

# frontier

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## *"Your Money is not Charity..."*

**I**N YET ANOTHER DRAMATIC MOVE UKRAINIAN PRESIDENT VOLODYMYR Zelensky went to Washington to meet American President Joe Biden and seek "weapons, weapons and more weapons" in his first overseas trip since Russia started its "special military operations" ten months ago. Russia didn't attach much importance to the event and Kremlin's spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said nothing good would come from the much-publicised parley. But Zelensky succeeded in getting more sophisticated arms, more precisely Patriot missiles, with striking range deep inside Russian territory. The US Administration finally announced after a lot of theatrical acrobatics that a Patriot battery would be shipped to Ukraine as part of the latest 'aid package'. While addressing the US Congress Zelensky made a passionate and balanced appeal to American law makers because he was aware of people who have the power to save his country or doom it by withdrawing "aid". But he was candid enough to state the ground reality of American benevolence! What he said was not that innocuous: 'your money is not charity but an investment in global security and democracy'. True, it is an investment. But it has nothing to do with 'global security'. Nor does it promote democracy in any part of the world. What matters most to the Biden government is how to boost their military-industrial complex. And the Ukrainian war has opened golden opportunities to the merchants of death worldwide. The ultimate losers are Ukrainians. At the press conference Biden was straightforward to admit the fact that 'The United States had given Ukraine "what they needed" at the expense of more than twenty billion dollars, but decisions regarding the kinds of arms provided had to be made jointly with NATO and European partners'. For one thing Biden's western allies are not interested in going to war with Russia despite their moral and logistics support to Ukraine. They are not looking for Third World War on European soil. Here lies the crux of the matter. They want to remain unaffected while making sure that Ukraine is able to win in the battlefield.

What all they want is to make Ukrainians their cannon fodders. The Anglo-American axis is the real actor in this war theatre. Americans have nothing to lose, they have everything to gain. So far the United States and its allies have done precious little to stop the war and mitigate the sufferings of Ukrainians. They could but they have not. The war is now 10 months old and as things are it will continue. Meanwhile, Russian troops have

already erased a number of Ukrainian towns from the face of the earth and crippled energy infrastructure in order to deprive civilians of heat, light and running water in winter. In truth 'General Winter' may be a game-changer for Russia! America and NATO hope for an easy victory for Ukraine. But there won't be many people to celebrate because the script of more devastation is in the making. It is unlikely that Russia would surrender its gains achieved after a heavy cost.

Incidentally, '102 years ago, on December 22, 1920, the viii All-Russian Congress of Soviets opened, which adopted a plan for the electrification of Russia—the GOELRO plan. The initiator and inspirer of the GOELRO plan was V I Lenin. To draw up the plan, a state com-

mission was created, which included over 200 of the best Russian engineers and scientists headed by G M Krzhizhanovsky.'

The GOELRO plan transformed Russia from an agrarian economy into an industrial one. By 1935, USSR took second place in Europe and third in the world in this indicator. Many in the West initially dismissed Russia's dream of electrification as pure fantasy but in reality it was over-fulfilled before time. Socialist spirit worked.

The extensive electrification and subsequent industrialisation of Ukraine was the result of GOELRO plan. What a tragedy—Russia is destroying the vast electricity network of Ukraine that owes its genesis mainly to the erstwhile USSR and Lenin's historic programme of action.

Zelensky likened the on-going war to the battle of the Bulge, one of the major battles of the Second World War. It was the same time of year, even. The comparison suggested that, just as Americans and Western Europeans presented a joint and ultimately victorious front against Hitler in 1944. But there is a difference. Americans are not going to die for Ukraine; Ukrainians keep dying. In Belgium in 1944, American troops were fighting on the ground. This chilly December only Ukrainians are fighting the Russians with American guns. He forgot to mention how the Red Army defeated the Germans. Quite expectedly American audience responded to Zelensky by valourising him.

□□□

26-12-2022

**COMMENT**

## Scrapping MANF

SACHAR COMMITTEE WHICH was appointed by the Congress-led UPA- I in 2005 released its report in 2006. It observed that the condition of Muslim community in all areas of social and political life has been sliding down. Faced with the insecurity due to violence against them, its representation in social-political life has been going down for a free fall. UPA in all its wisdom decided to work on this nagging social political issue. One of the steps taken by it was institution of Maulana Azad National Fellowship (MANF). This was meant for higher education and research for the minority students. It had provisions for scholars from all religious minorities, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Jains and Buddhist. Still as the number of Muslim minority is much higher from among the 1000 fellowships lately 733 were awarded to Muslims.

Among Muslims the status of

education worsened after Independence due to the intimidating atmosphere, poverty and lack of any affirmative action. As the level of education went up the number of Muslim students enrolled fell down steeply. Above 17 years of age educational attainment of Muslim students is abysmally low. As per Ministry of education data the national average for Matriculation is 17% for Muslims while the national average is 22%. The literacy rate stands at 57.3% as against the national average of 73.4%. The overall illiteracy among Muslims is higher than among other religious minorities. Similarly their enrollment in higher echelons of education and research is much lower. This is where MANF came in as a small boost for higher education among Muslims. As against 14.2% of their population only 5.5% Muslims reach higher education. As per 2011 census data Graduates

among Hindus were 5.98 and amongst Muslims was 2.76%.

On similar lines Pre Matric scholarship for Muslims has been restricted only to 9th and 10th standard students only. The pre-matric scholarship was launched in 2008 and was definitely of great help to Muslim students in secondary education. Even at that time with Modi as Chief Minister of Gujarat argued in Supreme Court that Centre cannot force Gujarat to implement it as it is based on Religion! The central contribution for the scheme was returned by the Gujarat state. In tune with this the Central Government has now restricted the scope of Pre Matric scholarship only to 9th and 10th standard students as per a notification in November 2022.

The MANF has been stopped from December 2022 as per proclamation by the minority's affairs minister Ms Smriti Irani on 8th December 2022. There have been protests against this high handed- policy of the Government and many Congress and other MPs have also raised

the issue in Parliament. The argument of Ms Irani is that this scheme overlaps with other similar schemes for which Muslims students are entitled, the ones for OBCs. She forgets that one cannot get two scholarships at the same time.

It is very clear that the present Government is out to undo whatever little affirmative action directed 'Equal Opportunity' exists.

Unfortunately in India the domi-

nance of divisive politics has affected the lives of Muslim minorities in diverse ways. Even when not in power they put immense pressure on semi-secular parties not to undertake any affirmative action in favour of Muslim and Christian minorities in particular. With new education policy and ruthless privatisation of education, the poor and marginalised will be the big victims. □□□

[Contributed]

#### NOTE

## Love, Loss and Longing in Kashmir

*Joydip Ghosal writes:*

**K**ASHMIR IS A PLACE where profound individual grief is absorbed into collective sorrow as people mourn the killings and enforced disappearance of their loved ones. Sahba Husain's book *Love, Loss, and Longing in Kashmir* published by Zubaan stands testimony to her long and sustained relationship with Kashmir, her acquaintance with its deeply moving sorrow and profound grief that remains enmeshed with breathtakingly beautiful environment. Sahba Husain, an independent social researcher and women's rights activist travelled extensively in Jammu and Kashmir. The social consequence of armed conflict, the travails of women who were shoved to the margin came into her ambit of research. In this book she delved deeper into different aspects of militarisation of families, individuals and communities. This book based on personal interviews, group discussions brought to the fore the issues of increased militarisation of civilian spaces, women's mobilisation for justice and accountability. It seemed that given the complex nature of the conflict the research peeled many layers to see what lay beneath. While undertaking the research one nagging

question always haunted the researcher. In a militarised zone, riddled by conflict within the border of the country where did the researcher stand in relation to the researched? She gradually learnt the inherent complications that defined the nature of conflict. In Kashmir the massive deployment of security forces created an unprecedented situation where all civilians were considered as prime suspects.

