

# What They're Marching For

If there are dark clouds on the horizon for India-Pakistan peace diplomacy, they continue to come from Pakistan's reluctance to call it a day in maintaining the notorious legacy of two-nation theory and a bellicose religious right-wing that still thrives on hatred and intolerance of pre-partition days. And peace-brokers on both sides of the fence continue to stumble about looking for a positive message. Technically speaking India is still at war with Pakistan over the Kashmir issue. One may call it a proxy war but it's a war. The sub-continentals are not in a position to resolve their real estate dispute even under the baton of sole super power—America. After the serial bomb blasts in Mumbai and Srinagar hawks in New Delhi have reasons to talk Pakistan beyond proxy-war. But this terror campaign—or what they call cross-border terrorism—helps the ruling elites of India and Pakistan in a big way to divert public attention. Even the official left found an excuse in 'blasts' to postpone their much publicised anti-price rise agitation while routinely urging the united progressive alliance government not to derail the Indo-Pak peace train. In truth New Delhi's apparent tough stance is at worst an empty rhetoric aimed at not allowing the BJP to take political advantage of the situation as it was evident from prime minister Manmohan Singh's somewhat mellowed speech after his meeting with G-8 leaders.

Originally it was Kashmir. But things have reached such a pass that it is no longer Kashmir that defines the Indo-Pak divide despite much hullabaloo about peace process. Even if the Kashmir imbroglio gets resolved in favour of Pakistan, New Delhi and Islamabad cannot live in peace because being a theocratic state Pakistan will always have domestic compulsions to oppose secular ideas to address the concerned Pakistanis who command mass support.

Peace can prevail in the region if toilers step up their movement in the sub-continent against their common enemy—multi-national corporations and their local collaborators—while pinning not too much hope on some sentimental issues like cultural exchanges involving cinema stars and recital of poems by the distinguished poets of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Progressives in this part of the globe never think in terms of developing solidarity movement. Only human rights bodies sometimes raise this issue or that with limited impact on the middle class people—their main constituency.

As for terrorism, it has become a way of life for thousands of youths across the third world. Not that they are always motivated by ideology. In case of terrorism and counter-terrorism along Indo-Pak border what matters most is religious fanaticism in addition to ever increasing unemployment. In case of Kashmir, ideology, no doubt, plays its part. Islamic fundamentalism continues to be a dominating ideological tendency in Kashmir's volatile politics and it will continue to thrive because the so-called mainstream parties do hardly address the people's grievances. They always remain pre-occupied with electoral calculations and rehabilitation of their partisan loyalists by way of sharing the exchequer.

Given the changed geo-political equation globally, it is unlikely for Uncle Sam to intervene in South Asian drama, awarding Kashmir to Pakistan. But the Musharrafs still harbour that illusion. And the Pakistani Generals also think there is still a lot of scope to bargain with Washington over Afghanistan.

If anything militants need new areas to escalate terror because Kashmir seems to be too hot for them at the moment.

So the soft targets—suburban train blasts. Strange it may seem the terrorists have so far failed to isolate the New Delhi administration over excesses committed by security forces. Much of exposure of army brutality has been done by human rights organisations, not based in Srinagar. They hope to fight fire with their limited fire power. The problem is, they don't have an effective and convincing framework to communicate their agony to persuadable people other than Kashmiris. After every terroristic attack the question returns: what comes next? Terrorism is not collapsing. *🔪🔪🔪🔪*