

The Genocidal Pogrom in Gujarat: Anatomy of Indian Fascism

The Fascism of the Sangh Parivar

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(This article was written in early 1993, in the aftermath of the Demolition of Babri Masjid at ayodhya on December 6, 1992. *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 28, No. 5 (Jan. 30, 1993), pp. 163-167. Today, as we near the turn of the century and the millenium, its observations and conclusions remain as fresh and relevant, and have acquired more urgency than ever. We are grateful to the aurthor for permitting us to put it here.)

Fascism in contemporary Indian as distinct from the European historical context had appeared till the other day a mere epithet, worn out by overmuch, indiscriminate use, signifying little more than particular blatant acts of authoritarian repression or reactionary violence. With the 6th of December and its aftermath, elements frighteningly evocative of its totality of horror stalk our streets, obtain connivance and implicit sustenance from within the highest corridors of power, emerge from everyday conversations with relatives, colleagues, friends of yesterday. Not that exact parallels can be found, in most part India 1992-93 remains very different from the Germany of 60 years back. Yet a closer look at the pattern of affinities and differences may help to highlight certain crucial features - most notably, the ways in which the implications of the current all-out offensive of the Sangh Parivar go far beyond even the obvious and terrifying fact that the subcontinent has just witnessed the most widespread round of communal violence since the Partition years. The drive for Hindu Rashtra has put in jeopardy the entire secular and democratic foundations of our republic. An old warning of Nehru sounds particularly appropriate today. Muslim communalism is in its nature as bad as Hindu communalism, and may even be stronger among Muslims than its counterpart within the majority community. "But Muslim communalism cannot dominate Indian society and introduce fascism. That only Hindu communalism can" (quoted in *Frontline*, January 1, 1993). Probing the fascist analogy, then,

many contribute towards a greater understanding of the dangers that confront us today. Just occasionally, it may provide us also with what is most needed, and is in woefully short supply: resources of hope.

Fascism had come to power in Italy and Germany through a combination of street violence (carefully orchestrated from above but still undeniable with great mass support), deep infiltration into the police, bureaucracy and army, and the connivance of 'centrist' political leaders. Crude violations of laws and constitutional norms and consequently had alternated in Fascist and Nazi behaviours with loud protestations of respect for legality. It is not always remembered, for instance, that Hitler had become chancellor on January 30, 1933 in an entirely constitutional manner, as leader of the largest party in the Reichstag, at the invitation of President Hindenburg. He repeatedly asserted his party's respect for legality throughout the next month - but meanwhile Goering Nazified the Berlin police, organised street encounters in which more than 50 anti-fascists were murdered, and set the scene for the notorious Reichstag fire, after which first the communists, and then all opposition political panics and trade unions were quickly destroyed.

There is much, surely that is ominously reminiscent here. A mosque is systematically reduced to rubble over five long hours, in total violation of a direct Supreme Court order and repeated assurances given by the leading opposition party and its allies, and the central government does not lift its little finger. Countrywide riots follow; marked by blatant police partiality, with the guardians of the law not unoften turning rioters themselves. And then come strange political and judicial manoeuvres that in effect have allowed the land-grabbing vandals to build a temporary 'temple' complete with darshan, where curfew exists for Muslim and not for Hindus, and which suddenly is not a 'disputed structure' unlike the 462-year-old monument it has displaced, but something worthy of protection. Meanwhile the BJP alternates between an occasional apology and much more frequent aggressive justification, and VHP leaders add the Delhi Jumma Masjid to Varanasi and Mathura, and openly denounce the Indian Constitution as anti-Hindu.