Men were routinely roughed up, tortured, leaving women more vulnerable. It is needless to say that there was hardly any space for political dialogue. After the abrogation of Article 370 people were further pushed into quagmire. The massive state repression and large scale violence led to fear and uncertainty. She sensed a constant effort among the people to come to terms with the everyday reality. They were stripped off their civil and democratic rights.

While trying to understand and absorb the calamity she was confronted with she asked a question: How the largest democracy in the world treated its own people in such a brutally oppressive manner? The overwhelming presence of gun-wielding soldiers had shaken her. Her

**Just Published**

## WITH THE PASSING TIME

by  
**Farooque Chowdhury**

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research took her to Dardpora (Village of Widows) and Kunan Poshpora that were marked by severe violence.

She keenly observed the many implications of Kashmiri Pandits' migration. While visiting Muthi camp she felt appalled at the sight of dismal condition of the camp. Her research showed clearly that there was a rural-urban divide that characterised migration. Rural poor found accommodation in different camps in Jammu which Bashir Ahmed Dabla termed as 'sham accommodation'. Rich and upper middle class shifted to their own houses which were built prior to militancy. She raised a pertinent question which was seconded by Balraj Puri that during the peak of militancy 20,000 Muslim families from the valley were forced to migrate. There was much hue and cry over the migration of Pandits but the migration of the Muslims hardly stirred the conscience of the mainstream media.

The political expression of women defined the period from 2008 onwards and it was probably the first time that women's contribution began to find much space in the media. As state repression became ram-

parent and brutalisation reached its zenith women found ways to protect their men. They played pivotal roles in mobilisation of protesters and getting their men released.

In 2010 BBC profiled a younger mother whose 14 years old son was killed by a tear gas shell. The mother told the BBC correspondent that she had decided to take to the street after

the gruesome killing of her son. She willfully chose the path because she wanted freedom from subjugation.

This book documented the intense trauma and pain that the common women underwent. In 2015 Doctors without Borders conducted a survey on the mental health of the populace. It showed that 99.2 per cent adult population in Kashmir

stated witnessing or experiencing one traumatic event in their lifetime.. It had become apparent that militarisation had led to the structural breakdown of all spheres.

This book ended with a passionate hope and desire to find a solution. It is an essential read for anyone who wants to know the ground reality prevailing in Kashmir today. □□□

#### “SNEAKING TENDENCY”?

## “Leftist Response to the War in Ukraine”

*Farooque Chowdhury*

THE ILLUMINATING ARTICLE in *Frontier* (Vol 55, No 24, December 11-17, 2022, also in *Countercurrents*, November 1, 2022) by Mr Sumanta Banerjee, “Leftist response to the war in Ukraine” (<https://www.frontierweekly.com>) deserves discussion as it focuses on (1) the most burning issue of the moment—the Ukraine War, (2) the Indian Left’s position on the issue, and (3) a few observations on Stalin and Mao.

Mr Banerjee begins with a question:

“How is the Left facing the multi-dimensional complex challenges thrown up by the [Ukraine] war and the ravages that it is heaping upon its people?”

Then, he refers to Arundhati Roy: The “Left’s dilemma as ‘tortuous yoga asanas’—some pretty drastic seeing and unseeing—depending on where you have decided to place yourself.”

He also refers to political commentator Achin Vanayik: An interesting analysis of the international Leftist response to the war in Ukraine, where he puts the Leftists into four categories.”

Then, he focuses on the Indian Left by referring to the reactions by the CPI(M-L) Liberation, CPI(M), CPI, and CPI (Maoist) to the Ukraine War.

What the problem he has found

in the statement of the CPI(M-L) Liberation he has quoted?

The same question with the rest of parties’ statements he has referred?

Do they, or any of the parties referred by Mr Banerjee, stand for Russia’s position in Ukraine? Do they deny the right to self-determination of the people in Ukraine?

Probably, if not wrongly understood, Mr Banerjee’s problem is, as he says in his article: “They [the Indian Lefts] blame it on NATO’s expansionist designs on the borders of Russia.”

He finds, as he writes: “In this Leftist argument, we discern a rather sneaking tendency in favour of Russia—depicting it as a victim of NATO’s expansionist designs.”

Does Mr Banerjee like to deny NATO’s moves, (1) which were going for years, (2) which were provocative, aggressive and deceptive (3) many of which were military, and (4) which were rescinding promises made?

And, does he consider the Ukraine War emerged suddenly, out of the air, since Russia sent its troops into Ukraine? Was there any other development prior to the Russian move? Shouldn’t the on-going war be seen with its full background?

And, does he like to deny that the NATO is the world’s biggest war

alliance today, and most aggressive, most expansionist and imperialist?

Does he like that the Indian Left shouldn’t talk about the imperialist moves, and shouldn’t oppose imperialism?

Does he mean that opposing imperialism is synonymous to supporting Putin/Russia? And, should the Left oppose only Russia, and shouldn’t mention NATO’s war?

Does Mr Banerjee like to deny the fact that today, the world is on the brink of world war? Effectively, parts of a world war have already begun playing respective roles, and there, in this context, imperialism is making provocative, aggressive moves. Europe, the landmass that witnessed much bloodshed in earlier two World Wars, has again begun bearing suffering. Millions of people in Europe are suffering—escalating energy poverty, inflation. Can this be ignored?

Then, shouldn’t Mr Banerjee suggest the correct wording of a resolution/statement to be adopted by the Lefts in India that properly and correctly tells about the situation and today’s tasks? Why doesn’t he propose (1) oppose all imperialist wars and its preparations in all forms in all lands, (2) immediately cease all military activities by all parties in all lands, (3) withdraw all nuclear arsenals, weapons and delivery mechanism from all lands, (4) stop all imperialist military aid, and (5) oppose and disband Nazi/Fascist forces in all forms in all lands?

Mr Banerjee could have accused



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the Left parties he has referred to as meek in wordings in their statements/resolutions that oppose/denounce/condemn the war and imperialism.

The “sneaking tendency” he has found, and said in his article, is subjective. It is his judgment. The Left in India may locate “sneaking tendency favouring the NATO” in his article also, if they critically evaluate his article.

Mr Banerjee finds, as his article says about “response of the Indian Left to the Ukraine war,” the Left is “mainly blaming the US”.

Sounds strange! Who’s to blame? Should it someone else who’s not the main actor, not the main instigator, not the main financier of war? Does Mr Banerjee feel a bite, a pinch while the main imperialism, the main player in this imperialist war is blamed? Where does Mr Banerjee’s sympathy sleep?

No, you’re not pro-imperialist. Your anti-imperialist position is unequivocal, staunch and stubborn.

