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Another Assault on Academic Freedom

Apoorvanand

A former professor at the Jawaharlal Nehru University told me that his vice chancellor once called him to speak to him about the regular commentaries he wrote in the newspapers. He thought that the vice chancellor probably did not want him to waste his time writing opinion pieces and instead use it to produce academic work. But what the vice chancellor said next put his unease in perspective. I can get in trouble for what you write, the vice chancellor told him. The professor returned amused, he was not concerned about the security of his job.

Those were gentler times. A vice chancellor asking a faculty member not to make life difficult for him by criticising the government knew that it was embarrassing to discuss this in the open. If the professor decided not to listen to him, he could do little.

Today, vice chancellors have a reason to shut up their teachers. They are being directed by the University Grants Commission to treat teachers as government servants—bar them from speaking their minds which more often than not goes against the power.

The regulator sent the directive to universities in May. But it is making news now after the JNU

administration adopted the directive to make its teaching staff compliant to Civil Services Conduct Rules.

The JNU teaching community is up in arms, fearing the decision will take away their freedom to pursue their work without fear. The administration is accusing the complaining teachers of spreading half-truths. It maintains that the conduct rules will kick in only where the JNU Act or relevant ordinances are silent. But the laws governing universities such as JNU are silent at many places. For one, they do not explicitly state how the faculty should conduct themselves in matters of politics, or public life generally.

Civil servants are not supposed to criticise the government, their employer. This may be understandable even if we now see many civil servants writing or speaking rather freely. Their views can embarrass the government, yet they are being tolerated.

Teachers have enjoyed freedom in this regard. Not only can they air their political views openly, they need not resign to participate in active politics. They can join political formations, organise or lead political campaigns, even fight elections while still in service. The

government has now moved to curb this freedom. The UGC, having forgotten that it must act on behalf of universities and chosen to be the government's post office, has asked universities to frame ordinances to bind teachers to the Civil Services Conduct Rules.

To understand how dangerous this is, look at the Tribal Central University of Amarkantak, which is already implementing the conduct rules. An ordinance issued by the university directs all its employees not to speak, write or publish without prior permission from the authorities. This means no employee will be able to speak critically about the government, the university or the UGC. The rules do allow writing for "purely scientific or academic" purposes but are silent on who will make such a determination. Further, not only are the employees barred from associating with any political party or activity, they are expected to dissuade their family members from doing so as well.

JNU has also resolved to implement the service rules while the Central University of Gujarat and the Maulana Azad National Urdu University, Hyderabad, have already started framing ordinances.

The government has always held the teaching community to be a nuisance, although many members of the ruling class have been teachers themselves. We have often heard bureaucrats wondering how teachers can be allowed to criticise the government when it pays their salaries.

Feeling under siege

Knowledge, in the true sense of the term, is criticism. It questions authority in all its forms. A teacher's job is not only to facilitate the transfer of available knowledge

to the next generation but also to create new knowledge. How can this be done uncritically? How, for example, would a critique of atomic energy or the building of mega dams be treated by the government? When any word against the Sardar Sarovar Dam is deemed sacrilege in Gujarat, or when atomic energy is seen as being essential to national development, how can a teacher discuss them without risking being treated as anti-government or even anti-national?

In any modern democratic society, the academic community has a function beyond the classroom. They are expected to help the public make informed choices, and not only in elections. How else are citizens expected to assess government policies that affect their lives if specialists are prevented from explaining their import without fear or favour. In recent years, we have seen how intervention by economists like Jean Dreze led to the enactment of the Right to Food Act. And it's constant public intervention by scholars like him that has kept the debate on Aadhaar alive. Scholarship will flee India's public universities if teachers are restrained from speaking their minds.

In any case, it is not the UGC's business to keep bombarding universities with suggestions about internal governance. Universities are autonomous institutions governed by their respective acts. The UGC is meant only to ensure that standards are maintained. Yet, in the last few years, successive governments have used the regulator to dictate to universities and meddle in their internal affairs. And weak leaderships of universities have allowed it without much protest. Forcing the conduct rules on teachers is the latest assault on academic

freedom in India.

In countries such as China, Russia and Turkey, universities are seen with suspicion and, thus, tightly controlled by government. In India, however, campuses have been largely liberal. Academics have been allowed to have their views and no government has dared treat a university teacher as just another of its employees. Until now, that is.

Since the Bharatiya Janata Party took power four years ago, leaders of the ruling party and even ministers have frequently denounced universities as dens of "anti-nationals". Most recently, liberal campuses have been projected as the stomping grounds of "Urban Naxals". The government has unleashed propaganda that anti-national and "anti-development" elements are operating out of universities, masquerading as teachers. For India to achieve peaceful development, the government says, campuses must be weeded out of such undesirable elements. It appears a wide section of the public is receptive to the idea of purging campuses of people who do not confine themselves to jobs they are supposedly being paid for—and the government is now using this popular sentiment to ensure compliant campuses.

This will greatly damage public universities. Already, some eminent scholars have left esteemed institutions such as Delhi University and JNU for private establishments such as the Ashoka University or the Jindal University. It is wrong to assume they were lured by money. A feeling of being under siege robbed them of their peace. Scholarship cannot take place in this atmosphere. It would be really sad if our society left teachers to fight this battle on their own.

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The Indian Economy in a Tailspin

Prabhat Patnaik

The Indian economy is in a tailspin. This cannot be attributed only to innocence in economic matters of the command-centre of the NDA government. While that is indubitably a contributing factor, the current travails of the economy point to something deeper, namely the dead-end to which neo-liberalism has brought the economy. Without moving away from the neo-liberal trajectory, the economy cannot come out of its current difficulties.

India's success in raising the GDP growth rate, the main selling point for the neo-liberal regime, was, unlike China's, built upon the quicksand of a persistent trade and current account deficit on the external front. This was covered all this time by financial inflows, which were large enough even to add to the foreign exchange reserves. A major factor contributing to such inflows in recent years was the much lower interest rates in metropolitan economies, especially in the US where they were virtually pushed down to zero to revive the economy after 2008, compared to India.

But now the US itself has started raising the interest rates; and uncertainty over the future of neo-liberalism in the wake of Trump's protectionist measures is making globalised finance flow massively to the US as its safe "home base". The dollar, for both these reasons, is rising relative to other currencies, especially relative to the rupee. This state of affairs is not going to be reversed in the foreseeable future, which is why the rupee continues to slide vis-à-vis the dollar, even after

Arun Jaitley announced a slew of measures on September 14 to attract finance into the economy to stem the rupee's slide.