Expanding Target Area

It is this wider dimension, in which the obvious, classically communal Muslim target area steadily expands, and efforts intensify to terrorise wider and wider circles of potential dissent that perhaps requires a little additional emphasis. The Hitler analogy is once again, appropriate: Jew and communist had quickly expanded to cover social-democrats, liberals, Catholics, everyone who dared to think with any independence - even, by June 1934, a number of Nazis, massacred in the 'night of the long knives'. The BJP turn towards open terror had begun with two incidents in Madhya Pradesh unconnected with the Ram Janmabhoomi movement -the murder of Shankar Guha Niyogi, labour leader of unusual initiative and originality, in autumn 1991, and the public humiliation recently of B D Sharma, distinguished progressive retired civil servant. (The Shiv Sena of Maharashtra had shown the way even earlier, of course, smashing through street terror the once formidable Red Flat Unions of Bombay in the 1970s). The beating-up of journalists on December 6 is thus not an aberration, but part of a broader emerging pattern. The forces of Hindutva have assiduously cultivated the press, with great success till recently, but fascists always like to combine persuasion with the occasional big stick.

Certain like-reported developments in Delhi acquire relevance here, indicating once again the typical combination of street violence with administrative collusion even in a city where the December riots were relatively localised and minor(1), right next to a central government which is said to have banned the RSS, the VHP, and the Bajrang Dal. Peace activists trying to do things as innocuous as singing songs, distributing leaflets calling for harmony: and staging street plays have been repeatedly attacked: the police come a little later, ignore the RSS-Bajrang Dal elements supposedly under a ban, but arrest and harass anti-communal groups. Even a peace march led by men as distinguished as P N Haksar and Habib Tanvir was obstructed by the police, while a Delhi University student in an anti-communal group whose name begins with Ram was slapped by a Policeman who had arrested him: a man with such a name, he was told, should not be doing such things.

The Bajrang Dal thugs often openly declare that anyone who criticises the destruction of Babri

Masjid will have to go to Pakistan, while in the selectively curfew-bound Muslim Pockets of Seelampur in east Delhi, the police had rounded up all Muslim men in some areas, beaten them up unless they agreed to say Jai Shri Ram, and even pulled out the beard of a Muslim gentleman.

Myths As Common Sense

What is making all this possible is evidently a wide, though very far from universal, degree of consent, where large numbers may keep away from communal riots, maybe, even sincerely condemn them, and yet be participants in a kind of communal consensus in which a whole series of assumptions and myths have turned into common sense. Far from being a spontaneous or 'natural' product of popular will expressing a legitimate 'Hindu hurt', however, as the organised forces of Hindutva sedulously propagate, this consent is something constructed and carefully nurtured, a product of more than 60 years of strenuous and patient effort. The RSS, founded way back in 1925, and spawning from 1950s a whole series of affiliates manned at crucial levels by its cadres (among which the Jan Sangh/BJP and the VHP have been the most important), concentrated for many years on unostentatious, slow, 'cultural' work. Shakhnas combined physical training of young men with indoctrination through baoddhik sessions, a chain of schools was built up, ideas were disseminated through personal contact and conversation, and even a very popular Hindu comic series was brought out (the Amar Chitra Katha extolling Hindu mythical or historical figures). It was for long, almost, a Gramscian process of building up hegemony through molecular permeation. Then, in the early and middle 1980s, came the efforts of Indira and Rajiv to play the 'Hindu card', communalising the state apparatus on an unprecedented scale through the anti-Sikh pogrom of 1984 and the subsequent cover-up of the guilty, and further eroding the rule of law through rampant corruption. All this directly prepared the ground for the Ram Janmabhoomi blitzkrieg of the Sangh Parivar, now spearheaded by the VHP. It must not be forgotten that it was the Congress government that updated the Ramayana epic into a pseudo-nationalist TV serial, and allowed access in 1986 to the idols installed inside the Babri Masjid by stealth and administrative collusion in December 1949, under an earlier Congress regime. The Sangh Parivar's war of position now gave place to a spectacular war of movement, pressing into service the latest in advertising and audio-visual techniques on a scale and with resources never before seen on the subcontinent. Hitler, by the way, had also been a bit of a pioneer in these

matters, fully realising the importance of spoken propaganda through the then relatively new techniques of the loudspeaker and the radio.(2)

