

LETTERS

Professor Harbhajan

Professor Harbhajan Singh Sohi, Central Committee member of Communist Party Reorganizing Centre of India (CPRCI)-ML is no more. He passed away on 15 June unnoticed without having even normal medical help at Bathinda. He was cremated on 16th June morning in the presence of his family, friends and several social activists. He had returned a day before after attending some party work outside Punjab.

Professor Sohi was born on 18th March 1942. His ancestral village was Bhari in Sangrur district of Punjab. During his student days in Bathinda, he got involved in leftist movement. After doing his MA in English literature from Punjabi University, Patiala, he taught for a few months at Rajindra Government College, Bathinda, which gave him the life long tag of 'Professor'. He remained known as Prof Harbhajan for a long time, then added Sohi to differentiate from another Naxal activist of the same title and name. He became active in CPM and worked for a few months in CPM daily paper 'Lok Lehar', published from Jalandhar then. During 1967 Naxalbari revolt, he was one among those, who came out of CPM. For a while, they became part of All India Coordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries of India (AICCCRI), set up by Charu Majumdar, later converted into Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist). The mass base group of popular communist leader of Andhra Pradesh, T Nagi Reddy was either kept out or did not join it. The Group led by Harbhajan Sohi also came out of CPI (ML) opposing its individual annihilation line while supporting mass line of T Nagi Reddy. Later they formed Bathinda-Ferozepur committee of Communist Revolutionaries, which worked in close coordination with Nagi Reddy group of Andhra Pradesh, leading to the formation of Unity Centre of Communist Revolutionaries of India (UCCRI-Marxist-Leninist) in 1975, led by D V Rao. UCCRI focused on building mass organization of students, workers, peasants, youth and women. In Punjab, Punjab Students Union led by popular leader Pirthipal Singh Randhawa became quite strong. Peasant organization-Wahikar Union and workers organization-Moulder&Steel Workers Union in Ludhiana also took roots. But UCCRI (ML) split in 1988, on the issue of post-Mao Chinese developments. It led to the formation of Committee for Communist Revolutionaries and further leading to formation of Communist Party Reorganizing Centre of India (CPRCI-ML). But the group never attained the same popular standing among masses after this split, and the decline set in mass line follower groups of ML as well. Prof Harbhajan Sohi remained a close follower of T Nagi Reddy and one of the important theoreticians and leader of this group. In early seventies, he wrote a booklet on Bhagat Singh in the party name of Baldev, in which he analyzed the revolutionary legacy of Bhagat Singh.

Indian middle class is getting more and more fascist in its moorings. In such a situation, after losing Baba Bhagat Singh Bilga, Vimla Dang in quick succession, the loss of Harbhajan Sohi in relatively early age is even more sad and damaging for the democratic movement of Punjab. Yet the life must be celebrated and the struggle to change it for the better must continue, that would be the best tribute to Prof Harbhajan Singh Sohi.

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Torture and Truth

On or by May 28, the Obama administration was forced to release 2000 photos of detainee abuse in US facilities from 2001-2006. The Abu Ghraib photos, released in 2004 only because a soldier was horrified over the torture, brought an international storm of protest against the US torture state. The new photos, including many from Bagram, where the detention facilities have just been doubled to hold 60,000

Afghanis showed that US torture was widespread, sustained, and systemic, not an “aberration,” but an integral part of the “global war on terror.”

Weeks after 4 more torture memos revealed the detail with which George Bush’s lawyers managed the torture of individual detainees, calls to prosecute those responsible—from the White House principals, to the legal torture team, to the CIA agents who tortured—have met objections from Washington. Cheney and the open advocates of torture scream that they must be able to use “harsh methods” to win the global war on terror. The Obama administration, after deciding to continue indefinite detention, CIA rendition, and Bush’s executive powers, says prosecution would stop them from “moving forward.” Torture is a war crime!

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