The sliding rupee is raising import costs, especially of crude oil; and the latter get passed on in the form of higher petro-product prices. This fact, together with the rise of crude prices in the world market, following an agreement within the OPEC itself, has now raised petrol and diesel prices in India to dizzying heights; and the rise continues daily. Here again there is no question of any respite within the neo-liberal regime from the relentless impact of this exchange-rate-depreciation-cum-inflation syndrome. The only thing Arun Jaitley can think of doing is to attract sufficient financial inflow to stabilise the rupee, but that as suggested above is now more difficult; and even if there is some temporary reprieve through such inflows, it cannot but be temporary.

Manmohan Singh and Chidambaram attack the NDA for its economic incompetence, which is undeniable, but they have hardly any better ideas. At the most they may jack up interest rates a bit more, but that, while its effects on financial inflows would be dubious for reasons already mentioned, would amount at best to merely papering over the cracks (since the basic problem of the current account deficit would still remain unaddressed); besides it will worsen unemployment, and damage further the economy of the small producers.

One way of providing relief to the people against the skyrocketing

petrol and diesel prices, whose effects are felt even by the poorest persons because they increase the transport costs of all goods, is to lower the taxes on these goods which make up the bulk of their prices. Some state governments, of whom Kerala was an early example and Karnataka the latest, have indeed reduced their taxes on petro-products to provide relief to the people. But there are limits to the extent to which such relief would be forthcoming, for two obvious reasons, both related to the neo-liberal regime.

One is our overwhelming reliance on indirect taxation, and the eschewing of direct taxation, because of the compulsion to retain so-called "investors' confidence", so that finance flows in adequate quantities to keep the balance of payments on an even keel. The second is the disastrous move towards a Goods and Services Tax, again in conformity with the demands of a neo-liberal economy, which has affected government tax revenues adversely.

In the face of this already adverse effect, the need to maintain government revenues becomes even more pressing, and puts a limit to the degree to which taxes on petro-products can be lowered (unless greater direct taxation is resorted to). Indeed the only reason that some states have been able to reduce taxes, for lowering petrol and diesel prices, is because these goods fall outside the GST ambit; but naturally they cannot keep doing so beyond a point without raising revenue in other ways. (And such ways are no longer

available to state governments even to the limited extent they were earlier).

The way out of the current economic predicament however is obvious, though invisible to eyes blinkered by neo-liberalism. Since the inflow of finance will no longer cover the current account deficit, the slide in the rupee would require controlling this deficit; and this can be effected only by directly controlling inessential imports. Even in 2013 when the rupee was sliding, the government had controlled gold imports as a means of stemming this slide. Wealth-holders then were moving from rupees to gold. This had boosted gold imports, and direct controls over such imports played a significant role in reducing the trade deficit and halting the rupee's slide. The ambit of import controls now will of course have to be wider, but there is no escape from such controls. The rupee will have to be stabilised immediately with a combination of import controls and use of foreign exchange reserves.

But this may not be enough to stabilise petro-product prices in view of world market trends. These prices will have to be not just stabilised, but actually lowered to prevent down-the-line cost-push inflationary effects on commodities in general. This can be done by significantly lowering taxes upon them, and making up for the revenue shortfall caused by such lowering through larger direct taxation, in particular wealth taxation.

Wealth taxation in any case is the best way to finance public expenditure as it has no adverse effects upon any investment "incentives": since all forms of wealth are taxed without discrimination, there is no special disincentive for holding wealth in

the form of productive assets. In addition it has the effect of keeping wealth inequality in society in check, which, as is commonly accepted now, is an essential prerequisite for democracy.

It is shocking that in India, where wealth inequalities have been rising so sharply of late, there is hardly any wealth taxation. Using direct taxation on wealth as a substitute for indirect taxation on petro-products will thus kill several birds with one stone: it will prevent the inflationary squeeze on the people that rising petro-product price are imposing, and at the same time bring greater wealth equality in society which is desirable per se.

Lower petro-product prices, it may be argued, would encourage larger consumption of such products, which, in the current context of rising world crude prices, would raise the country's import-bill, bringing pressure on the rupee once again. Alongside controlling, and lowering petro-product prices therefore, the government has to take steps to control petro-product consumption directly. Since much of this consumption occurs within the government itself, with the defence sector in particular being a major consumer, controlling consumption can be effected through a set of directives within the government. As for consumption outside the government sector, several measures can be taken which effectively ration the use of petro-products.

Many of these measures are advocated and even implemented on environmental grounds. The "odd-even" scheme for instance that was implemented in Delhi was also a means of petro-product rationing. In many countries, to avoid congestion in peak hours, a

minimum number of occupants per car is insisted upon; this also acts as a measure of directly controlling petro-product consumption. In other words, measures of petro-product rationing would also kill several birds with one stone: they would reduce road congestion; they would reduce environmental pollution; and they would also reduce the consumption of petro-products with beneficial effects for our balance of payments.

A combination of direct import controls on inessential items, reduction of petro-product prices, measures for reducing the consumption of such products and direct taxation, especially on wealth, is the obvious way of getting out of the tailspin in which the Indian economy is currently caught. But this combination of measures which is desirable, not just for getting out of the current travails, but on other, more long-term considerations as well, runs contrary to the direction of neo-liberalism. There is however no alternative to them if we are to avoid the fate of countries that eventually run to the IMF and get caught in the vice-like grip of "austerity".

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Is India Heading Towards Militarism?

Anil Sinha

It was unusual for a country like India to accept the fact that it invaded a territory of the neighbouring country. But Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the BJP president Amit Shah are not tired of mentioning the valour of a strike across the Line of Control on the Kashmir border. The strike which they claimed to be surgical one became the focus of a month-long celebration two years later in September 2018. The celebration of the 'Surgical Strike' made on a Pakistani post on September 29, 2018 was not only a show of military strength of India, but also an affirmation to a newly acquired faith. Indian polity has made a turn towards militarism, in a clear departure from the policy the country had adopted even before it became independent. Another dark side of the story is the ruling party's attempt to make it an electoral plank in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections.

There is any hardly need to emphasise that the much hyped surgical strike could not achieve its objective to check cross border terrorism. The celebrations to commemorate the operation two years later had nothing except the intent to mobilise people around an idea which goes against the democratic interest of the country and the sub-continent. A dramatised version of the story ran across the screens of TV channels. Statistics do not favour the claim of the government that terrorist attacks in Kashmir have come under control. An objective analysis only reveals that the operation only achieved distrust and bad name for

the country. Former minister and eminent journalist Arun Shouri has given an account of the surgical strike carried out by the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government. If we go by his claims, the earlier strike during Vajpayee's time seems to be much bigger than one under the Modi government.