Unlike Fascism, then, which came to power in Italy and Germany within a decade or less of its emergence as a political movement, Hindutva has had a long gestation period. This, no doubt, has given it added strength and stability, time to get internalised into common sense. But there is an element of hope here, too, for despite the tremendous effort spread across decades the conquest of hearts and minds remains far from complete. It needs to be recalled that around four out of five Indians voted against the BJP even in 1991 (its all-India percentage was 21.9) - and if that had been a vote about Ram, the UP victory was at best some kind of a mandate for a Ram temple, not for the destruction of the Masjid. The real base of the Sangh Parivar remains the predominantly upper-caste trader-professional petite bourgeoisie of the cities and small towns in the Hindi heartland, with developing connections perhaps with upwardly-mobile landholding groups in the countryside. Extensions beyond this remain unstable, as the panic evoked by Mandal and the Bihar example seem to indicate - and the whole bloated structure of today's Hindutva requires for sustenance constant excitement, a high pitch of hysteria, the stimulus of communal violence. Hence perhaps the gamble of sacrificing the BJP ministries, which could have got discredited and shown up as little different, if not worse, from Congress regimes by any long period of normal governance.

An early perceptive analysis of Fascism had defined it as "not only an instrument at the service of big business, but at the same time a mystical upheaval of the ...petite bourgeoisie"(3). That a 'mystical upheaval' has happened around the slogan of Ram is undeniable, and its lavish orchestration indicates an evident abundance of funds. But the specific linkages of Fascism with capitalist interests have remained a controversial issue even for Europe, and most historians have found it necessary to make distinctions between various kinds of capital as well as across countries. Relatively underdeveloped Italy, for instance, differed quite fundamentally from highly industrialised Germany. Controversies exist also as to whether capitalist interests were linked to Fascism by positive intention, as the term 'instrument' suggests, or more through accommodation to circumstances."(4) The Indian situation is significantly different above all because of the absence of any major threat to propertied interests from organised labour or

apparently impending socialist revolution. The scale and nature of the economic crisis is also not quite comparable. In post-Depression Germany, Nazism arguably could have appeared to many business groups "as the last available means of preserving the capitalist system" (5), while Fascism in Italy had had a developmental, if anti-popular, 'passive revolution' aspect that Gramsci realistically recognised even from within a Fascist prison. Neither feature is particularly noticeable so far in India, where Narasimha Rao has been carrying through wide-ranging changes in economic policy with a degree of determination and skill conspicuously absent in his handling of Ayodhya. The Jan Sangh and the BJP have been advocating such a repudiation of the Nehruvian legacy of self-reliance and planning for many years, but the forces of Hindutva, in whose propaganda and activity matters economic so far have occupied only a minor place, can claim little 'credit' for actually bringing about the shift. The Indian business groups that support Manmohan Singh's New Economic Policy (not necessarily the entire class) might still prefer a tougher anti-labour line under a Hindu Right regime no longer dependent even marginally on Left votes in parliament. Conversely, however, if the fascistic thrust of Hindutva, even now, encounters determined resistance, the traditional centrist option might appear more reliable and attractive for bourgeoisie groups, precisely because there is much less 'need' for Fascism in the interests of capitalist survival and profit than in inter-War Italy and Germany.

Suicidal Wobbling

It is in this context that the wobbling - and worse - of the Congress, and particularly of the Prime Minister, before and after December 6 appears so disastrous, indeed suicidal, even from the point of view of narrow party interests. There did exist a possibility of retrieval just after the sixth. The much-quoted Vajpayee interview was an indication that the BJP for a few days had been forced into the defensive. But Narasimha Rao, to quote a rather apt comment by a journalist, then proceeded "to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory". Sporadic, largely unimplemented, obviously halfhearted measures of repression, not backed up by any political campaign by the Congress, have by now been succeeded by what appears to be yet another attempt to compete with the BJP for the 'Hindu card'. Principles apart, elementary real politics suggests that the more determined and consistent always win that kind of game. The shift in the attitude of the major Delhi-based dailies from virtually total condemnation of the BJP just after December 6 to much

more ambiguous alignments in recent days might in this context be a straw in the wind of a most dangerous kind.