The problem is with an attitude: Left bashing-whip the Left.

No doubt, the Left carries a huge burden of failures, limitations, incapacities, setbacks, condemnable acts. But, it’s not the only fact. Along with these, the setbacks, the failures, etc, the Left has achieved something, a little, a bit, if not a lot. And, all the failures, setbacks, etc had a certain perspective, a context, which includes factors including historical development and development of class. A lot of Left bashing has been done by many. Now, propose, suggest, show by application alternatives to asanas.

The four categories that the revered political commentator/analyst has found and Mr Banerjee refers to, appears problematic to them. It may be. It may not be, also.

There’re condemnations of Stalin, as is accusation made, his dictatorial practices, he directed all com-

munist parties in all lands. There’re sayings that most of the Left camp once positioned their umbrellas according to the rains that fell either in Moscow or in Peking, today Beijing.

Now, what’s the problem if the Lefts in countries have diversified positions? Should any scholar expect that the Left in Serbia will have the same position as of the Left in Nigeria or Nicaragua, or Cuba or Venezuela or India or Iran or Poland or the UK? Is it possible to have same position in all lands at the same time? Are not differences there in terms of context, class alignments, political situation, imperialism’s and dominating capital’s role, etc? It has to be seen whether or not fundamental questions like class and class struggle, imperialism, democracy, not the democracy imperialism propagates and tries to impose, etc, are compromised/diluted. So, does it matter what different positions one analyst finds or not? The matter is which position is correct or which one is wrong.

What’s wrong with a Left party in India if the party condemns war-mongering by imperialist powers? What’s wrong if the party demands cessation of an imperialist military alliance’s expansion? Do those go against likings of Mr Banerjee? Shouldn’t that party demand dissolution of imperialist alliances? That dissolution hasn’t been demanded. That’s the shortcoming of the parties’ position expressed in the statement Mr Banerjee has quoted.

What’s the problem if CPI (M) demands immediate cessation of military hostilities? Is it a problem that the NATO has also to cease hostility?

What’s the problem if CPI demands halting of further advance by the Russian forces, and immediate declaration of ceasefire?

What’s the problem if CPI (Maoist) demands immediate halting of war by Russia; NATO should

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not make Ukraine its part, and demilitarisation of all areas?

Haven't these parties, as Mr Banerjee has cited, made these statements?

Doesn't Mr Banerjee want these: cessation, demilitarisation, etc?

Mr Banerjee goes back to some sort of background: Russia's Crimea annexation, etc. He prefers to forget NATO's years-long military involvement in the land named Ukraine. This involvement included NATO training and arming Ukraine military. He finds "Putin's aggressive impulse", but he doesn't find NATO's aggressive expansion. Is it a correct approach, or a one-sided approach? With this approach, Mr Banerjee makes an announcement regarding a right, as he writes, "we [he and his friend, probably] have every right to suspect that Putin's 'military operation' in Ukraine, is yet another manifestation of his policy of territorial expansion." Suspicion isn't bad, as it leads to investigation—a scientific approach. But, with such partial finding, only Putin's policy, he relinquishes his right to suspect the imperialist camp's policy—loss of a scientific approach. Imperialist policy is clear to Mr Banerjee. So he has no suspicion regarding that policy.

His criticism of the Indian Left parties, as he writes, is the parties' refusal to condemn killing of Ukraine citizens, etc. Shouldn't the criticism also include the issues of imperialist war, war-efforts, pumping of billions of dollars of weapons, steps to escalate the war, etc? Aren't these ground level facts? Does he like to ignore these facts? Mr Banerjee should search answer to the question: Why imperialism is spending so much in its war in Ukraine? Does that spending, the real meaning, take out the reason to oppose imperialism? Or, the opposite?

He writes the Indian Left parties "come out with mealy-mouthed expressions like 'deeply concerned,' or

'grave concern,' or request for "the establishment of peace."

What should they call for? Shouldn't they go for demanding dissolution of all imperialist war alliances?

Mr Banerjee writes: "The Indian Left is indulging in a half-hearted criticism of Russian invasion of Ukraine, and is reluctant to condemn Russian atrocities in Ukraine."

How has he measured the heart of the Indian Left? Shall he divulge the unit of measurement? He has to, to substantiate his claim, present some sort of evidence.

Moreover, has he told about the need, requirement, demand of this time—the condemnation and opposition of the imperialist war in Ukraine, imperialist machinations prior to investigating this war?

His problem with the Left camp is much deeper. Mr Banerjee has reached to the days of Stalin while discussing the Indian Left's present day position on the Ukraine War.

To him, Mr Banerjee, the entire system of Soviet, or let's say, the revolutionary project of the proletariat in Russia, as Mr Banerjee writes, achieved "removing poverty" and "equitable distribution of resources".

Here's a little problem with Mr Banerjee: The Soviet system's first and foremost achievements were political power of the exploited, dissolution of means of exploitation—it was, may be with many limitations and setbacks, an expropriation of exploiters. Success in the war against poverty, etc followed those acts. For the first time in human history, the exploited successfully wrenched political power, challenged finance capital, and declared rights of the toiling masses. It was humanity's one of greatest marches for having a humane world. Mistakes, errors, wrongs, obviously, accompany such a great project by a class that was pressed to the dust with suppression and ignorance in a no-rights environment.

Expecting no-error in such a historical march on a socio-political-economic reality is a foolish idea about society and class struggle. With such ignorance, none should enter into the business of making comments on society, politics and revolution.

So, Mr Banerjee makes the mistake, as he writes, the achievements of the Soviet system of socialism under Stalin were "besmirched by suppression of political dissent and violation of human rights."

Is any socio-political-economic system evaluated by (1) a single act, (2) by an act of a single period, (3) acts of a single leader? Shall Mr Banerjee evaluate other socio-political-economic system with his preferred method? That, even if he likes, will be a foolish act, an act by a person knowing nothing either about society or about politics or about economy or about struggle between classes or about political power of a class.

Thus Mr Banerjee makes another controversy. He finds Putin in the same group of Stalin, as he argues: The same Stalinist model of repression is being followed today in Russia by Putin. He [Putin] was trained by the KGB—the notorious intelligence and surveillance agency that was shaped by Stalin."

So, according to the argument presented by Mr Banerjee, Hitler was "not" a Nazi leader, as, Hitler was trained as a corporal, a motor cycle riding messenger, in the German army of the WWI, and at that time Nazi philosophy was not imparted to the soldiers and corporals; and Jinnah pursued Congress politics for partitioning the sub-continent, as he was a Congress politician before joining the Muslim League; and Chiang Kai-shek pursued politics of Sun Yat-sen, as Chiang was in the same party, which was organised by Sun Yat-sen; Putin is Boris Yeltsin's shadow as Putin

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was once BY's close associate, chosen successor. The argument can move on further and further with many instances from politics in many countries, if Mr Banerjee's argument is accepted. No more is the need.

How shall Mr Banerjee identify a bourgeois political system, if he finds the system's model of repression "Stalinist"?

What Mr Banerjee, knows, but likes to forget now, is there's a gulf of difference between Stalin's politics and policies and Putin's schooling and politics, between the interests, whatever class(es) those be, Stalin was connected to or was based on and the interests Putin is connected to or based on. Shouldn't scientific analysis follow such an approach? Otherwise, the analysis, how much filled with rage and hatred that don't matter, turns like the analysis a group of ghost-chasers in this sub-continent follow to deceive easy-going commoners.

