan PC 23000  
Phone : 0092-932440224

**Asmita Resource Centre for Women**  
Teacher's Colony, East Marredpally,  
Secunderabad 500026,  
Andhra Pradesh, India  
Phone : 040-27733251, 27733229, Fax : 040-27733745  
E-mail : asmitacollective@sancharnet.in

**CNI-Synodical Board of Social Services**  
CNI Bhawan, 16, Pandit Pant Marg  
New Delhi - 110001  
Phone - 011-23718168  
Fax - 011-23712126  
Email - cnisbss@cnisbss.org  
Website - www.cnisbss.org

**Centre for Social Development (CSD)**  
Palace Compound (west)  
Imphal 795001, Manipur, India  
Phone : 0385-2230004  
E-mail : secycsd@sancharnet.in

**Christian Children's Fund of Canada**  
India Liaison Office  
Vinoth Vetri  
Flat F2 ( First Floor)  
New No 37, Old No 73&74  
Govindan Street, Ayyavoo Colony,  
Aminjikarai, Chennai - 600 029, India.  
Tel : +91 44 2374 0742 / Direct: + 91 44 2374 0743  
Fax : + 91 44 2374 0741  
Email : vmuniasamy@ccfcana.ca  
Website : www.ccfcanada.ca

**Christian Commission for Development in Bangladesh (CCDB)**  
88, Senpara, Parbatta,  
Mirpur-10, G.P.O., Box 367  
Dhaka-1216, Bangladesh  
Phone : +88-02-8011970-3  
Email : ccdb@bangla.net, ccdbhope@bangla.net

**Church's Auxiliary for Social Action (CASA)**  
4th floor, Rachna building 2,  
Rajendra Place, Pusa road,  
New Delhi-110008, India,  
Phone : 91-11-25730611, 612, 25080758  
Fax : 011-25752502, 25733763  
Email : indrani@casa-india.org

**Community Development Centre (CODEC)**  
47/H, R#1, Ispahani Park, South Kulshi,  
Chittagong, Bangladesh  
E-mail : codecprg@spnetctg.com

**Cornerstone**  
31, Teeds Garden IV Street,  
Perambur, Chennai-600011, India  
Phone : 91-44-45058270  
Email : richidev@yahoo.co.in, cornerstonetrust5@gmail.com

**Deenbandhu Fellowship**  
Deenbandhupuram Via Vemgal Raja Kuppam  
Distt.- Chittoor  
Andhra Pradesh – 517599  
Phone:00919-445269445  
Mobile : 919443596651  
Email : ajeetdeenabandu@yahoo.com

**EED**  
Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst e.V. (EED)  
South and Middle Asia Desk  
Ulrich-von-Hassel-Strasse 76,  
D-53123 Bonn, Germany  
Phone : 49 (0) 228 81 01-0,  
Fax : 49 (0) 228 81 01 - 160  
E-mail : eed@eed.de,  
Website : http://www.eed.de

**Institute for Social Democracy (ISD)**  
110, Numberdar House, 62-A, Laxmi Market, Munirka  
New Delhi 110067, India  
Telefax : 91-11-26177904  
E-mail : notowar.isd@gmail.com, notowar@rediffmail.com

**Maleya Foundation**  
North Kalindipur  
Rangamati – 4500  
Bangladesh  
Phone : 0351-61109  
E-mail : maleyafoundation@yahoo.com

**Peoples Action for Development – PAD**  
No. 4/124, Roachpalayam, VEMBAR - 628 906,  
Thoothukudi Dist., Tamilnadu  
Telephone: 04638 262388  
Email : info@padgom.org, padgom@gmail.com  
Website : padgom.org

**Taangh Wasaib Organisation**  
House number 43, street 1, Gulshan-e-Bashir  
Sargodha, Pakistan  
Phone : 0092-451-215042  
Fax : 0092-483-215042  
Mobile : 0092-300-9602831  
E-mail : twasaib@yahoo.com, rubinaferoze\_bhatti@yahoo.com

**Tariq Zaman**  
Res. Add : House # 271/B Railway Road Bamus City,  
N-W.F.P Pakistan  
Phone: 0092-333-9747161, 0092-928-613417  
Email: tariqzaman@lawyer.com

**Trinamul Unnayan Sangstha**  
Marma Samsad Bulding.  
Pankhaiya Para  
Khagrachari-4400  
Phone: 0371-61179  
E-mail : trinamulcht@yahoo.com

**United Mission to Nepal**  
PO Box 126  
Kathmandu, Nepal  
Phone: (00977 1) 4228 118, 4268 900  
Fax : (00977 1) 4225 559  
Emails : umn@umn.org.np (General enquiries)

FOR LIMITED DISTRIBUTION ONLY