That leaders who subjectively no doubt demarcate themselves from the BJP, their principle political rival, can still stoop to such levels of opportunism indicates the degree of spread of what I have tried to argue lies at the heart of our present tragedy: a communalised common sense produced through sustained effort. Analysis-cum-critique of the varied components of this common sense is clearly vital for any effective resistance to what, with many qualifications, may still be called the Indian variety of fascism.

Fascist ideology in Europe had combined already quite widespread crudely nationalist, racist, and in Germany anti-Semitic, prejudices with fragments from much more sophisticated philosophies. That it had owed something to a general turn-of-the century move away from what were to be the sterile rigidities of Enlightenment rationalism is not a fact without some relevance today, for not similar ideas have become current intellectual coin in the west, and by extension they have started to influence Indian academic life. The ideologists of the Sangh Parivar (a Girilal Jain or a Swapan Dasgupta apart) may themselves be still largely unaware of the varied possibilities of post-modernism: that certain current academic fashions can reduce the resistance of intellectuals to the ideas of Hindutva has already become evident. The "critique of colonial discourse" inspired by Said's Orientalism, for instance, has stimulated forms of indigenism not too easy to distinguish from the standard Sangh Parivar argument, going back to Savarkar, that Hindutva is superior to Islam and Christianity (and, by extension, to creations of the modern west like science, democracy or Marxism) because of its allegedly unique indigenous roots. An uncritical cult of the 'popular' or 'subaltern', particularly when combined with the rejection of Enlightenment rationalism as irremediably tainted in all its forms by colonial power-knowledge, can lead even radical historians down strange paths (6). It is not unimportant, therefore, to recall that Giovanni Gentile had defined Fascism as a "revolt against positivism", or that Mussolini in 1933 had condemned the "movement of the 18th century visionaries and Encyclopaedists" along with "technological" conceptions of progress. Ominously relevant, too, is another peroration of the Italian dictator, in July 1934, where he called for an end to "intellectualising and of those sterile intellectuals who are a threat to the nation". Hitler at the Nuremberg Nazi Congress next year similarly exalted the "heart", the "faith" the "inner voice" of the German volk over "hair-

splitting intelligence."(7)

Enemy Image

This, however, has been a bit of an aside: far more central to Hindutva as a mass phenomenon (or for that matter to Fascism) is the development of a powerful and extendable enemy image through appropriating stray elements from past prejudices, combining them with new ones skillfully dressed up as old verities, and broadcasting the resultant compound through the most up-to-date media techniques. The Muslim here becomes the near-exact equivalent of the Jew - or the Black (more generally, immigrants felt to be inferior for one or another reason) in contemporary White racism. The Muslim in India, like the Jew in Nazi propaganda, is unduly privileged - a charge even more absurd here than it was in Germany, where the Jews had been fairly prominent in intellectual, professional and business circles. In post-Independence India, Muslims in contrast are grossly underrepresented at elite levels, however defined. The alleged privileges, in the second place, are the product of 'appeasement' of Muslims by 'pseudo-secularist', and so very quickly the communal target starts broadening itself, and Mulayam Singh Yadav, to take one example among many, becomes a 'mulla'. The stock examples of 'appeasement' in recent days have been the destruction of temples in Kashmir, allegedly never condemned by the 'pseudo-secularists', and Muslim personal law permitting polygamy. Desecration must be condemned, whether by Muslims or by Hindus, but it is a strange condemnation that sues it to justify or condone the wanton desecration of December 6. The destruction of numerous Muslim religious places in riots (at Bhagalpur, for instance) is of course never mentioned. The Kashmir temples issue, incidentally, became very prominent in conversation just after the destruction of the Babri Masjid, indicating a concerted whisper campaign as well as, possibly, an element of guilt suppressed through verbal excess. The oft-repeated argument that Muslims must repent or atone for their acts of past or present aggression has meanwhile acquired a strange flavour in the context of some current reports from Bombay. Muslims offering to rebuild destroyed temples have been spurned by Shiv Sena, and in Dharavi a group of them who were actually rebuilding one have just been stabbed (Pioneer, January 9). On the Muslim Personal Law issue, the Sangh Parivar once again takes full advantage of Rajiv Gandhi's misdeeds, when he tried to counterbalance the opening of the locks of Ayodhya by the