Mr Banerjee extends his analysis or comment to Mao, as he writes, "devastations brought upon the Chinese people by the same Mao's adventurist experiments like the Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution."

How does Mr Banerjee ascertain that the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution were experiments, weren't economic and political imperatives in a certain eco-

nomical, political and class context in a certain period? Why not check the situation the party was going through or facing? If those were experiments, then, why not accept that errors are normal in any experiment, not only in controlled condition in lab, but also on open socio-economic-political field? Should any one expect error-tight experiment? Even, with whatever errors, should the entire be cancelled? Is it logical to define an entire policy as "adventurist" on the basis of a certain error in a certain time? Adventurism dooms—historical experiences tell this fact. But, ultimately, Mao has not doomed.

Mr Banerjee makes confusion, as he writes, "these two states" [Soviet Union and China] "had often operated as a fascist style under the garb of 'communism'."

Mr Banerjee knows it well that neither of these two states claimed communism has been established in the countries. The two were at different stages of development. Mao began with New Democracy, different from socialism, and far away from bourgeois democracy. Soviet Union went through different phases. Fascist states will laugh at Mr Banerjee if he tries to group Soviet Union and China with those states. The fascist states will not accept Soviet Union and China into their group. The economic base, the class

**As Timir Basu is still seriously ill, he is not in a position to communicate with contributors and subscribers. Please bear with us.**

—Fr.

base on which fascist states stand are different from the class and economic bases Stalin-led Soviet Union and Mao-led China were standing. The rise of the Third Reich under the Nazi Hitler's and the Nazi party's leadership was in a certain context, with a number of factors. Nazism/fascism is not determined by extent of torture, persecution. Nazism/fascism, one of the most hated ideologies, evolves with certain forces in economy and politics of the dominant classes. Making sweeping remark is different from analysing a state—it should be maintained. Sweeping remarks can be used for bashing a camp or a person or leader, but the remarks go down the drain in ultimate analysis.

Further discussions on the issue, it's hoped, will continue with a response from Mr Banerjee; and that discussion will be concrete if he presents a draft resolution/statement, as an example of what should be written or told, on the Ukraine War question. □□□

*[Farooque Chowdhury writes from Dhaka, Bangladesh]*

## A TRIBUTE

# Joma Sison is No More

*Harsh Thakor*

**P**ROFESSOR JOMA SISON passed away in the night of December 16, 2022. Joma died peacefully after a period of confinement in a hospital in Utrecht, The Netherlands. He was 83.

The Communist Party of Phillipines (CPP) declared ten days as a period of mourning for the

entire Party in order to give the highest possible tribute to Joma. It decided to dedicate the Party's upcoming 54th anniversary to Joma's memory, to celebrate his life and all the victories that Filipinos have achieved under his leadership and guidance. All units of the New People's Army (NPA) have been or-

dered to stand in formation at the break of dawn of December 26 and silently perform a 21-gun salute by way of giving honour and bidding farewell to their beloved leader.

He was responsible for re-establishing the Communist Party of Phillipines in December 1968 and igniting the spark of the armed struggle in 1969. Unfortunately the so-called mainstream media is hailing Sison's death as a culmination of the armed insurrection of the CPP, and a victory of the fascist Duterte regime.

Professor Jose Maria Sison ranks amongst the most accomplished Marxist leaders, and writers, to have landed their feet into the Communist movement. Few leaders have contributed so much to shape a nation's path breaking achievements in revolutionary movement or defend citadel of Marxism-Leninism. Sison knitted the scattered seeds to sow the nucleus of the Communist Party of Phillipines and the New People's Army. His writings and talks most illustratively trace the genesis of the germinating of the people's war and how the party and red army steered through the most tortuous paths to lead one of the greatest armed uprisings in history.

In 1974, Sison was captured by the Ferdinand Marcos dictatorship and faced years of torture and solitary confinement before being released in 1986 after the overthrow of the Marcos dictatorship. In 1988, Sison was forced to seek asylum in the Netherlands after the Philippine reactionary government cancelled his passport while he was abroad on a speaking tour.

Sison obtained recognition as political refugee from the Dutch Council of State in 1992, and has since enjoyed the protection of the principle of non-refoulement under the Geneva Refugee Convention and Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights, thus preventing his deportation to the Philippines or any third country.

While the people's war continued, Sison faced repeated attempts of legal harassment and repression during his forced exile.

In recent decades no Marxist leader as symmetrically defended or synthesised theory of Marxism-Leninism-Mao thought or distinguished it from revisionism. With deep dialectical approach he defended concept of the party as a vanguard and rebuked post-modernism and

Trotskyism. Through his writings, Joma formulated the theoretical foundation of the Philippine revolution. He also left behind a rich and deep Marxist-Leninist-Maoist treasure trove which will serve as guide for the Party's continued growth in the next stage of the Filipino people's revolutionary struggles. No Marxist intellectual has produced such diverse range of writings in the last half century, be it on people's war, political economy, massline, fascism, environment and climatic changes, Maoism, History of Communist Movement in the Philippines etc.

He gave a most balanced analysis of the pros and cons of USSR under Lenin and Stalin and China under Mao, giving a striking blow to the counter revolutionary winds, defacing Socialism.

Joma's interviews as writings illuminated light of liberation struggle in nation more than any Marxist leader since Chairman Gonzalo, in 1992 and gave a most lucid illustration of the International economic crisis and the global setback in Marxist movements.

He exposed the most sectarian or anti-Marxist nature of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement (RIM) and even aspects of the Peruvian Communist Party proclaiming 'Gonzalo Thought', 'Militarisation of the Party', 'People's War Till Communism'.

Unlike dogmatist Maoists he upheld Ho Chi Minh and Che Guevara as great Marxist revolutionaries and, projected the progressive nature of societies like Cuba.

Most comprehensively he analysed the futility of line of protracted people's war in Imperialist countries, and why it was unique for third world countries. In the last few decades no leader as comprehensively projected how Marxism-Leninism-Mao thought has not been extinguished from the globe and could still resurrect like phoenix from the Ashes. Sison's writings illustrate

that Maoism is not only about military line but on establishing the Broad United Front.

Sison's writings are an invaluable treasure house for any Marxist reader or revolutionary Democrat. His very biography is also fascinating, illustrating what factors crystallise the spiritual transformation of a Marxist revolutionary. Sison was a most accomplished poet, whose poems were soul-searching.

A most important lesson to be imbibed was how he integrated the CCP and the NPA in the 1970's in the background of the fascist Marcos regime, and how his leadership sprouted bastions of mass revolutionary democratic formations from below, or people's self government. Another most important aspect of study is Joma's refutation of urban putchist struggle.

He demonstrated how a United Front like the National Democratic Front of Phillipines could include even Non-Marxist forces, establish link of people's war with urban areas and even adopt extra-parliamentary methods of struggle.

Sison's writings distinguished between massline and military line, contrasting the role and practice of the CPP with the NPA.

He illustrated that Maoism was an integral part of Marxism-Leninism and not a separate entity. In recent times he most boldly defended Russia in the Ukraine War, even if it was an Imperialist country. Joma asserted that Russia was confronting the tyranny of NATO backed expansionism.