The deterioration in the Kashmir situation is all too visible. Life is more difficult than before. Terrorists have been frequently striking civil and military establishments. Pakistan has also shown not any sign of timidity, as we were made to believe soon after the exercise. Then, what is the rationale behind celebrating a strike? Is it not irresponsible on the part of a democratic country like India to glamourise a military operation? It has an adverse effect on regional peace. A country like India is known for its efforts towards promoting peace. It is really a matter of concern that we are ignoring the role we are known for. The Modi government must be held responsible for abandoning the ethos of our traditional foreign policy. The government is carrying forward a creed which has been proved a failure during the World Wars.

Militarism has inspired some more acts of the BJP government. The induction of General V.K. Singh into the party and later into the ministry despite his being a general with a controversial background is another example of BJP's inclination towards militarism.

In its four years of focused campaign in favor of the army and endorsement of every single act of the army, the BJP has always been

trying to promote the concept of a polity which gives the military an important role. The climax of the campaign can be seen in Amit Shah launching his 'Sampark for Samarthan' campaign with a visit to the residence of ex-Army chief General Dalbir Singh Suhag. Obviously, the visit has given rise to speculations that General Suhag may contest the coming Lok Sabha elections.

The BJP, an avatar of Bhartiya Jan Sangh, was in the forefront of the anti-emergency movement and used the movement for an image makeover. Obviously, it is relevant to compare its attempt to change the idioms of democracy with the authoritarian moves taken by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. She had a bigger opportunity of dealing with army generals. Indira Gandhi took over from Lal Bahadur Shastri immediately after the 1965 war was over. She had generals like General J.N. Chaudhary and Lieutenant General Harbaksh Singh to deal with. Both of them had led a decisive win over Pakistan and were household names by the end of the war. Chaudhary did not show any inclination to politics, nor did Mrs. Gandhi encourage him to do so. He went to Canada as India's High Commissioner.

Lieutenant General Harbaksh Singh had led Indian soldiers to victory on the western sector, but he did not even become the Chief of the Army. However, both the generals were recognised for their distinguished services and given the highest civilian honour, the Padma Vibhushan.

The classic case is of Lieutenant General Jagjit Singh Aurora. He was General Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the Eastern Command when the Bangladesh war was fought in 1971. He led the Indian soldiers to victory and forced 90 thousand Pakistani soldiers to surrender. However, Indira Gandhi did not encourage him to join politics. He later became an MP with the help of Akali Dal. He also received the Padma Bhushan.

BJP's inclination cannot be dismissed as an act of opportunism. This is a case of political faith. If we look at the ideological background of the BJP, it is not surprising to see it attempting this. The RSS, the parent organisation of the party, has been a supporter of militarism since its inception. The organisation has been advocating military training for every able bodied individual and wants it to be a part of the curriculum in schools and college. The final training given to an RSS cadet has in fact been given the name Officers' Training Course.

The attempt is obviously bringing some uncommon trends into country's polity. Serving generals are issuing political statements. They are not hesitating in commenting on issues which are purely political. General Bipin Rawat speaks on foreign affairs and asserts that Nepal and Bhutan have no option except to incline towards India.

The latest example of pro-government comments by senior military officers is that of Air Chief Marshal B.S. Dhanoa. He said that in making the Rafale deal, the Indian Air Force was consulted at the appropriate level. It was decided to buy two squadrons through a 'government to government deal' to meet the emergency requirements of the Indian Air Force. "When it

comes to the subcontinent, it will be a game changer, and we have lots of advantages in the Rafale deal," he asserted, at a time when the controversy regarding the Rafale deal is being talked about in the French media as well.

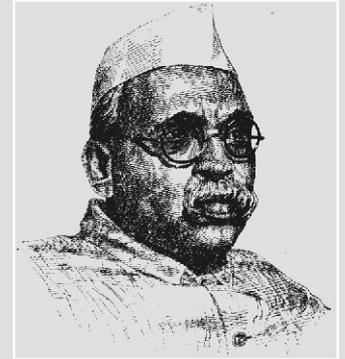
He does not stop here and goes on to criticise the HAL. He accused the public sector company of delaying deliveries, "there is a three year delay in the delivery of Sukhoi-30, a six year delay in the Jaguar, a five year delay in the LCA, and a two year delay in delivery of Mirage 2000 upgrade."

The negotiation for the 126 aircraft deal for the Rafale had reached an impasse. Speaking like a spokesperson of the government, he stated, "The option before us was to keep waiting, or issue a fresh RFP and waste more years, or go in for an emergency purchase. The government took a bold decision."

The Air Chief's defense of the government only confirms that militarism has made its way into the polity. However, the Opposition does not seem to have realised the danger militarism is going to pose to Indian democracy. It seems to have no concern for it. How can we forget that militarism led to two World Wars? How can we forget the catastrophe it has brought to human civilisation? We have also seen that any country chooses militarism to its own peril. People lose democratic rights in the name of nationalism. Hitler and Mussolini are the best examples. Contemporary examples can also open our eyes. In both Myanmar and Pakistan, the army has captured everything from economy to culture. All attempts of restoring democracy in these countries have failed so far. Do we want to go the same way?

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(The Life Story
of
Mrunal Gore)**

by

Rohini Gawankar

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Jayaprakash Narayan: An Idealist Betrayed – Part II

M. G. Devasahayam

What a marvelous experience!

When I received ‘prisoner JP’ at the tarmac of Chandigarh Air Force base on the night of July 1, 1975, Emergency was only a few days old. JP had been taken into custody by the District Magistrate, Delhi on 25/26 June night, moved around nearby areas of Haryana and Delhi’s All-India Institute of Medical Sciences, and was being brought to Chandigarh for safe custody and medical care. To me at that time, JP was an enigma as well as a mystery. My memory of him as the ‘Quit India Movement’ hero of the forties was hazy and the perception of his recent campaign for ‘total revolution’ was rather confusing.

During the 22 weeks JP was in my custody, I did come to know him very intimately. And having understood the nobility of his struggle and the intensity of his commitment, I partook in all matters concerning him and the State, shared his intimate thoughts and feelings, discussed political events and happenings, played ‘Devil’s Advocate’, participated in brainstorming and strategy sessions, took charge of his mental and psychological well-being, initiated the reconciliation process between him and the Prime Minister, and succeeded in reviving his faith in himself and his people which he was on the verge of losing.