Muslim Women's Bill. The Muslim fundamentalist side of the appeasement (from which the only real and direct sufferers were Muslim women) is always mentioned, never the simultaneous appeasement of Hindu communalism. The real importance of the question, however, is in the light it can throw on the presuppositions, reminiscent of racism, of the Hindutva ideology. The continuation of the legal right of polygamy among Muslims is constantly linked up to assertions that Muslims consequently breed faster: "hum panch hamare pachis", as the Delhi VHP leader (currently BJP MP) B L Sharma elegantly described it in an interview he gave to a group of us in April 1991. The Report on the Status of Women in India (1975), however, had found the rate of polygamy actually higher among Hindus than Muslims (5.06 per cent as against 4.31 per cent). The Muslims, then, become dangerous simply by going through the basic biological processes of birth, procreation - and even death, for we were told during an investigation of the 1991 Nizamuddin riots in New Delhi that a dead Muslim always grabs a bit of land by burial, unlike the self-effacing cremated Hindu. Racist attitudes, finally, are neatly encapsulated in the very recent coinage of the formula ' Babar Ki Aulad'. Alleged descent from Babar is sufficient to damn, no overt misdeed is really required...just as once in fanatical Christian circles all Jews stood condemned because of what their ancestors had supposedly done at the time of the crucifixion of Christ.

Such is Hindutva ideology at its crudest, engaged in the direct justification of communal violence. The slightly 'softer' or more insidious levels should also be considered, for these can indicate almost as clearly the fascistic implications of Hindu Rashtra. Fascism has often tried to appropriate elements, or at least terms, from ideals considered laudable and progressive in the society it sought to conquer: thus the Nazis claimed to be not only nationalist- in post-Versailles Germany, but also, keeping in mind the very strong working class political presence in the Weimar Republic, 'socialist' and representative of 'labour'. The Sangh Parivar, similarly, tries to establish its claim to be truly and uniquely 'national' by a 'democratic' argument: Hindu interests should prevail always in India, and maybe, it should at some stage be declared a Hindu Rashtra, for Hindus after all are the majority, by Census reckoning 85 per cent of the population. But democracy logically must connote two other features in addition to rule of majority: protection of rights of minority ways of life and opinions, and, even more crucially, the legal possibility that the political minority of today can win electoral majority in the future and thus peacefully change the government. Otherwise it becomes difficult to deny the status of democracy to the one-party

regimes of Hitler, Mussolini (or Stalin), for all of them did go in for occasional elections of a single-list, plebiscitary type, and won majorities which may not have been entirely rigged. Democratic theory, in other words, stands in total contradiction of any notion of permanent majorities-but such, by Sangh Parivar definition, would be the position of the party that claims to speak uniquely for all Hindus; the BJP. Inherent in that claim is a second assertion, equally reminiscent of Fascism: only s/he is a true Hindu who accepts the leadership of RSS-BJP-VHP combine. Any dissent runs the risk of being branded as pseudo-secular appeasement. So had Hitler and the Nazis arrogated to themselves the right to speak for all 'pure' Germans, along with the power to decide who are racially pure.

What the triumph of Hindutva, 'hard' or 'soft', implies for Muslims and other minority groups is already obvious enough: a second-class citizenship at best, constant fear of riots amounting to genocide, a consequent strengthening of the most conservative and fundamentalist groups within such communities. The near-coincidence in time between the destruction of the Babri Masjid and the barbarous assault of Professor Mushirul Hasan does not appear accidental-and the police, interestingly, were strangely absent or inactive in both cases. The fallout of December 6 has already strengthened Muslim fundamentalist forces in Pakistan and Bangladesh. The Muslims in India, it needs to be added, are not an insignificant minority, but 120 million-the biggest in the world next to Indonesia. The sheer size and diversity of the Indian people make secularism, democracy and the preservation of national unity more closely inter-dependent than perhaps anywhere else in the world. The permanent and total alienation the BJP seems working for can lead to a Lebanon or Yugoslavia on vastly enhanced scale. The Sangh Parivar certainly has peculiar ways of living up to its much-touted claim to be more 'national;' than anyone else.