With deep insight Sison probed into China's imperialist ventures but asserted how revolutionaries should utilise its contradiction with United States of America.

He displayed great humility in assessing that the CPI (Maoist) in playing a leading role in the International Communist Movement and held its contribution in Dandakaranya in great



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esteem. Extricating himself from dogmatism he gave high credibility to the CPI (Maoist) analysis on Brahmanical fascism or caste question.

With an open mind he expressed admiration for the Russian Workers Party and paid homage to Irina Malivnoskaya, after her death.

Most imaginatively, he encouraged Pakistani activists of 'Workers and Peasants Party' and National Students Federation of Pakistan to combat the revisionist lines.

Joma also endorsed the contribution of the Church and classed it as an ally to the revolution, thus not completely negating religion.

As a leader of National Democratic Front with great resilience he gave solidarity to anti-imperialist struggles blooming all over the globe.

Sison's writings are useful even for non-Marxists in many spheres and for progressive intellectuals in general.

In recent times 11 books have been published of the Sison reader series. Without rhetoric they rationally address subjects. They comprise On Culture, Art and Literature, On the Philosophy of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, Critique of Philippine Economy and Politics, On the People's Democratic Revolution, On the Communist Party of the

Philippines 1968-1999, On the Communist Party of the Philippines, 2000-2022, On People's War, On the United Front, On the GRP-NDFP Peace Negotiations, Socialism: Resistance and Resurgence, and On the Marcos Fascist Dictatorship.

Sison recently in On the Philosophy of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, refuted subjectivist idealism. He has also written articles on the Frankfurt school, Austrian school, French postmodernism, the British analytic philosophy and so on.

Joma Sison last month wrote an invaluable essay on World Imperialism written from a Leninist standpoint; traversing all spheres it dissected positive and negative elements. It delves on crystallisation of modern imperialism to dominance, elaborates the current contradictions and crises engulfing the world's capitalist countries and the entire global capitalist system, and illustrates prospects for revival of anti-imperialist struggle and socialism.

Joma's main weaknesses lay in soft-peddalling and establishing relations with revisionist parties like in erstwhile USSR and Eastern Europe in the 1980's, to build the United Front.

He hailed countries like Cuba and Vietnam as Socialist erroneously and

took an eclectic position upholding Hugo Chavez of Venezuela.

He failed to diagnose the left sectarian line practised by the CPI (Maoist) in India.

Sison upheld nationality struggles in India in Punjab, Kashmir and Assam in 1996 without a concrete understanding of the Indian realities.

Joma failed to adopt a firm stand against Lin Biaoism, and failed to recognise contribution of Zhou En Lai. His recognition of China going revisionist under Deng was much delayed in 1989.

He hardly investigated deeply into the reversals in actually existing Socialist Societies in East Europe.

Joma made no diagnosis of changes in methods of people's war in accordance with the changed times of globalisation.

He didn't make any constructive self-criticism of the stagnation in the armed movement in Philippines and even overestimated prospects of victory of revolution.

Sison also did not redress the aspect of why the International Communist Movement received such a jolt and the proletariat was so alienated.

He also made a kind of balanced assessment of M K Gandhi, treating him as a Tolstoy type social reformer, but still an opponent of revolution. □□

## CPJ REPORT

# Journalists Behind Bars

**Arlene Getz**

*[The number of journalists jailed around the world set yet another record in 2022. In a year marked by conflict and repression, authoritarian leaders doubled down on their criminalisation of independent reporting, deploying increasing cruelty to stifle dissenting voices and undermine press freedom. Following is an abridged version of the prison census report released by the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ). Arlene Getz is CPJ's editorial director.]*

**I**T'S BEEN ANOTHER RECORD-breaking year for the number of journalists jailed for practising their profession. The Committee to Protect Journalists' annual prison census has found that 363 reporters

were deprived of their freedom as of December 1, 2022—a new global high that overtakes last year's record by 20% and marks another grim milestone in a deteriorating media landscape.

This year's top five jailers of journalists are Iran, China, Myanmar, Turkey, and Belarus, respectively. A key driver behind authoritarian governments' increasingly oppressive efforts to stifle the media: trying to keep the lid on broiling discontent in a world disrupted by COVID-19 and the economic fallout from Russia's war on Ukraine.

In Iran, dozens of journalists are among the estimated 14,000 Iranians arrested during the crackdown on protests sparked by the death in police custody of Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old Kurdish woman arrested

for allegedly breaking Iran's hijab law. Since September, the demonstrations have spread nationwide, with protesters broadening demands for women's rights to calls for strikes and the overthrowing of Iran's leaders. Authorities have imprisoned a record number of female journalists—22 out of the 49 arrested since the start of the protests are women—a reflection of the prominent role they've played in covering this women-led uprising.

Iran's crackdown on nationwide protests has made it the world's worst jailer of journalists in 2022. Many are being held in Tehran's Evin prison. (Majid Asgaripour/WANA [West Asia News Agency via Reuters])

In China, authorities tightened online censorship during recent protests over the government's zero-COVID lockdown policies and several journalists are reported to have been briefly detained while covering the demonstrations.

CPJ's data also highlighted another theme: the ongoing repression of minorities.

In Iran, Kurds have borne the

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brunt of the Iranian government's retaliation against the protests, and at least nine Kurdish journalists are among those in jail. In Turkey, authorities arrested 25 Kurdish journalists working either for the Mezopotamya News Agency, the all-female JINNEWS outlet, or production companies that made content used by Kurdish outlets in Europe. In Iraq, all three journalists on this year's census are jailed in Iraqi Kurdistan. And in China, many imprisoned journalists are ethnic Uighurs from Xinjiang, where Beijing has been accused of crimes against humanity for its mass detentions and harsh repression of the region's mostly Muslim ethnic groups.

Imprisoning journalists is just one measure of how authoritarian leaders try to strangle press freedom. Around the world, governments are also honing tactics like "fake news" laws, are using criminal defamation and vaguely worded legislation to criminalise journalism, are ignoring the rule of law and abusing the judicial system, and are exploiting technology to spy on reporters and their families.

In countries ranging from Russia to Nicaragua to Afghanistan, independent media outlets have been gutted as reporters flee into exile or are intimidated into self-censorship. And while suppressive strategies differ between countries, the cases documented in CPJ's census share a common thread of official cruelty and vindictiveness.

Some, like China and Saudi Arabia, have a record of keeping journalists in detention even after their sentences end. Others engage in random acts of callousness. In Vietnam, for example, journalist Pham Doan Trang serving a nine-year sentence for distributing propaganda against the state, was transferred from Hanoi to a remote prison more than 900 miles away from her

family—a common tactic to prevent regular prison visits.

In Belarus, Belsat TV correspondent Katsiaryna Andreyeva, one of dozens of journalists detained for documenting nationwide protests against President Aleksandr Lukashenko, was on the verge of completing a two-year prison term when a court sentenced her to another eight years on a charge of "giving away state secrets."

In Turkey, where the Constitutional Court ordered a retrial for Hatice Duman—already 20 years into a life sentence—the journalist told an Istanbul court this month that prison officials had confiscated her legal documents and notes several weeks ahead of the trial, thereby violating her right to prepare for her defense. (Earlier, Duman told a CPJ in an interview that personal possessions like her desk, books, diary, and even blank pieces of paper were also taken in the ward raid.)