“My world lies in shambles all around me. I am afraid I shall not see it put together again in my lifetime. May be my nephews and nieces will see that. May be.”

These opening words of *JP’s Prison Diary—1975* dated 21 July—a full three weeks after his arrival in Chandigarh—amply describe a sense of defeatism and extremely fragile state of JP’s mind and spirit during the initial days. Then he started taking stock of things and did some hard soul searching, introspection and evaluation of events leading to the imposition of Emergency and its aftermath. This intense ‘solo-brainstorming’ led JP to believe that the ‘intellectuals’ who had egged him on saying ‘JP you are the only hope of the nation’ and whom he counted upon as bulwarks of democracy had buckled and had deserted him.

This deep mental hurt was the main cause for some disturbing developments later, including his conclusion that at least for the foreseeable future, democracy in the country was dead. And even if “it was put together after a long time” he will not be there to see it. So, over a period of several days, he drafted a “letter of farewell” to Mrs. Indira Gandhi pouring out his heart in anguish, pleading with her to mend ways and “reconciling to die a prisoner under her regime”. This letter—indeed an epistle—sent on July 21, 1975 to the Prime Minister caused quite a ripple in the corridors of power.

A couple of weeks later on Sunday, August 10, 1975, I had permitted JP’s brother-in-law S.N. Prasad an interview for one hour. Around noon, the Jail Superintendent delivered to me a letter from JP addressed to the Prime Minister

conveying his decision “to go on fast until death” unless the Emergency was revoked and all prisoners released within two weeks. JP had authorised Prasad to announce this to the outside world. Considering the grave implications this could bring forth, I took upon myself the task of dissuading JP from this disastrous move, but did not make any headway even after two hours of highly surcharged nail-splitting verbal duel. JP refused to relent and said that his decision was irrevocable because in his opinion Mrs. Gandhi will only bring more destructive measures now that ‘intellectuals’ had totally buckled and there was no resistance whatsoever. I contested it vehemently and eventually succeeded in persuading JP to give up the idea of fast.

Sensing the distress of JP, I initiated the process of political dialogue and reconciliation, which I had been thinking about for some time. I got working on this, quietly putting this thought in the mind of JP, and increasingly getting a positive response. My efforts culminated in a warm gesture by way of a letter from JP to the PM on September 17 expressing hope of an early end to the Emergency. In response to this, at the behest of Mrs. Gandhi, Sheikh Abdullah issued a positive statement setting the ball rolling on reconciliation.

JP responded to Sheikh Abdullah through a letter which inter alia said:

However, in spite of all that has happened and is happening, I am prepared to seek the path of conciliation. I shall, therefore, be

much obliged if you kindly see me as soon as possible so that I could discuss this matter with you. I being the villain of the piece, the arch-conspirator, culprit number one, a return to true normalcy, not the false one established by repression and terror, can only be brought about with my co-operation. I am herewith offering you my full co-operation.

This letter was delivered at Delhi on September 24 forenoon and the response from PM's Office, particularly P.N. Dhar, Principal Secretary to PM, was swift. A special emissary (Sugatha Das Gupta, Director, Gandhi Institute of Studies, Varanasi, of which JP was the Chairman) arrived on the 25th morning to initiate efforts for a political dialogue between the PM and JP. There were some more visits by Das Gupta and the preliminary work on reconciliation was going apace.

As hope for the success of reconciliation efforts and restoration of democracy was rising, certain mysterious and intriguing things happened culminating in the whole process being sabotaged by Sanjay Gandhi and his cronies. JP's letter to Sheikh Abdullah was never delivered but was returned through Das Gupta during one of his visits. Certain other disturbing events followed.

Mysteriously, in early November 1975, JP's health started deteriorating fast and from the doctor's hedgy replies about his health, I suspected that something was amiss. As later events proved, JP's kidney was getting irrevocably damaged! Under the circumstances, I was convinced that it would be unsafe to keep JP in Chandigarh any longer and he should get to a place where his ailment could be diagnosed correctly

and treated properly.

This conviction led me to initiate silent and swift steps to launch a multi-pronged assault through PMO emissary Das Gupta, JP's brother Rajeshwar Prasad, Chandigarh Chief Commissioner/Union Home Secretary and my personal channel to the PMO with the same message content—"If JP dies in Jail"—to create a crisis mindset in Delhi so that JP could be released immediately.

This worked admirably resulting in a flurry of activities leading to JP's release on 'unconditional parole' on November 12, by an order served on him by the Chief Secretary and District Magistrate of Delhi who flew into Chandigarh by a special BSF aircraft. This was followed by high intensity drama in the next few days when the panicked 'Delhi Durbar' made desperate efforts to retain JP in Chandigarh. However, I prevailed upon the PGI to discharge JP and commandeered seats in the Indian Airlines flight to take JP to Delhi en route to Bombay Jaslok Hospital!

As he departed from Chandigarh on November 16, I saw him off at the airport wishing him well and requesting him to look after his health. JP's reply still rings in my ears: "Devasahayam, you are like a son I never had. My health is not important. The health of the nation and democracy is. I will defeat 'that woman' and have them restored." And then the aircraft departed.

I came back home feeling completely drained but relieved. The last words of JP showed that the fire was back in him and the transition of the 'Lok Nayak' from a defeated individual to a defiant icon was complete. I was confident that with this new spirit he would fulfill his pledge of returning India to freedom

and democracy.

Fourteen months later, emboldened by the reports of 'success' of the Emergency regime and the perception that opposition to her rule was crumbling and JP, the only mass all-India leader was sick and demoralised, Indira Gandhi called for the Sixth General Election to Parliament in January 1977. And in his inimitable style, JP went into action despite being tied down to a dialysis machine twice a week. Without wasting any time, he put into effect the political blueprint he had worked out while in detention and refined later and put together a "Janata Parivar" with one flag and one symbol.

Due largely to his untiring efforts, immediately after coming out of jails, the opposition leaders announced the coming together of Congress (O), Jan Sangh, Bharatiya Lok Dal and Socialists under the Janata Party umbrella. Congress was dealt a body-blow by the sudden defection of Jagjivan Ram, H.N. Bahuguna and Nandini Sathpathy who formed the Congress for Democracy and, along with the DMK in Tamil Nadu and the Akali Dal in Punjab, forged a common front with the Janata Party in order to give a straight fight to the Congress and its allies in the election held in March 1977.

