

Left Fascism

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What happened in Nandigram on 14 March 2007 is not first or new in the last thirty years' history of West Bengal.

The name does not matter. It may be called a 'Pseudo-Fascism', or a 'Fascism', or a 'Totalitarian Police State', or even a 'Left-Front Misrule'. But the facts remain same, irrespective of its partisan or popular beliefs.

As per the CAG Report, at the end of March 2006, the debt of West Bengal is 104202 crores of rupees, which probably cannot be repaid by selling a major part of West Bengal mainland in cash! In the eyes of National Human Rights Commission, West Bengal has an extra-ordinary cruel Police System.

According to NCERT, West Bengal's school education has 80% drop-outs. All these are natural in a Fascist State.

The rise of Left-Fascism is not sudden. Its inhuman repressive system has been gradually grown over the years.

CORONATION 1977 WITH BLUFF

After coming into power in 1977, the 'Left Front' Government of West Bengal set up the 'Emergency Excesses Inquiry Authority, West Bengal' (EEIA) consisting of Honourable Haratosh Chakraborti of the West Bengal Higher Judicial Service, which was scheduled to be expired on 31 December 1978, the same day on which the Shah Commission of Inquiry established by the new central government was also to be expired. Then by a notification No.7800-H.S. of 30 December 1978, the Home Department (Special), Government of West Bengal appointed a Commission of Inquiry with effect from 1 January 1979, again consisting of Honourable Haratosh Chakraborti, to deal with the complaints regarding the abuse of power, excesses, malpractices, atrocities etc. 'committed during the period when the Proclamation of Emergency made on 25 June 1975 under Article 352 of the Constitution was in force or in days immediately preceding the said Proclamation', and its official name was the 'Emergency Excesses Inquiry Commission', popularly known as the 'Chakraborti Commission' (EEIC), which was to submit its report with recommendations within 30 June 1980.

It was absolutely a false propaganda or mega-myth that the 'Chakraborti Commission' was set up to inquire into the complaints of torture and repression in 1970s in West Bengal. On the contrary, the Commission (EEIC) in respect of a matter of March-April 1974 said [EEIC/VII-292/78] that it was 'long before Emergency was proclaimed, so that this Commission had no jurisdiction to look into the matter'.

In 1977, in spite of tremendous political and mental pressure, this writer personally never allowed his own family's 'Archana Guha Case' (a matter of July 1974) to be filed before the Inquiry Authority or EEIA, so it narrowly escaped from the glittering trap of the 'Chakraborti Commission'.

The total number of complaints received by the EEIA and the EEIC was 478, of which 122 cases were received from the Shah Commission of Inquiry, 103 cases from the newly formed State Government and 253 cases from the members of the public. Out of all 478 cases, up to 31 December 1978, 289 cases were disposed of by the EEIA, which was not a

Commission of Inquiry. The First Interim Report of the EEIA in respect of 76 cases was submitted to the Shah Commission on 20 September 1978 [Letter No.372-EEIA]. Then the Second and Third Interim Reports of the EEIA in respect of 213 cases disposed of up to 28 December 1978, printed as one combined booklet 'For official use only', were submitted to the Government of West Bengal, about which in a very short memorandum of action consisting of only ten lines, the then Chief Minister Jyoti Basu said : 'The recommendations of the Authority are being examined by the Government. The Government proposes to initiate suitable action according to law after the process of examination in each case is completed.'

It is also true that in its Reports, Honourable Haratosh Chakraborti on behalf of the EEIA rejected most of the 213 cases for this or that reason. Up to 7 May 1979, only 23 cases were disposed of by the 'Chakraborti Commission' (EEIC), which submitted its First Interim Report on 11 May 1979 [Letter No.1269-EEIC], also printed as a booklet 'For official use only', while the three Interim Reports of the Shah Commission were being sold to the public from open sales counters!

Interestingly, the very short memorandum of action consisting of ten lines signed by the then Chief Minister Jyoti Basu was identical to that for the Second and Third Reports of the EEIA. Then the EEIC submitted its Second Interim Report of 21 cases, of which 6 were noted to be examined or considered by the memorandum of action signed by the Chief Minister on 6 March 1980, and it was said : 'The remaining cases contained in the Second Interim Report under consideration have been recommended by the said Commission for rejection', thus, 'no further action on the remaining cases on the part of the State Government is required'. Though the EEIC rejected some complaints in its Second Report, it is not true that it rejected all the remaining cases, as said in the memorandum of the Government of West Bengal. For instance, the memorandum absolutely ignored the case against mala fide detention of Biman Hazra under MISA, where the EEIC unambiguously recommended the prosecution of accused two police officials under various sections of Indian Penal Code [EEIC/VII-2/78].