### **WORST OFFENDERS**

#### **IRAN**

Iran's crackdown on mass protests following Amini's death left at least 62 journalists in jail as of December 1. The count would have been even higher had another 21 journalists detained after the start of the demonstrations not been released on bail ahead of the census date.

The number of women among those held is unprecedented. When Iran jailed a then-record number of journalists in the years following the disputed 2009 presidential election, peaking with 47 journalists imprisoned in 2012, just four of those reporters were female.

By contrast, 24 women are listed in this year's census; 22 were of them arrested after the protests began.

During this year's arrests, sources told CPJ of a pattern of predawn raids on reporters' homes, with police seizing their devices and sometimes beating those they took into custody.

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Often, their coverage disappears too. Many of their social media accounts—a key publishing platform in a country where most media are state-controlled—have vanished, either shut down by the government or preemptively deleted by journalists fearing retaliation for their reporting.

The 62 behind bars represent the highest number documented by CPJ for Iran in the 30 years of its census, easily surpassing the previous imprisonment record set during the aftermath of the country's disputed 2009 election.

Hong Kong's pro-democracy media entrepreneur Jimmy Lai, jailed since 2020, faces a possible life sentence under the city's national security law. (AP Photo/Kin Cheung)

#### CHINA

China's tight censorship of the media and the fear of speaking out in a country that conducts such extensive surveillance on its people make it especially difficult to research the exact number of journalists among its prison population. Against that backdrop, the slight drop in the known number of journalists jailed in the country—from a revised total of 48 in 2021 to 43 in 2022—should not be interpreted as any easing of the country's intolerance for independent reporting.

Uighur journalists continue to comprise a significant portion of those serving harsh sentences on nebulous charges. Omerjan Hasan, for example, is serving 15 years for publishing an unofficial history of the Xinjiang region. Ilham Weli, Juret Haji, Mentimin Obul, and Mirkamil Ablimit have been held since 2018 on the accusation of being two-faced—a term Chinese authorities frequently use to describe those they see as openly supporting but secretly opposing government policy. Editor Memetjan Abliz Boriyar, also detained since 2018, is accused of approving the release of books that

only later were banned by Chinese authorities. Another disturbing trend: A group of students who worked for Ilham Tohti, the jailed-for-life founder of Xinjian news website Uighurbiz, are among those believed to have completed their sentences—and then moved to so-called “reeducation camps” instead of being released.

In Hong Kong, independent media outlets have been silenced following Beijing's punitive targeting of those like pro-democracy media entrepreneur Jimmy Lai. The treatment of Lai, incarcerated since December 2020, is seen as emblematic of authorities' growing disregard for due process and the “one country, two systems” arrangement guaranteeing Hong Kong's judicial independence from China. Lai, who has U.K. citizenship, remains in a maximum-security prison even after completing a 20-month sentence on various charges. On December 10, while awaiting the start of another trial that could lead to a life sentence under a draconian national security law, he was sentenced to five years and nine months on fraud charges—even as his legal preparation for the security trial was hampered by Hong Kong authorities' pushback against the November ruling by the city's top court that he could be represented by a British lawyer.

#### MYANMAR

Myanmar catapulted into CPJ's census rankings as the world's second-worst jailer of journalists in 2021, when a February military coup ousted the country's elected government and cracked down on coverage of the new regime. According to the human rights group Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, that retaliation took a countrywide toll of more than 2,500 dead and more than 16,000 detained on political charges.

The number of Myanmar journalists known to be jailed on De-

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cember 1 rose to at least 42—up from a revised 30 last year—as the regime doubled down on its efforts to mute reporters and disrupt the country's few remaining independent media outlets. Many news organizations remain reluctant to identify their detained staff and freelancers to avoid the harsher sentences often meted out to journalists.

Nearly half of those detained were sentenced in 2022, most under an anti-state provision that broadly penalizes “incitement” and “false news.” In another case in November, journalist Myo San Soe was sentenced to 15 years in prison on terrorism charges for contacting members of People's Defense Forces, an array of insurgent groups fighting the regime.

#### TURKEY

The number of journalists held in Turkey rose from 18 in 2021 to 40 in 2022 after the arrests of 25 Kurdish journalists in the second half of the year. The journalists' lawyers told CPJ all were jailed on suspicion of terrorism—a result of the country's ongoing efforts to silence those it associates with the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

And while even this year's jump in numbers has left fewer journalists

in prison than in the aftermath of a failed 2016 coup attempt, Turkey's independent media remain decimated by government shutdowns, takeovers, and the forcing of scores of journalists into exile or out of the profession.

Many now fear that the latest arrests could signal a fresh assault on press freedom ahead of next year's elections, especially given the Turkish parliament's October ratification of a controversial media law mandating prison terms for those deemed to be spreading disinformation.

Belarus journalist Katsiaryna Andreyeva, shown here inside a defendant's cage in a Minsk courtroom on February 18, 2021, was on the verge of completing a two-year prison term when a court sentenced her to another eight years on a charge of 'giving away state secrets'.

### **BELARUS**

Belarus held 26 journalists in custody on December 1—up from 19 last year. Almost half are yet to be sentenced; two are serving terms of 10 or more years. All known charges are either retaliatory or anti-state, such as treason.

The arrests have taken place against the backdrop of Lukashenko's ongoing vindictiveness against those

covering the aftermath of his disputed 2020 election. Among those still held is Raman Pratasevich, the journalist whose arrest caused a global outcry when Belarus authorities diverted a Lithuania-bound commercial flight to the Belarus capital of Minsk to take him into custody.

### **ASIA**

Media suppression in China, Myanmar, and Vietnam make Asia the continent with the highest number of imprisoned journalists—a total of 119.

Vietnam, which holds 21, shows little tolerance for independent journalism, invoking tough sentences for those convicted of anti-state crimes. In October, it sentenced Le Manh Ha to eight years in prison, to be followed by five years of house arrest; in August it sentenced blogger Le Anh Hung to five years for “abusing democratic freedoms to infringe upon the interests of the state, organizations and individuals.”

Among other detainees are Pham Doan Trang, a winner of a CPJ International Press Freedom Award in 2022. Trang is serving a nine-year prison sentence under a law that bans making or spreading news against the state.

India, with seven journalists in jail, continues to draw criticism over

its treatment of the media, in particular its use of the Jammu and Kashmir Public Safety Act, a preventive detention law, to keep Kashmiri journalists Aasif Sultan, Fahad Shah, and Sajad Gul behind bars after they were granted court-ordered bail in separate cases.

Afghanistan, with three imprisoned journalists, appears on CPJ's census for the first time in 12 years. Hundreds of Afghan journalists fled the country after the Taliban took back control of the country in August 2021; those who stayed face sometimes violent pressure to conform to its fundamentalist ideology.

### **LATIN AMERICA**

The relatively low number of jailed journalists—two in Nicaragua, one in Cuba, and one in Guatemala—belies the continued decline of press freedom across the region. The year 2022 was especially deadly for journalists in Mexico and Haiti, and several countries passed legislation that introduced new options for criminalising speech and reporting.

In Nicaragua, attacks, arrests, and threats of imprisonment have forced almost all of the country's independent journalists either into exile or out of their jobs; a similar situation exists in Cuba.

