

Editor's Note

This double issue of the *Marxist* (necessitated by the holding of our 23rd Party Congress in April 2022) marks the 75th anniversary of India's independence. *Marxist* volumes I to IV of 2021 had traversed some aspects of this history discussing the role of the Communists in the freedom movement, the interventions the nascent CPI had made in seeking to shape the agenda of the freedom struggle and in leading momentous struggles of various sections of our people especially the peasantry, bringing on to the agenda of the freedom struggle crucial issues that shaped the evolution and content of independent India.

This double issue of the *Marxist* focuses on two aspects. One, the cementing of the communal-corporate nexus – the venal cocktail of incendiary communal polarisation based on poisonous hate and terror with unbridled pursuit of neoliberalism leading to the loot of India's national assets and wholesale privatisation of the public sector and services. Two, the ruling party, BJP controlling the reins of state power and the Modi government are vigorously furthering the Hindutva agenda of the fascistic RSS. This seeks to replace our secular democratic Republic based on the Constitution of India with a rabidly intolerant fascistic 'Hindutva Rashtra'. Amongst the various tentacles of this effort important is the one that seeks the rewriting of India's history buttressing the communal narrative of irreconcilable differences between the religious majority and the religious minorities.

Prof. Prabhat Patnaik gives an overview of the Indian economy since independence to the current face of aggressive neoliberalism. He analyses the shift from the initial years of a dirigiste regime where the economy had high levels of protection from foreign goods and capital flows with significant state support and public sector. While noting the important achievements in the immediate post-independent decades, he analyses the contradictions of this dirigiste regime and the external and internal pressures to move towards a neoliberal regime.

This shift is also indicative of the change in the nature of the state. The dirigiste state 'while presiding over a capitalist tendency, though admittedly a controlled capitalism, appeared to be above classes looking after the interests of all, the state under neoliberalism exclusively looks after the domestic corporate – financial oligarchy.... and of globalised finance capital'. This change also entitles the change in society where the corporate financial oligarchy is ranged against the working people. The consequent growth of hunger, poverty, unemployment and other miseries under neoliberalism while GDP growth was accelerating giving rise to growing inequalities is discussed.

The emergence and rise of a Corporate - Hindu supremacist alliance will not overcome the economic crisis, but will resort to spread more hatred against the religious minorities and newer and newer ways of demonising the 'other' will be found as the only means to consolidate support. He argues that 'there has in short got to be an alternative economic agenda to neo liberalism for overcoming neo-fascism'. He concludes by outlining an alternative based on five fundamental economic rights to be provided to the people which can be financed by a two per cent wealth tax on the top one per cent of the population.

The second focus of this issue, on the rewriting of India's history in the backdrop of the 75th anniversary of Independence is discussed by professors, Sucheta Mahajan and Aditya Mukherjee.

Prof. Sucheta Mahajan notes that 75 years of achieving independence is an appropriate moment to pause and assess the direction in which historical writings on Independence and Partition have been moving. On the

50th anniversary of Independence the criticism was why studies on the Partition were scant relative to the studies on Independence. Today, she notes, that there is 'a thicket of Partition studies, I peer around hoping to find a path to Independence among the many pathways to Partition.'

Today's government has decided to observe August 14 as the remembrance day of the horrors of Partition. In choosing Pakistan's Independence day for this remembrance there is a message loaded with communal overtones. Is this remembrance day to recollect the horror or to actually relive the horror? The government could well have chosen 3rd of June instead – the day partition was announced by British Viceroy Lord Mountbatten. May be this explains the preoccupation with the surfeit of Partition studies currently.

She discusses critically the various historical enquiries on the Partition and the circumstances around our Independence. She concludes by noting that 'if communalism and secular nationalism are collapsed, the idea of a pluralist syncretic culture of the society is dismissed and community, as constituted through violence, is offered as the only reality, then only nihilism remains'. The resources of secularism need to be marshalled, 'when confronted with horrific communal violence, or, with what is worse the brazen parade of communalism masked as development. Ideology is certainly the terrain on which historical debate is mounted.' She concludes by saying that the possibility of writing a different kind of history has opened up to recognise the revolutionary transformation marked by August 15, 1947.

Prof. Aditya Mukherjee penetratingly observes that the cynical misuse of history today is putting the very survival of the Indian nation State, not only its secular character, at stake. He analyses the weaponisation of history and how it has been put to such disruptive use. The convergence of the colonial and communal historiography promotes divisions in Indian society. Both see Indian history as one where Indian people have always been deeply divided on the basis of religion and caste. Both repeatedly emphasise the trauma of Hindu-Muslim conflicts by distorting history. The intelligentsia linked with the freedom movement refuted this so called historical trauma by drawing on the reality of Indian society and how it dealt with religious, caste and with other differences. The birth of new religions – Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism and the Sufi and Bhakti movements focus on the critical aspects of Indian civilizational history, its ability to live with differences, accommodation and adjustment leading to the creation of a composite culture.

Colonial rulers sought permanency for their rule on the grounds that the irreconcilable differences between Hindus and Muslims could only be put on hold when neither had the control of the government. The current communal attacks on secular scientific history highlight this very irreconcilable religious divide between the Hindu majority and Muslims and Christian minorities in order to sustain its political project of 'Hindutva Rashtra'.

Prof. Mukherjee calls for a strong resistance against this distortion of history and the rapid manufacturing of untruths in the name of history for purposes totally destructive for the survival of India as a Constitutional democracy.

In the section of documents, we reproduce a series of articles that appeared in a national daily reviewing the recent changes in the syllabus taught in our schools. These changes are a testimony to the fact of how the social consciousness of our youth is sought to be shaped in order to buttress the ideological content of the rabidly intolerant fascistic 'Hindutva Rahtra'