How was this mythical Commission abolished? All the 'progressive' intellectuals and civil-rights-mongers deceived people by their lies for 27 years. One day, in 1980, a person, like a piece of wreckage, gave this writer a typewritten note and said 'Can you do something?' It read : 'A young boy and social worker residing at....., Calcutta was murdered by the following Police Officers on 16.8.70 in the night after being arrested and taken to Shyampukur Police Station. Deceased's mother filed a complaint before the Chakraborty Commission and after the notice being served upon the said Police Officers by the Commission, they moved the High Court and the police officers were virtually acquitted by the High Court within a few days of moving the writ petition. Names of the Police Officers.....'

In West Bengal, an entire 'Commission' could be stopped once and for all by an order of the High Court obtained by a few accused policemen, while the Government did not move the High Court and Supreme Court properly for justice.

POWER AFTER 1977

If there are 30 deaths in police custody in West Bengal during 1996-1997, then at least 30,000 people are tortured in 1 year by the police, one can guess. The police, usually, do not arrest a person to kill him or her in their own custody. If they like to kill, they kill the prisoner in a desolate place to hide their crime. Even in 1970s in West Bengal, people saw a less than 0.1% of the torture victims died in the police lock-up. Most of the youths killed by the police were outside their lock-up. All the deaths in police custody are due to torture. Thus the deaths are important, but the more important is the torture in police

custody in present West Bengal which surpassed any record of the past and of any other state in India.

Torture machinery in West Bengal is typical of the Totalitarian Police State. It is ruthless and inhuman, at the same time naked, shameless and overtly arrogant. The entire torture system in West Bengal has been built up so cleverly and systematically, that the police and police stations can torture people without any real danger of legal punishment and of a fall from the power. In this respect, West Bengal is unmatched to either Uttar Pradesh or Kerala.

In West Bengal, the government is allowed to suppress the public outcry either by bullets or by most intelligent techniques of pacification. Thus it does not matter, if some hundred stones are thrown at the police station for some hours, if thousands of people go on demonstration outside the police station, if some people or organizations hand over any memorandum of protest, and if some newspapers publish the stories of torture and repression. The rulers, the persons in authority, all these flamboyant tantrums are short-lived, and are not at all mingled with consistent mass movements. So, the torture system in West Bengal becomes not only systematically obstinate and audacious, but also dares to be remarkably massive.

In Tongtala, the villagers were under repression for the eradication of a spontaneous protest against arbitrary arrest. This phenomenon prevailed, in other places, in other incidents, where people came forward against police atrocities, sometimes encouraged by CPI(M), SUCI, Congress (I) and other political parties, but pathetically, without being followed up by any organized civil rights movements.

These spontaneous voices of the people were to be suppressed by the state machinery of West Bengal, which during these 10 years from 1977 to 1987, only reminded of the condition of the Gestapo of the Nazi police state in Germany in 1934: "The intelligence tasks they performed could, however, suffer from adverse publicity. Hate piled up against Himmler and Heydrich; after June 30 the murderers bearing the signature 'Avengers of Roehm' showed the need for creating a 'parallel' secret network. It was in this spirit that Heydrich gave an impetus to the recruitment of 'well wishers'...These camouflaged agents were recruited from every class of the community...At the end of the war women formed the majority of these informer networks. The well wishers had been baptised 'V.Männer', in the other words 'men of trust'." (Jacques Delarue: *The History of Gestapo*, Corgi Books, 1966, Page-129)

After 1977, the new government never tried to legally proceed against the criminals involved in the Baranagar and Kashipur massacres in 1971, not to say the massacres of Howrah, Barasat, etc. On the contrary, some 'ex-Naxalites', for their own survival, helped the ruling leaders to appear at the annual lecture-ritual 'Baranagar Day', though the original criminals are living freely under the government's umbrella. Even at that annual lecture-rituals, rulers' touts do not tolerate any criticism against the police. [*Pratidin*, 14.8.2002]

TOTALITARIAN POWER

In 1982, in Nadia district, the repression by the state machinery was massive for eradication of 'Naxalite upsurge' before and after the election 'at the gun-point' (*Amrita Bazar Patrika* (Calcutta), 6.6.82).

Thus police party was surrounded by villagers and 'confined' for some time in Canning area, 24 Parganas, after a man was killed in police firing in March, 1983 (*The Statesman* (Calcutta), 6.3.83). A Large number of local people gathered near the beat office in Bartala village, in Joynagar, 24-Parganas, and demonstrated in protest against

the death of 12-year old Alpana Pramanik who worked at the police beat office, and allegedly was raped and murdered by the policemen (*The Statesman* (Calcutta), 3.6.83).