□□□

## **LOOTING PUBLIC ASSETS**

# **Denationalisation and Constitution**

*[Following is an abridged version of a statement issued by the People's Commission on Public Sector and Services]*

**W**HEN PRIVATE BANKS were nationalised in 1969, the then government had informed the Parliament that “The money which depositors entrust to the banks are in the nature of a sacred trust”. “The operations of the banking system should be informed by a larger social purpose, and should be subject to close public regulation”, it would serve the purpose of “sever-

ing the link between the major banks and the bigger industrial groups” which had so far controlled credit, “the interests of the depositors of the banks which have been nationalised, will not only continue to be fully safeguarded but will now have the backing of the State itself”.

Those considerations have since become far more relevant, in view of the large sections of the disad-

vantaged households not being able to access affordable credit facilities even today, and in view of the fact that income inequalities and concentration of wealth have since increased, not decreased.

Due to a lack of access to credit, people use loan apps which use dubious methods and exorbitant interest rates, which have led to suicides.

As expected at the time of nationalisation, the PSU banks continue to play a vital role in promoting the welfare function of the State, as visualised in the Constitution.

From the point of view of the legal



implications, one should remember that the PSU banks are entities set up under Article 19(6) (ii). Coming within the ambit of Article 12, they are deemed to be an arm of the State. As such, they are an instrument of the State in promoting the welfare role spelt out in the Directive Principles, especially Article 38(1) ["promote the welfare of the people"], Article 38(2) ["minimise the inequalities in income"], Article 39(b) ["the ownership and control of the material resources of the community are so distributed as best to subserve the common good"], Article 39(c) ["that the operation of the economic system does not result in the concentration of wealth and means of production to the common detriment;"]. In addition, they are also subject to the provision relating to reservations for the SCs/STs/OBCs under Article 16.

If anything the move to privatise public sector banks would run counter to this constitutional obligation, and even amount to renegeing on it.

The PSU banks employ around 8.26 lakhs of personnel including those belonging to the SCs/STs/OBCs/EWSs and implement reservation policy strictly. A significant portion of them occupies managerial positions in those banks. Reservations in employment need to be viewed, not merely from the point of view of the creation of employment opportunities alone but, more importantly, from the larger socio-economic benefit of empowering and uplifting them. Privatisation of even a single PSU bank would not only create uncertainty regarding the conditions of service of the existing SC/ST/OBC employees (as also similar uncertainty in the future of all other employees) but also permanently close the Constitution-given opportunity for new recruitments to that extent.

Households, especially from the low and middle-income groups, deposit their savings in the PSU banks, on the assumption that those banks

are a part of the State and, therefore, their deposits would enjoy sovereign backing. In fact, as already indicated, that was the solemn assurance given to the Parliament by the government in 1969 when it nationalised the private banks. A unilateral decision on the part of the government now to privatise a PSU bank, without the consent of the depositors, would therefore constitute a breach of the trust reposed by the depositors in the bank and in the sovereign government backing it. Such a step may not be legally sustainable.

It is worth recalling the way the private promoters of the much-touted Global Trust Bank had let down the bank's unfortunate depositors, and the RBI and the Ministry had to direct a PSU bank in 2004 to rescue whatever had been left of that errant private bank. The recent Yes Bank fiasco is another example where a PSU bank had to save a failing, mismanaged private bank.

When private banks were nationalised, the then government had consciously stated in the Parliament, as indicated above, that the purpose of bank nationalisation was to "sever the link" between the banks and the industrial groups to whom they give credit. Privatising a PSU bank would amount to restoring such an egregious link, which involves a clear conflict of interest. The way the government has so far gone about privatising the CPSEs points to the absence of any due diligence.

Several corporate business houses stand heavily indebted to the PSU banks. Many of them have been classified as NPAs, largely the outcome of outright fraud committed on the PSU banks, and the ongoing statutory resolution process has imposed heavy liabilities on them. Even now, the names of defaulters whose huge loans have been written off are not made public.

As per GOI presentation the

operating profit of 12 PSU banks, excluding IDBI and Regional Rural Banks in March 2022 is Rs.2,08,591 crore and net profit is Rs.66,541 crore which doubled in a year. Huge dividends and taxes are paid by these banks to the government.

Their market share in deposits is 62% and in advances, it is 58%. Their NPA provisions are 0.9% at par with private banks despite the PSU banks also discharging several welfare functions enjoined upon them by the Directive Principles. What is needed is an increase in the number of branches and staff along with an improvement in the credit deposit ratio.

LIC has invested 51% share in IDBI at the cost of Rs 61 per share and has turned around the failing bank. Laws should be amended if needed to allow LIC to own the bank permanently, as banks have been allowed to run insurance companies. The government cannot discriminate. Selling IDBI Bank to foreign investors through road shows is against the declared policy of self-reliance.

Government should also learn lessons from the disaster it has created through the 3.5% IPO of LIC.

The People's Commission on public sector and public services also appeals to the political parties, Members of Parliament of all political parties, trade unions and civil society to take up the issue in the interest of the people. □□□

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## LETTERS

**Swamy's Maoist Links**

A new report by Massachusetts-based digital forensics firm, Arsenal Consulting, said that "Swamy was the target of an extensive malware campaign for nearly five years, the longest known for any defendant and right up until his device was seized by police in June 2019," the Washington Post reported.

"During that period, the hacker gained full access and had complete control over his computer, dropping dozens of files into a hidden folder without his knowledge," the Post said, citing the Arsenal report.

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) had arrested him on October 8, 2020. He was the 16th person to be arrested in connection with the case and charged since June 2018.

According to the report, these documents, including the so-called 'letters to Maoists', are cited by the police as evidence against Swamy and others.

The NIA didn't respond to the newspaper's request for comments.

The new findings were released after Arsenal examined an electronic copy of Swamy's computer, at the request of his lawyers, it added.

Arsenal's report said Swamy's laptop was infected beginning in October 2014 with Net Wire; a malware focused on password stealing and keylogging, and also includes remote control capabilities.

The hacker copied more than 24,000 files and folders from Swamy's computer onto his own server, the report said.

In December last year, Arsenal Consulting had confirmed that Wilson was a victim of both surveillance and incriminating document delivery for close to a year before his arrest on June 6, 2018.

In June, tech magazine Wired had claimed, citing researchers from Sentinel One, an American cyber

security firm, that the hacking of e-mail accounts of activists Wilson, Varavara Rao and Delhi University professor Hany Babu were linked to the Pune police.

**The Wire Staff, The Wire Release Saibaba**

Activists associated with the 'Campaign against State Repression' wondered why the acquittal granted to the accused in the case by the Bombay high court was overturned within 24 hours.

Over 30 rights organisations came together under the banner 'Campaign against State Repression' (CASR) in Delhi on Monday, December 5, to demand unconditional bail for professor G N Saibaba and others, who have been in jail for years for their alleged links with the outlawed Maoists.

The acquittal of Saibaba and four others in the Maoists-links case by the Nagpur bench of the Bombay high court was overturned by the Supreme Court within 24 hours, on October 15. A division bench of justices M R Shah and Bela M Trivedi at the apex court, which heard a special plea by the Union government against the acquittal orders, overturned the earlier verdict, delivered on October 14.