The Emergency and its excesses were the major issues of the election campaign. JP created a public upsurge by touring the country intensively and addressing mammoth gatherings. At several places where he could not go, large crowds intently listened to JP's speech through pre-recorded tapes. His message was simple and straight—if you want autocracy and corruption, vote Congress; if you

want democracy and honesty, vote Janata.

With the popular upsurge thus created, the Janata Parivar captured 345 parliamentary seats with the Congress and its allies far behind with 189. The Congress was virtually wiped out in North India with the party winning only two out of 234 constituencies in seven states. Both Indira Gandhi and Sanjay Gandhi were defeated. Indeed, JP lived up to his promise of redeeming India's freedom and I was happy that I had a small part to play.

Why JP brought RSS into the Janata Parivar

While under detention in Chandigarh, JP was making his own plans for elections as and when they took place and the ways and means to remove the Congress from power. He was of the firm conviction that unless a viable and working political alternative to the Congress emerged and sustained, the ruling party would continue to revel in the 'There is no alternative' (TINA) syndrome and an Emergency kind of situation would get repeated. JP planned to devote whatever life was left in him to accomplish this mission of uniting the Opposition.

This was the main subject of discussion when JP and I met frequently in the month of October 1975. During our interaction, JP used to analyse the chances of the Opposition winning in the event of elections as per schedule in February/March 1976. As of now, they were a divided house, he said. Would the trials and tribulations of the Emergency unite them, he wondered. Would a single, viable Opposition be formed? Once elections were announced and he was released, he would go all out

and do his best to defeat Indira at the hustings, he said. He hoped the people wouldn't be fooled again. "This lady must be defeated. She has ruined the country enough," JP used to fume.

I played the devil's advocate. Was she not the hope of the minority—both linguistic and religious—and their champion? I also pointed out that minorities were the majority in this country. Would it not be very difficult to defeat her at the polls, I queried. The Jan Sangh had a communal image and non-Hindus did not feel comfortable with them because of the RSS. Most non-Hindi-speaking people were suspicious about the Jan Sangh because of their linguistic fanaticism. Congress (O) was a divided house, and their leader, Morarji Desai, was a suspect in South Indian eyes because of his perceived pro-Hindi views. His role prior to and during the 1965 anti-Hindi agitation had antagonised the Tamil population. His rift with Kamaraj had led to the DMK coming to power. Because of the above reasons, South India would vote en bloc for Indira. This was particularly so since the Emergency, its harshness, and perceived excesses were no issues in the South, because these were not felt in that part of the country.

About the composition of the united party that JP was contemplating to take on the Congress (I), he had only a broad framework in mind and details were to be thrashed out when the party would actually take shape. The framework would have Congress (O) with the socialist faction of Congress and the Bharatiya Lok Dal as core components. The RSS-backed Jan Sangh would provide the cadre base, which was essential

for facing elections at short notice. Parties like the DMK in Tamil Nadu and the Shromani Akali Dal in Punjab would provide the much-needed regional base.

I was astonished and pointed out that JP's views on several occasions had been sharply critical of the Jan Sangh and its communal hue. I specifically quoted his article in a journal way back in 1968: "When, following Gandhiji's murder, the RSS was under a shadow, there were many protestations made about its being entirely a cultural organisation. But apparently emboldened by the timidity of the secular forces, it has thrown its veil away and has emerged as the real force behind, and controller of, the Bharatiya Jana Sangh. The secular protestations of the Jana Sangh will never be taken seriously unless it cuts the bonds that tie it so firmly to the RSS machine. Nor can the RSS be treated as a cultural organisation as long as it remains the mentor and effective manipulator of a political party."

I asked JP that despite such a categorical disapproval, how he could associate with this 'communal organisation' in his fight against the Emergency rule and its eventual overthrow. JP was candid in describing the causes, criteria and compulsions leading to the decision to associate the Jan Sangh with the united opposition party. The main reasons were two. One was JP's unwillingness to opt for the alternative of associating with the Communists, the other cadre-based party, since according to him, "Communists were professional collaborators. They collaborated with the British and must now be collaborating with the Emergency coterie." Indeed, they were!

The second was the solemn

pledge taken by top RSS and Jan Sangh leaders—RSS Sarsanghchalak Balasaheb Deoras, previous President of Jan Sangh A.B. Vajpayee, then President of Jan Sangh L.K. Advani—in his presence to totally give up communal politics in the event of coming to power at the Centre. They had also categorically assured him that within a short period of coming to power, the Jan Sangh will merge with the parent party (yet to be formed) and they will terminate the ‘dual-membership’—RSS and Jan Sangh—making the former a purely cultural organisation. They also assured JP that if any hurdle came up for this, they would not hesitate to even wind up the RSS. And JP, being a man of his words, had no reason to doubt the honour and integrity of these senior leaders.

JP was clear that the monolithic and servile Congress Party had to be defeated if democracy was to be revived in the country. There was finality in the voice of JP when he said: “These parties merging and providing a viable alternative is the only hope for our democracy.” And I thought it prudent to leave it there.

The Great Betrayal: Dual membership gave birth to the BJP

In 2005, as BJP was celebrating its silver jubilee, its president LK Advani openly admitted that the party would not have been born in 1980 had the Janata Party not raised the issue of dual membership in the manner it did. “The Janata Party parliamentary board put forward the excuse of our dual membership as they thought that they would not be able to progress if we stayed with them,” Advani said after releasing a book on 25 years of the BJP.

According to him, the rationale behind the birth of the BJP lay in

the fact that the party opposed a ban on its ties with the RSS, which was sought to be imposed by the Janata Party leaders. RSS sahasarkaryavah, Madandas Devi, who presided over the function, put it more bluntly when he said: “The BJP stands on the backdrop of the Jan Sangh and the Jan Sangh stood on the backdrop of the RSS.”

Flashback to post-Emergency. After a delay of one-year, Indira Gandhi made the election announcement on January 18, 1977. When opposition leaders sought JP’s support for the forthcoming elections, he insisted that all opposition parties form a united front. Accordingly, the Janata party was officially launched on January 23, 1977 when the Janata Morcha, Bharatiya Lok Dal of Charan Singh, Swatantra Party, Socialist Party of India of Raj Narain and George Fernandes, and Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS) joined together, dissolving their separate identities. The merger of all these party organisations was to be completed after the elections. Although the political ideologies of the various Janata constituents were diverse and conflicting, the party was able to unite them under the over-arching leadership of JP, who was seen as the ideological mentor of the anti-Emergency movement and now the Janata party.