In June, 1983, the villagers of Kamarpara, Nadia District demonstrated against the police about the death of 65-year old Biswanath Biswas, when he was 'being' arrested by the Police (*Aajkal* (Calcutta), 1.7.83). On 5.9.83, the police of Tikiapara outpost lathi-charged a crowd of 300 people, who were demonstrating against the police for an incident where a woman rice seller was dragged by a constable to a room in a bid to 'outrage her modesty' (*The Statesman* (Calcutta), 6.9.83). And the police were backed by their unlimited power, and the torture became a part of political doctrine. So, in February, 1990, the villagers of Guptipara, Hooghly District, underwent massive torture and repression, even their huts were destroyed, men and women were beaten inside and outside the police lock-up (*The Telegraph* (Calcutta), 12.2.90). But in March, 1990 the people of Dasnagar, Jagacha, Bantra and Baksara in Howrah District burst into protest against the inaction of the police when 16-year old Sanjay Patra was shot dead by gangsters. Police fired on the crowd, and injured many people, of whom 17-year old Prantik Mukherjee died (*The Telegraph* (Calcutta), 18.3.90).

Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Calcutta, directed the Deputy Commissioner of Police, Detective Department, Calcutta to make a thorough inquiry into the cause of Tarak Chatterjee's death in police custody. "The Magistrate said that when the accused Tarak was brought to court on August 13 (1984), he was unable to stand and was groaning in pain in the court room. The Magistrate directed to send him to jail custody and directed the Superintendent, Presidency Jail, to arrange for his proper medical treatment. Later, it was reported that he fell sick inside the south lock-up after he had been taken from the court. He was removed to the Medical College Hospital where the doctor declared him "brought dead".

Tarak had multiple injuries on his body' (*The Statesman* (Calcutta), 21.8.84).

Various newspapers and journals, in the '80s not only published the isolated news of torture and repression by police, but also, they published some serious insight report on the 'deaths in the police custody in West Bengal' (see, *Paribartan* (5.10.83), *Ananda Bazar Patrika* (31.3.84), *Pratikshan* (17.4.84), *The Telegraph* (20,21, and 22.7.86), etc.).

At the courts of law, in '80s the scenes were little different. The people were raising their voice in the Court of Law against torture by the police, more and more spontaneously, which could be the seeds of civil and human rights movements in West Bengal, but in reality succumbed to malnutrition and treachery. 'Kamal Thakur Case' was the first known case in two decades from 1970, which crossed the boundary of the High Court at Calcutta, successfully. This case was won at the cost of the lives of witnesses, who were killed. And finally Shailen Thakur, venerable crusader and father of Kamal, was killed in a 'mysterious' road accident on 3 June 1990!

Rita Baidya complained of the 'electric shock' inflicted on her to the Judicial Magistrate, Howrah (*Jugantar*, Calcutta), 29.8.84). A teenage girl complained to the magistrate, how she was molested by the police of Hasnabad Police Station (*The Statesman* (Calcutta), 7.5.85).

Aswini Kumar Sarangi of Gopiballavpur, Midnapore District, filed a complaint against the Circle Inspector and 3 other policemen before the Court of Sub-divisional Judicial Magistrate, Jhargram on 13 July 1988 about his son Subhankar Sarangi, who was tortured to death in police custody.

Shekh Jahangir was arrested by the Maheshtala Police Station, 24-Parganas, on 30 June 1991, and brutally tortured by the police for some days, which was witnessed by Mohammed Kalam, another prisoner in the lock-up and their relatives. From 4 July 1991, Jahangir 'disappeared' from the police custody, and there was no doubt that he was tortured to death. Relatives of Jahangir, tried their best to know the fate of Jahangir,

wrote to the persons in authority, and on 9.12.91 the father of Jahangir filed a petition before the High Court at Calcutta. Just after that, there was an unprecedented police repression which forced the poor people of Maheshtala to raise their voice against torture and repression.

It was unprecedented, because of, as far as the documents speak, the en masse participation of the people in protest against police repression and involvement of the police in drug-trafficking, which is rare in recent past in its length and breadth. The police harassed and threatened the people and took many of them to torture in their custody. Mohammed Kalam was the 'star witness' of 'Jahangir Case', thus he was threatened to be killed. Kalam informed the persons in authority for the protection of his life, but only in vain.