Speaking at the joint press conference organised by rights bodies on Monday, December 5, Saibaba's partner, Vasantha Kumari, recounted what she had gone through on October 14-15, and how their joy after the acquittal was short-lived.

Vasantha said that it must dawn on the authorities concerned to release Saibaba immediately since his health is rapidly deteriorating. "I met Sai after the stay on his acquittal. He is suffering, from spasms and cramps and breathlessness. He has been put in the Anda cell. The cell is not covered from the top, as it is a torture cell from the time of British rule in

India. The British put those who fought for freedom in that cell. Sai is battling life and death. He wrote a letter two days ago saying that he is having a lot of problems. However, no doctor is speaking openly. He is in unbearable pain. Despite his medical condition, his bail plea has been rejected. This is extremely unfortunate when rapists and murderers are out freely."

Alongside Saibaba in the case, the police also arrested Jawaharlal Nehru University student Hem Mishra, two tribal youths Vijay Tirki and Pandu Narote, journalist Prashant Rahi and Mahesh Tirki in the case. Narote (33), convicted under UAPA charges alongside Saibaba, died in police custody in August this year.

**Sumedha Pal**

**K P Sasi**

Today (25 December 2022) came to know about the sad demise of my dear and close friend K P Sasi. I came across this creative brilliant person when I was working for my book, 'Communalism: Illustrated Primer'. I had long chats with him on the issue of communalism. He himself was very concerned about this issue and readily agreed to draw for the book. And what a remarkable work! His cartoon, 'skeletons talking to each other and asking their religions' will never be forgotten. On another instance his cartoon on beauty pageant, with one of the contestant being Miss Poverty will leave its imprint on the type of work which he did in such a committed, dedicated and compassionate manner. And there are number of them which need to be re-circulated.

His film making is another great contribution. His brief film America, should be a must watch for all those who are concerned about the damage Imperialism has inflicted on the world.

Further I also worked with him closely in National Solidarity Forum

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for over one and half decade. He doggedly pursued the Kandhamal issue for last many years and kept us on toes to keep fighting for Human rights of victims of the violence.

Have not seen his other films but whatever little I have seen; his films, cartoons and writings are outstanding. His work will be an inspiration for us all to pursue the struggle for Human rights with deep understanding and commitment.

It is an irreparable loss for all of us working for democratic rights and trying to preserve humane values in society.

I am grieved personally.

**Ram Puniyani**

### **Dalit Atrocities Cases in UP**

Out of the 28 states and 8 Union Territories only 5 states and 5 UT's have not recorded a single case of Dalit atrocities registered in the year 2021.

In reply to a starrer question by Rajya Sabha MP and Congress minority affairs chairman Imran Pratapgarhi on the number of incidents of atrocities and attacks on Dalits in the country during the last four years and the number of FIR cases filed and ended in conviction during the last four years, the ministry of Home Affairs on Wednesday presented the data of the same.

"Police" and Public Order" are State subjects under the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution of India. The responsibilities to maintain law and order, protection of life and property of the citizens including investigation and prosecution of crime against citizens rest with the respective State Governments." The reply read.

It further said, "The State Governments are competent to deal with such offences under the extant provisions of laws. The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) compiles and publishes statistical data on crimes in its publication of Crime in India".

BJP ruled Uttar Pradesh recorded

the highest number of Dalit atrocities in the year 2021 (13146). The Yogi Adityanath ruled state recorded 11924 in the year 2018, 11829 in 2019 and 12714 in 2020.

**HW News**

### **Vedanta Sterlite**

Advertisements of the murderous Vedanta Sterlite Corporation have been appearing for the past few days in newspapers and television.

"Strike is towards Destruction, Scholarships awarded to Tuticorin children, Green Tuticorin-1.25 lakh trees planted" are advertised.

Sterlite Vedanta Corporation has been involved in various crimes like operating without permission, direct burial of hazardous waste in the soil and not creating a green belt for many years. This was revealed during the hearing of the case against the Sterlite plant by the Madras High Court.

Sterlite company and Tamil Nadu police jointly fired and severely suppressed the people in Tuticorin who protested against Sterlite issue.

Close to five years after the firing, anti-people campaign in support of the Sterlite plant has been continuing till now, justifying the firing and insisting on reopening the Sterlite plant.

But till now, the Tuticorin District Police has banned anyone from speaking against the Sterlite plant. The Tuticorin police had also told them that not to talk about Aruna Jagadeesan's statement in the recent protest held by the Indian Democratic Youth Association. Thus, the police have made it a condition that no one should speak against Sterlite during the demonstrations and protests in Tuticorin.

But in Tuticorin, continuous campaigns are going on in favour of Sterlite. The police never stopped it. Instead the police encouraged them.

In this situation, "we will act according to the final report of the CBI investigation", says Tuticorin District Collector. In the CBI's chargesheet, it has been recorded that the martyrs

who fought were erroneous. The people of Tuticorin tore up the CBI's chargesheet demanding that the CBI's investigation should be discarded.

On behalf of United Anti-Sterlite People's Federation, a special law should be enacted to remove Sterlite permanently, the murderers should be arrested and criminal action should be taken against them. It is in this situation that the people are constantly fighting to take criminal action, and advertisements are being given by Sterlite in the media.

The People's Power strongly condemns the anti-people media for publishing advertisements of Vedanta Sterlite Corporate Company, which has been doing injustice to the people and the land of Tuticorin.

Also, a protest insisting that a special law should be passed to remove Sterlite permanently, and the murderers of the shooting should be arrested and prosecuted is to be held on December 12. In order to disrupt this, a person claiming to be Vijayakumar from People's Power spoke inappropriately to Prof Fatima Babu. In that conversation, he falsely claimed that People's Power was working with the Maoist organisation.

Sterlite Vedanta itself has planned and organised such a person to disrupt the people's protest.

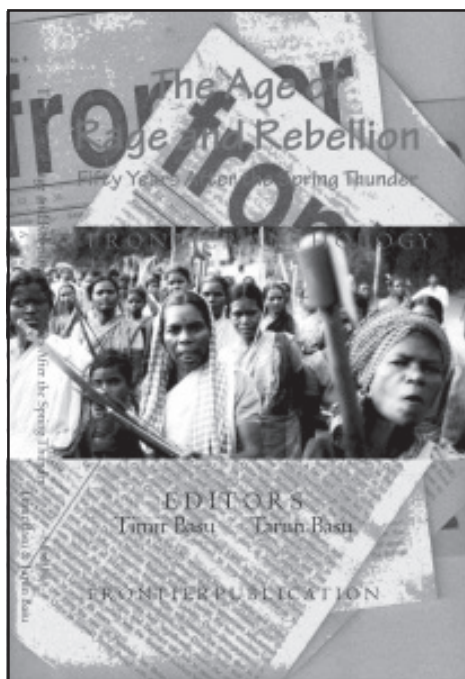
A few years ago Sterlite stooges published a fake press report criticising Fatima Babu in the name of People's Power. No action has been taken so far on the complaint filed against this by the police.

All the above incidents are an attempt to disrupt the people's protests and re-establish the Sterlite plant. It is a well-known fact that the government and Tamilnadu police are helping this effort of Vedanta Sterlite Corporation. People's power strongly condemns this.

**Vetrivel Chezhan,  
State Secretary, People's Power**

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