Morarji Desai was elected the first party chairman, Ramakrishna Hegde became the party general secretary and Jana Sangh politician Lal Krishna Advani became the party spokesperson. After the Janata victory in March and elevation of Morarji Desai as Prime Minister, JP appointed his close confidante Chandra Shekhar as the Party president with a clear mandate to enforce the solemn undertaking

given by the Jan Sangh of merging with Janata Party and ending RSS–Jan Sangh ‘dual-membership’ within six months as had been agreed by it earlier.

True to his nature, Chandra Shekhar went about his task in all seriousness. During those days, the land-based telephone system was managed by the Department of Telecom and the Subscriber Trunk Dialing (STD) between cities was very porous and cross-talk was common. I used to call Chandra Shekhar once in a while to keep in touch. During one such call, I could hear a conversation between him and Raj Narain, the clownish socialist who had defeated Indira Gandhi at the hustings. When I heard the word RSS repeatedly, I got interested and listened to the entire conversation that lasted for about 15 minutes. It was all about the Jan Sangh / RSS U-turn on the ‘dual membership’ issue. The conversation was in Hindi and both of them used abusive language and choicest epithets about the RSS. They ended the conversation with a mutual understanding to force the issue. Accordingly, soon thereafter, the Janata Parliamentary Board (JPB) passed a resolution barring Janata functionaries from their day-to-day activities in RSS.

With a tradition of lies and double deals, it was obvious that the Sangh parivar was never serious about keeping its promise and was waiting for an excuse. It came in the form of the JPB resolution. The situation was manipulated by Jan Sangh hardliners and the RSS Pratinidhi Sabha refused to ratify the proposal when presented by Balasaheb Deoras. That was the end of the ‘dual-membership’ issue and merger of Janata Parivar as a single

Anita, Christine, and Me

Belle Chesler

entity. Said a saddened Janata Party president, Chandra Shekhar: "I did expect that Deoras would fulfil his promise. But I'm not surprised at the recent stand taken by the RSS. However, I fail to understand it."

Vijay Kumar Malhotra of the Jan Sangh, who was president of the Delhi Janata Party, tried to rationalise this perfidy when he said: "We are proud of our association with the RSS. We can't accept a decision on our association with the RSS from the Janata Party which makes the RSS appear as something undesirable. But if the RSS itself had decided to bar us, it would have been a different matter." Morarji Desai tried some patch-up but failed.

Nanaji Deshmukh, former RSS political commissar of the Jan Sangh and the one closest to JP, tried to apply some balm: "The Jan Sangh would do nothing to wreck the party unless we are compelled." But it appeared that the point of no return had been reached. Malhotra pulled the curtains down when he said: "To me it seems the time has come for a parting of ways. There is no other option. But it should be done in such a way that there is no bad blood so that we can have at least an honest coalition in the future."

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It's been three weeks since Dr. Christine Blasey Ford gave her testimony before the nation and I'm still struggling to move on. As talk turns toward the impending midterms, I find myself mentally pushing back against the relentlessness of the news cycle as it plows on, casting a spell of cultural amnesia in its wake. I'm still mired in the past, shaken by the spectacle of the Kavanaugh hearings, and pulled across the decades into the darkest crevasses of my memories.

In October 1991, I sat perched on a stool in Mr. Bundeson's seventh grade woodshop class listening with fascination as Anita Hill testified about her experience of sexual harassment by then Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas. To a seventh grader, the details, both surprisingly specific and appealingly lurid, were especially intriguing. What 13-year-old could have resisted the simultaneously bizarre and gross testimony regarding a pubic hair placed on a can of Coke? We were riveted. Who could make something like that up? Over the course of the hearing, our teachers rolled out TVs on carts and let the proceedings play during our classes. It felt like we were sharing a significant national moment and watching together meant we were all a part of history being made.

The full import of that experience wouldn't hit me, however, until the week I turned 40 and watched Dr. Ford telling her story in front of another judiciary committee. This time, I was looking at the computer on my desk at the suburban high

school in Oregon where I've taught visual art and film studies for the past 14 years. Taking in her testimony, I found myself growing distraught. As her voice quavered, I felt a surge of emotion so strong it seemed to paralyze me. I couldn't stop looking even though I knew something inside was tearing me apart and that, no matter my emotional state, I would still have to pull myself together to face my first class of the day, only moments away. As the camera zeroed in on Dr. Ford's face, her nervous gesturing at her hair, and the tears shimmering in the corners of her eyes, I couldn't shake the feeling that I was watching a woman sacrificing herself before the nation, just as Anita Hill had done so many years before.

As she recounted her experience with Brett Kavanaugh and Mark Judge, the internal wall of fortitude I'd built up over the years started to crumble. That wall, which had bricked in so many experiences—the catcalls, the comments from a high school teacher who praised my muscular legs in front of the class, the years spent with an abusive boyfriend, the boss who liked to show me his favorite porn, the men who exposed themselves to me in a park, on a bus, from a van—all started to spill out. There were too many experiences to catalogue so many years later, but they'd been there the whole time, ever present yet totally unmentionable. I had no idea how I'd make it through the day.

Walking into my first-period class on the history of motion pictures, it was clear that many of

my students had been watching Dr. Ford's testimony as well. Looking at them as they huddled around their phones, I was transported back to the seventh grade. I remembered how, during the Hill–Thomas hearings, we chatted at our small table in that woodshop class, making jokes, both confused and titillated by the spectacle. It was surreal to hear adults recounting interactions both intimate and grotesque in the most formal setting imaginable.

At that time, I'd never so much as kissed a boy, but I intuited that the nation's fascination with what had transpired between Anita Hill and Clarence Thomas had something to do with the way that older men had started to look at me that year. My absorption in the hearings ultimately manifested itself in a project I created that fall. I designed and made a cutting board with a silhouette of a fish carved out of black walnut surrounded by a sea of white pine. I named that cutting board Anita Hill.

The messiness of the world

Teaching is often a balancing act between revealing enough of yourself to be seen as approachable and genuine and maintaining the privacy and distance that is part and parcel of professionalism, while keeping personal boundaries clear. Much of my teaching philosophy stems from the belief that individual and community relationships are the foundation upon which all learning should take place. Students, I'm convinced, learn best when they feel comfortable in your classroom. Delivering content is sometimes less important than creating an environment in which they feel visible and know that their voices are heard. In order to establish that sense of community, I start each class with

a circle as a way to connect. We put down our phones, make eye contact, and simply share what's going on in our lives. Sometimes we chat about the inconsequential details of our days: our weekend plans, what classes are stressing us out, funny anecdotes. Sometimes we go deeper.