Finally, Kalam was killed by gangsters on 11 October 1992. Everyone knew, it could happen, and it happened. Rupesh Singh was arrested on 10 May 1992 by the New Township Police Station, Durgapur Sub-Division, and tortured to death on 16 May 1992.

Newspapers alerted its readers : 'West Bengal returned to the turbulent seventies with the arrest of a chemistry lecturer of Calcutta University, Mr Kaushik Ganguly; a college student, Mr Tinku Ghosh; and Mr Parashar Bhattcharja for "conspiring" against the state with PWG [People's War Group] activists in Midnapore West.' [*The Statesman*, 7.7.2002] Avijit Sinha was arrested on 5.7.2002 and interrogated by the police of Medinipur West, and allegedly committed suicide on 7.7.2002. Avijit's wife Manasi Sinha moved the High Court at Calcutta against the police. [*Pratidin*, 10.7.2002; *The Telegraph*, 31.8.2002]

But the newspapers did not report the repression and torture inflicted on the large number of poor unprivileged and 'non-intellectuals' in villages. A team of various civil, democratic and human rights organizations observed during 12-15 January 2003, in the name of arresting 'Naxalites' (CPI-ML, People's War Activists), Bibekananda Manki, Gurupada Soren and Kunu Manki of Lotojhorna village, Madhu Singh of Dulukdi village, Sarat Murmu and Bhim Soren of Gurpana village, others like Bahadur Mandi, Dashma Tudu, Subal Kisku, Lakshan Kisku, Kanailal Kisku, Basudev Kisku, Sarat Murmu, Basi Baske and Kalipada Kisku of Bogudoba village of the Banshpahari area, were arrested by the police, and tortured in the Police Station, or other places or in the open-air in Purulia and Medinipur districts, sometimes in presence of their sisters, wives and mothers, who were also not always spared, like Ahladi Kisku and Maino Baske of Bogudoba village. In Medinipur and Bankura districts, Chanchala Sardar's house in Banshpahari was gutted by the police and from the house of Bidubhusan Mahato (75) of Paluboni the police looted cash and crops; women like, Behula Kalindi (35) of Pachapani and Archana Mahato of Paluboni were assaulted on their modesty and tortured by the police. There are also excuses of different 'terrorism' in other districts. In Jalpaiguri district of North Bengal, Narendranath Burman of Shuripara was arrested and tortured by the police.

INHUMAN CUSTODY

A report sent to the Human Rights Commission prepared by the state detective department (CID) of police said that the employees of different jails are forcibly collecting money from the prisoners. In a report, the Commission found various corrupt practices in prison system of the state. [*The Ananda Bazar Patrika*, 5.8.1996]

On 1 August 2002, two undertrial prisoners suffocated and died in the Malda court lock-up. According to the post-mortem report, asphyxiation caused the death. At least 100 detainees had to be sent to hospital when police crammed 262 of them in the small lock-up. [*The Statesman*, 11.8.2002; *The Telegraph*, 6.8.2002; 1.9.2002] Agitated families of the prisoners of Malda Jail said : "The jail staff ask for Rs.20 everytime we

come to see a relative. We have to pay Rs.40 if we bring home-cooked meals for them.” The Malda Jail houses 370 prisoners against its capacity of 299 inmates. [*The Telegraph*, 4.8.2002; 31.8.2002]

Ajay Mondal was arrested on the day before and allegedly hanged himself on 30.8.2002 in the Bolpur Police Station of Birbhum district. [*The Telegraph*, 31.8.2002; *The Statesman*, 1.9.2002; *The Ananda Bazar Patrika*, 1.9.2002]

Ananda Bauri (25) died in the Asansol special jail hospital on 27.9.2002. “Several prisoners in course of a four-day long marathon interview revealed that Bauri was beaten up in custody by policemen before he was lodged in the jail in the afternoon of September 26.” [*The Telegraph*, 3.10.2002]

‘According to the West Bengal State Human Rights Commission, 458 detenus died in custody including 134 in police lock-up since 1995. The state recorded the highest in 1999-2000 with 84 custodial deaths including 39 in police custody. Deaths in jail have gone up to 55 in 2001-2002.’ [*The Times of India* (Calcutta) 25.7.2002, HinduNet Inc. website]

OLD WINE

A ‘spokesman from the state judiciary department said the sudden spurt in criminal activities had prompted the government to approach the apex court to modify its judgement on the release of short-term convicts.’ [*The Telegraph*, 4.8.2002]

The CPI-M Polit Bureau gave the chief minister of West Bengal full power of taking decision of framing and adopting the preventive detention act POCA, though some of the members of the government were in confusion. [*Pratidin*, 28.8.2002]