Scope For Common Action

One major distinction between the Hindutva of today and European Fascism, particularly the Nazi variety lies in a very different relationship with established religious traditions. Nazis sought to ground identity on race, not religion, and called on youth to build a new civilisation, which could at times sound openly anti-Christian. The Sangh Parivar, by very definition, has to preach total adherence and deference towards Hindu traditions even while fundamentally transforming them. That this has been a source of tremendous strength hardly needs to be stated;

just possibly, it could also be transformed into a weakness given effective counter-strategies. For Hindutva is really homogenising and changing Hindu beliefs and practices on a truly colossal scale. The statement of a VHP leader, exulting over the destruction of Muslim houses near what had been the Babri Masjid, epitomises this transformation: this was necessary, he said, to make of that area a Vatican. But the vast and enormously variegated Hindu world has never had what the VHP is trying to make out of Ram and Ayodhya - a single supreme deity and pilgrimage centre, steam-rolling out of existence differences of region, sect, caste, gender, class. Even more basic is the effort to transform what millions of Hindus sincerely believe - with what degree of historical accuracy does not matter very much in this context - to be a supremely tolerant and Catholic religion into a terrifying instrument of vandalism, murder, and usurpation of political power. The traditions of catholicity in our country are deep and themselves extremely diverse. They range from syncretic, at time radically iconoclastic Bhakti-Sufi 'sants' and 'pirs', for some of whom, in the words of a Baul song, the path seemed blocked by mandir and masjid, purohit and mulla - to the conservative, yet profoundly Catholic, Ramakrishna, in whose vision Hindu, Muslim and Christian differed as little as jal from pani and water. And our thoughts today inevitably go back, time and again, to another dark January 45 years ago, when a man died, a devout Hindu whose last words had also evoked Ram, murdered by a youth reared in the culture of the Sangh Parivar. An ocean separates the Ram of Mahatma Gandhi, conceived of as both Iswara and Allah, from the Ram in whose name the Babri Masjid has been destroyed.

Secularism Has Many Meanings

What is necessary today is the recognition that secularism can and indeed does have many meanings, that its wide and varied spectrum can extend from the devoutly religious to the freethinker-atheist, on a common minimum ground of total rejection of communal hatred and a theocratic state. This does not mean that non-religious secularists should engage in a breast-beating exercise for having been 'alienated' from the 'mainstream' and suddenly claim to be more 'truly' Hindu or Muslim than the VHP or the Muslim fundamentalist (8). It involves, rather, an awareness that even profound differences need not rule out common action in defense of basic human values, that, as Trotsky had once said while pleading for a united front against Fascism, it is possible to "march separately, but strike together". (9)

That the Hindutva forces are afraid of such unity is indicated by their persistent efforts to brand secularism and indeed all anti-communal attitudes as necessarily somehow anti-Hindu. Simultaneously they try to conflate secularism uniquely with the policies of the 'Nehruvian' state, thus making it bear the burden of the many sins of opportunism, excessive and bureaucratic centralisation and repression of which that state has been often guilty. Here, once again, current intellectual tendencies have provided respectability to such critiques, for it is often assumed nowadays that secularism was a creation of the now much-abused Enlightenment rationalism and scepticism, brought into India in the baggage of colonial discourse, and subsequently embodied in the repressive nation-states that have emerged on the western pattern. Actually, even in Europe, the roots of secularism go back at least another 200 years, to the times of the religious wars ('communal riots', we might legitimately call them) sparked off by the Reformation. The first advocates of toleration based on separation of church from state were not rationalist freethinkers, but Anabaptists passionately devoted to their own brand of Christianity, who still believed that coercion, persecution and any kind of compulsory state religion was contrary to true faith.