As we gathered in our circle that morning, I looked out at my students' sleepy faces and that veil of professionalism and privacy unexpectedly fell away. Suddenly, I was saying out loud what I'd only told a few close friends and family members: I, too, had been sexually assaulted. I'd spent a lifetime, I explained, being brave and strong, moving on with purpose and determination, and ensuring that the experiences I'd withstood had been formative yet not definitive. My students sat in stunned silence. I told them that sometimes the messiness of the world seeps into the classroom and that today, despite my best efforts, I'd been unable to shut it out.

What I didn't tell them were the details of my story. That it happened in Peru. My friend and I were staying at a small guest house in a surfing town on the northern coast. We'd been there for a few days, enough time to become friendly with the owner, his wife, and their small child. So when I ducked into our room one afternoon to get something—what, I can't remember—and found that man suddenly in the room with me, I was taken off guard. He quickly pinned me against a wall, one hand on my breast, the other clutching the machete he had been using just minutes before to hack away at overgrown shrubs around the property. He told me that my eyes were the color of the sea. He pushed his hips against mine. Without

thinking, I used all of my strength to shove him away. The rest is a blur. I know that somehow I ran from the room and found my friend, but I don't remember how we left, who packed my things, or how we got to the bus that would take us from that town. All those details are gone. His face, his smell, and that machete are not.

Will it matter?

As the Kavanaugh hearings went on, more and more students became invested in watching them. Some asked to listen on headphones while we worked, some just wanted to talk about what they'd heard. As each class began, I addressed the fact that I'd been crying all day—no point in pretending, teenagers notice everything—and explained why. As I talked, I noted certain students around the room crumpling. Bodies pulled in on themselves, heads lowered. Some students shyly wiped away tears. A few of them asked to leave the room to get some air.

One student, bubbly and cheerful as she entered, became despondent when her peers told her about what was happening in Washington. Unable to listen to the descriptions of the hearing, she swiveled so that her body was facing away from the circle and put her head down on a table. I waited for a quiet moment to sit down next to her. Without any pretense and in a no-nonsense monotone, she informed me that she was just one of a group of girls who had been assaulted by a senior boy the previous year. She was unwilling to tell her parents, fearful that they'd never let her out of the house alone again. While I was sitting with her, our school security officer came into the classroom to get her so she could be interviewed by someone already

investigating the case. The timing was impeccable.

The hardest part of that day wasn't sharing my story or opening up to groups of teenagers about the intimate details of my past. It was listening as my students argued about whether or not Dr. Ford's testimony would even matter. In their comments, I heard echoes of my own internal struggle. The experience of watching Anita Hill being picked apart and ultimately dismissed by those male senators in front of the entire nation had a powerful effect on my burgeoning seventh-grade sense of how to conduct myself as a woman: that even though I now had a name for what I, too, might experience—sexual harassment—if I called that thing out or made too much of a fuss, I would be the one who paid the price.

One of my students came up to me after class and told me that, though her stepbrother had assaulted her when she was younger, no one in her family believed her. She assured me that she was fine now because she had moved away and didn't have to see him anymore. As she was telling me this, I couldn't help imagining her, 10 or 20 years down the line, reflecting with startled pain on the way her own family dismissed her, the way the people charged with her love and care wouldn't or couldn't believe her.

Those laughing faces

At a rally in Mississippi on October 2nd, President Trump made a point of mocking Dr. Ford's testimony, joking about whether or not she had really consumed only one beer and highlighting her inability to remember certain details of the night she claimed that Brett Kavanaugh had assaulted her. What

fascinated me was not the obvious cruelty of his series of low blows, but the beaming smiles and laughter of the men and women in that crowd of supporters in Southaven, Mississippi.

I couldn't help but wonder how many of them, beneath that veneer of laughter, had felt a twinge of something familiar in the pit of their stomach as they listened to Ford's testimony. How many of the men in that crowd had given a passing thought to that one beer-soaked night in high school they barely remembered, the one that might have been the single most painful night of someone else's life? How many of those laughing women were secretly reminded of something painful buried deep in their own pasts? How many of them would not or could not dredge up experiences long suppressed, fearful of the personal toll that such a reckoning might take? How many of them would be shocked to know about assaults suffered by their own children?

I wish I could say that, while the hearings consumed the nation, I stood in front of my students and made powerful speeches about moving forward with hope and courage, about telling the truth and respecting one another. I did try, but I have no faith that I did a particularly good job of it.

Instead, in a sometimes halting, sometimes teary voice I talked about consent, about kindness, about how compassion and empathy can be transformative. I told them that I would listen, even when it seemed like no one else would. I believed what I was saying and yet there was still that enormous emotional weight in my chest, the weight of Anita Hill's legacy, of Dr. Ford's testimony, of a lifetime of unwanted encounters,

of the rapes and attempted rapes of loved ones and friends, of the stories my students shared with me during the hearings, as well as in the years that preceded them. It was a weight that made it hard to speak, let alone lead my students. In the end, I ran out of words and fell back on silence.

Ultimately, of course, Christine Blasey Ford's testimony, though deemed credible by those on both sides of the political aisle, didn't alter the course of Judge Kavanaugh's trajectory. He will sit on that hallowed bench, the residue of those hearings fading into an inconvenient stain on the CV of an otherwise charmed life. For those of us still struggling to move forward, the memory of the hearings, and all it represented, will be seared, as Dr. Ford might have put it, into the hippocampus, never to fade.

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UN Report: Revolution Needed to Prevent Climate Disaster

James Plested

Only a revolution can save us. That's the take home message of the latest report from the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), released on 8 October.

Based on emissions reduction commitments made under the 2015 Paris agreement, the world is on track for an average temperature increase of 3 degrees Celsius. Those commitments, however, are hardly worth the paper they're written on.

Australia has promised to reduce its emissions to 26–28 percent below 2005 levels by 2030. Yet since signing the agreement, emissions have continued to rise. The government is headed by a man whose passion for coal led him to bring a lump of the stuff into parliament—waving it in the air and passing it around to the delight of his Coalition colleagues.

Donald Trump has pulled the US out of the agreement.