‘The Calcutta High Court has directed prison authorities to display boards in front of all the jails across the state declaring the number of prisoners, quality of food and clothing and nature of jobs being allotted to them’, after hearing of a petition moved in 1995. [*The Telegraph*, 11.1.2003]

In 1982, in violence and brutality, West Bengal surpassed any other states and the past and present history of India. On 30 April 1982, in the broad daylight, at least 17 (15 male and 2 female) volunteers of Anandamarg were brutally killed at the Bijon Setu (bridge) beside the Bullygunge railway station, near the Kasba Police Station. While some of the pro-government newspapers and magazines tried to evade the responsibility of the Left-government, vivid description of the incident by the witnesses or readers clearly expose the nexus between criminals and rulers [*Darpan*, 7.5.1982].

Look at what Justice S C Deb of Deb Commission said about the death of Idris Mian on 28 March 1984, in police custody: “Brutal injuries were inflicted on Idris at the time of interrogation and resulted in his death, which is unnatural and homicidal. It is also culpable homicide.....As to motive, Idris was silenced forever either to shield some corrupt big businessman and some police officers who were giving protection to smugglers or he was intentionally killed to avenge the murder of V.K.Mehta. Idris was deliberately killed by the Calcutta Police.” [*The Telegraph*, 19.9.89] This is the character of Calcutta Police, and this report was also not a real threat to the tyranny in West Bengal. A complete volume can only put the facts of torture and repression in West Bengal together.

PRIMITIVE ORGY

The village ‘heads’ representing different political parties ‘punished’ Khajema Bibi, a 30-year old house-wife of Rowshannagar of Murshidabad district, on 24.1.2003 by beating her by clubs, hammering nails into her knees, hitting her head with iron rod,

bathing her mobil-oil, etc. etc. On 26.1.2003, Republic Day, eleven 'heads' gathered at the village 'court' to judge the crime of adultery allegedly committed by the victim Khajema. Again she was compelled to traverse nearly three kilometres in the village, half-naked, brutally teased, tortured, half-dead, by the heads' order. Complaint was lodged at police station, without effect. [*Pratidin*, 9.2.2003]

In early November, 1982, the people of Tongtala, 24-Parganas District, were fighting against the nexus of police with the country- liquor businessmen, and when villagers were arbitrarily arrested and shot injured, they beat the guilty police officer. Then started the massive repression by the police on the entire village, for which all the male villagers ran away from Tongtala. Only women and one old man remained in the village, who were even to carry and burn any dead body. The police robbed everything from the houses of the poor villagers, destroyed the houses, tortured the village-folks (*Paribartan* (Calcutta,) 15.12.82).

Atrocities committed by policemen forced about 500 men of villages in the Usthi police station area of South 24-Parganas to flee their homes in July 1996, while people protested against the nexus between the police and decoits. [*The Telegraph*, 3.8.1996]

In a complaint lodged with the Malda police on 17.3.2003, Dipali Sarkar charged the six accused, including a CPI-M gram panchayat member, with tying her to a pole in her backyard and then stripping and thrashing her. [*The Telegraph*, 20.3.2003.]

The last day of the year 2003 informed saw a very old man Niranjan Basu (87 years) was arrested allegedly for his connection with 'People's War' group of CPI(ML), and for that kind of police campaign, and an editorial of a newspaper expressed its fear with a heading 'We Don't Want Seventies' : 'Past experience said, whenever an unlimited power was given to the police or other armed forces to do something, in most of the cases, the power was misused. The people were terrorized by counter-violence used in the name of suppressing violence. The innocent people were tortured, due to the failure in identifying, arresting and punishing actual 'criminals'. Repeatedly it was feared that in tackling the People's War, the torture by police would be inflicted on the innocent poor people. The facts are going towards that direction.' [*Pratidin*, 31.12.2003].

The drama itself was totalitarian. On 26 January 2003, Buddhadev Bhattacharya, the Chief Minister of West Bengal inaugurated the larger-than-life-size bronze-statue of Indira Gandhi, the ex-Prime Minister of India, at the new triangular park in Calcutta, facing the Planetarium, surrounded by Cathedral Road, Shakespeare Sarani and Jawaharlal Nehru Road.

In 1977, the political parties of the ruling Left Front Government of West Bengal managed to be victorious by campaigning with the single issue against the misrule and repression instituted by Indira Gandhi during 'Internal Emergency' of 1975-1977! At that time, Indira Gandhi was equated by them to the Fascists or Semi-fascists. [*abridged*]

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