In India, as in other countries with multiple religious traditions, the need and therefore the bases of co-existence are broader and deeper than the teachings of the vast majority of holy men of all creeds or the policies of many kings, among whom Akbar is only the best remembered. They have been grounded in the necessities of daily existence itself, which might occasionally produce conflict, but also tend towards the restoration of interdependence - if allowed to do so by organised communal forces, which means less and less often nowadays (10). And if communalism shatters everyday existence, it simultaneously halts and turns back all efforts to improve the condition of living through striving to reduce exploitation and want. It does so in two fundamental ways: by shattering the unity and struggle of toilers and all the subordinate groups, and fostering, within the rigid community boundaries it erects, tendencies towards ruthless homogenisation. Such homogenisation invariably helps the groups and interests occupying positions of power - in the context of Hindu communalism, most obviously, the high caste elite. It is noteworthy how every move towards implementing even the fairly limited measures towards social justice promised by the Mandal recommendations are being, met by a Hindutva offensive. The noticeable silences so far about specific socio-economic issues in the programmes and activities of Hindutva (no effort has been made to spell out the 'roti'

concomitant of Ram, and that slogan itself seems forgotten) can be made into a space for effective secular intervention - provided, however, the habit of segregating the 'economic' and 'political' from the 'cultural' or 'ideological', fairly deep-rooted in Indian Left traditions, is abandoned. Anti-communal campaigns cannot be left to seminars or middle-class cultural programmes alone, important though these are, nor can everyday economic struggles afford to skirt questions of religion, communalism and ideology in the facile hope that material issues and 'real' class identities will automatically assert themselves.

Thinking back about the Fascist era in Europe may seem a grim and depressing exercise, now that chauvinist forces are rearing their heads virtually everywhere. But the memories of the 1930s and early 40s are not just of Storm Troopers, Holocaust, concentration camps, and the now unrelated deformations that have culminated today in the shattering of the world's first socialist experiment. They include the experiences of united, and in their time victorious, anti-fascist struggle, popular fronts, a Barcelona very different from the one seen on TV last year, the heroism of Stalingrad and not just Stalinist terror. The time may have come to draw sustenance once again from the slogan of the defenders of Republican Spain: Fascism shall not pass.

Notes

1. In terms, of course, of the high standards set in Kanpur, Bhopal, Surat, Bombay and a host of other towns in a country where 213 places were under curfew at one point after December 6, affecting 97 million people. Cry The Beloved Country (People's Union for Democratic Rights, Delhi, December 1992).
2. For a more detailed account of the evolution of the Sangh Parivar, see Tapan Basu, Pradip Dutta, Sumit Sarkar, Tanika Sarkar, and Sambuddha Sen, *Khaki Shorts and Saffron Flags: The Politics of the Hindu Right* (Orient Longman, Delhi 1993).
3. Daniel Guerin, *Fascism and Big Business* (1936; New York, 1974), p. 10.
4. Guerin, *op cit.*; Alan S Milward, 'Fascism and the Economy' in Walter Laqueur (ed. *Fascism: A Reader's Guide* (1976: Penguin, 1979).
5. Milward, *op.cit*, p.414.
6. Thus Gautam Bhadra, in an interview given to a Bengali journal in early 1991, managed to find elements of laudable subaltern assertion of identity in the first kar seva movement and even

in the speeches of Sadhvi Rithambara. Dipesh Chakrabarti, another member of the Subaltern Studies editorial team, in a more recent article has argued that we need to search for creative elements in everything condemned by the "His Master's Voice" of the post-Enlightenment West. This, for him, explicitly includes Marx just as much as Macaulay (Naiya, February 1991:Baromas, October 1992).

7. Zeev Sternhell, 'Fascist Ideology' in Laqueur, op cit., p 334 (the quotation from Gentile); Guerin, op cit., pp 65, 168-69, 171.

8. They are less alienated, surely, from Indian culture or elementary human values than those young men of Surat who, in the name of Hindutva, videotaped their gang-rape of Muslim women. The tape, I have been told, is being avidly watched at evening parties in some affluent Bombay homes.

9. Leon Trotsky, 'For a Workers' United Front against Fascism' (December 1931) in *The Struggle against Fascism in Germany* (Penguin, 1975, p. 106)

10. *The Frontline* of January 15, 1993, pp 60-81, carries some moving reports of the striving of ordinary people to restore the torn fabrics of inter-community mutual dependence even after the post-December 6 riots.