Even countries that have voiced support for the Paris agreement continue to expand their own fossil fuel industries. The British government is pushing to allow gas fracking. Norway, Western Europe's largest oil and gas producer, recently defeated a legal bid to block exploration of its Arctic territories for new resources to exploit.

Failure to change course rapidly will spell disaster for hundreds of millions of people. The destruction of the Great Barrier Reef, and all other coral reefs around the world, will come first. These natural treasures, on which 500 million people depend for their livelihoods,

may be gone by the middle of the century.

Under a 3 degree warming scenario, large areas of the world will be rendered uninhabitable. Deserts will expand into vital agricultural land. Sea level rises, which will continue for centuries as the polar ice caps melt, will force tens of millions to vacate coastal towns and cities.

Tens of millions more will be turned into refugees by severe food shortages caused by declining agricultural yields, the destruction of fisheries and so on. Already, with 68.5 million displaced people in the world, countries everywhere are transforming themselves into authoritarian, anti-refugee fortresses. In an era of climate migration, this tendency will intensify.

The world's imperialist powers, including those, like Australia and the US, that are doing nothing to address climate change, are ensuring that their militaries are "climate change ready". We're entering an era of increasing geopolitical tensions caused by competition over scarce natural resources—an era of climate wars.

The global average temperature is already 1 degree above pre-industrial levels. We're already seeing an increase in the frequency and intensity of extreme weather and natural disasters such as heat waves, droughts, cyclones, floods and fires. At 3 degrees warmer, such events will be a "new normal"—with death and destruction visited on communities with increasing regularity.

All this assumes that the

most apocalyptic scenarios won't eventuate. These include, for example, the rapid release of methane and other greenhouse gases trapped in the Arctic permafrost, which could cause runaway temperature rises well beyond current forecasts.

The IPCC report was authored by 91 scientists from 40 countries, referenced more than 6,000 scientific works, and was reviewed by 42,000 experts and government representatives from around the world. If anything, it's highly conservative.

Commissioned in 2015, its aim is merely to outline the benefits and necessary steps for achieving the Paris agreement's stated goal of limiting the rise in global temperatures to 1.5 degrees.

When the agreement was made, the scientific consensus was that 2 degrees was the "safe limit" beyond which we risk being propelled into dangerous runaway warming. The new report makes it clear that even 2 degrees is too great a risk.

The difference between 1.5 degrees of warming and 2 degrees is significant. As the report outlines, for example, a 1.5 degree warmer world would likely lose 70-80 percent of its coral reefs; at 2 degrees warmer, more than 99 percent of coral would die.

At 1.5 degrees warmer, the report notes, "9.6 percent of insects, 8 percent of plants and 4 percent of vertebrates are projected to lose over half of their climatically determined geographic range". At 2 degrees warmer, the figures double to 18 percent of insects, 16 percent of

plants and 8 percent of vertebrates”.

Perhaps the most striking thing about the report, however, is its description of the steps necessary for the world to have a chance of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees. This would require, the authors argue, “rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society. . . . Global net human-caused emissions of carbon dioxide would need to fall by about 45 percent from 2010 levels by 2030, reaching ‘net zero’ around 2050.”

Achieving this would involve an immediate and sharp turn from the current emissions trajectory—one that the world’s major emitters show no sign of being prepared to undertake.

The Australian government is determined to continue with its criminal inaction. Prime minister Scott Morrison told Sydney’s radio 2GB: “We are not held to any of the [IPCC recommendations], and nor are we bound by them.” Deputy prime minister Michael McCormack defended the coal industry, arguing it would continue to play an important role in Australia’s economy for decades to come. He says the government shouldn’t change its policy “just because somebody might suggest that some sort of report is the way we need to follow and everything that we should do.”

Environment minister Melissa Price made perhaps the most bizarre comment—that it would be “irresponsible” for Australia to commit to phasing out coal by 2050. “I just don’t know how you can say by 2050 you are not going to have technology, good clean technology, when it comes to coal”, she said.

The government’s response confirms what most already know: that they run the country not on behalf of all its people, but in the

service of the fossil fuel barons and associated capitalists and investors, who are more than prepared to watch the world burn if it means a few extra billions in profits.

If there’s one thing the past three decades of inaction on climate change has shown, it’s that we can’t rely on governments—in Australia’s case, either of the Liberal or Labor variety—to heed the warnings of scientists and take the steps necessary to halt our slide towards climate catastrophe. None of them are prepared to break with the logic of capitalism, in which the competitive drive to profit rules, and anything that gets in the way of that is to be shunned.

The time for tinkering around the edges is long gone. To achieve the rapid emissions reductions called for in the IPCC report requires a total reshaping of society and the economy. This can’t happen under the auspices of free market capitalism.

The environment movement would do well to reflect on this point. Over the past few decades, it’s poured its energies into lobbying governments and big business—trying to convince them to curb emissions on the basis of scientific arguments about the consequences for the planet if they fail to do so.

This strategy has been a disaster. It’s not that the global capitalist elite and their political servants don’t understand the consequences of their actions. It’s that they know a serious effort to address climate change will put their wealth, power and privileges at risk.

The CDP *Carbon Majors Report*, released in 2017, found that just 100 companies are responsible for more than 70 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions since 1988. These companies are among

the most profitable and politically influential in the world. No amount of rational argument will stop them from continuing their social and environmental vandalism.

The Paris agreement was welcomed by mainstream environment groups as a major breakthrough. The Australian Conservation Foundation, for instance, said it “signals the end of the fossil fuel age and will turbo charge the clean energy revolution already underway.” To continue with such illusions now would be fatal. The IPCC report, just like the Paris agreement, will change nothing without mass, determined action from all who want to save us from the looming catastrophe.

In the 17th century, Galileo got into hot water with the Roman Catholic Inquisition for promoting the “fable” that the earth revolved around the sun. Today, the persecution of such figures is rightly regarded as a last gasp of medieval superstition protecting the privileges of the religious elite against the encroachments of modern science.

The capitalist ruling class’s refusal to act on the observations of contemporary climate science is more regressive and damaging than anything the Inquisition could muster. The world could have survived a few more centuries under the boot of religious despotism. A few more centuries under the despotism of free market capitalism will leave it damaged probably beyond repair.

Our situation is aptly summed up by Nathan Robison, editor of US magazine *Current Affairs*:

There is a famous old left phrase, ‘socialism or barbarism’: there is no choice but to find a way to stop capitalism’s destructive logic, because if left unchecked it will create catastrophe.



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