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It was Death by Mob Lynching and State Sponsored Killing

Sandeep Pandey, Lubna Sarwath and Gurumoorthy M.

Whether it was a slightly high dose of potassium at the All Indian Institute of Medical Sciences at Rishikesh which ultimately caused cardiac arrest or deliberate neglect by the government about his 112 days of fast-unto-death to demand a law for conservation of Ganga by Professor Guru Das Agrawal turned Swami Sanand, the Central Government and especially the Prime Minister will be held responsible for his death. Matre Sadan, the ashram in Haridwar where Professor Agrawal fasted, has accused the government of murder by poisoning him. A 2011 case of murder by poisoning of Swami Nigmanand, a young hermit also associated with Matre Sadan, who fasted for 115 days against illegal sand mining in Ganga, is pending in court.

Professor Agrawal had forewarned the government about his fast by writing to the PM twice. He then again wrote to him twice during the fast. The PM, otherwise known to open his mind regularly in public broadcasts known as Mann ki Baat, chose not to respond, until after Professor Agrawal's death when he tweeted a condolence. The PM has similarly maintained silence on

critical issues like violence against Muslims, Dalits and the 'Me Too campaign'.

Governments play the trick of making an accused out of a victim to politically coverup, and it has become more of a wont under the present Bhartiya Janta Party government in power. Some unknown person is being accused by the authorities of not letting Professor G.D. Agrawal give up his fast. Those who know Professor Agrawal well are aware of his steely resolve. He would tell his well wishers during the marathon fast, 'Worry about Ganga, not about me.' He had chosen the beginning of his fast on Ganga Dussehra, giving up water on the first day of Navratra and predicted his demise before Vijaydashmi. As a true scientist he even planned his death meticulously. The government by accusing Professor Agrawal of continuing his fast under duress wants to divert attention from the main demands that he was making of the government: to enact a law for conservation of Ganga, to halt all hydroelectric projects on it, to ban mining and deforestation activities in its vicinity and to form

a council consisting of people sensitive to Ganga to oversee its interest. It was too embarrassing for the government whose PM contested his parliamentary election from Varanasi declaring that he got a call from mother Ganga, which altered the name of Water Resources ministry to include Ganga Rejuvenation in it, which committed itself to clean Ganga by 2019 and then revised the deadline to 2020, which has already spent 23% of the sanctioned Rs 23,323 crore budget for the purpose, to admit that the health of Ganga has worsened instead of improving during its regime and therefore Professor Agrawal was forced to go on fast.

The country and the world is witnessing horrific protests against the entry of women of all ages to Sabarimala temple in Kerala, which has been facilitated by an order of the Supreme Court. These protests have received a stamp of approval by chief of Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh, the ideological parent of ruling BJP. On the other hand, these very same cadres of Hindutva organisations, with proclivity for various degrees of militancy and who leave no opportunity of exploiting people's religious sentiments, have maintained an eerie silence on the issues raised by Prof. G.D. Agrawal related to protecting Ganga. It exposes the true nature of these right wing organisations. It is clear that politics of polarisation takes precedence over religious-cultural-nationalism issues. RSS has various weapons in its arsenal. This time it chose ostracism of Professor Agrawal on a mass scale and hence it was mob lynching by adopting stoic silence and managing the media so that Professor Agrawal's fast isn't highlighted. Compare

the mass hysteria created by Anna Hazare's short fasts a few years back, which the RSS had helped build up, to the conspicuously absent response from anywhere in the country to Professor Agrawal's long fast. Was Professor Agrawal raising an issue less important than corruption? Corruption can probably be fixed more easily than the damage to environment being caused by our developmental policies. The support to a retrogressive stand on Sabarimala temple entry by RSS-BJP is as shameful as their insensitivity towards the progressive issue of Ganga rejuvenation. Even though the RSS chief has vehemently resented that it is always Hindus who face persecution, the BJP should answer why Muslim women were chosen for 'equality' through an ordinance which jails husbands on a civil matrimonial issue of triple talaq while denying equality to Hindu women who laid claim to visit the Sabarimala temple as their fundamental right?

Professor G.D. Agrawal was an extraordinary scholar not just in the modern sense of knowledge but also in the traditional sense of wisdom. On top of it he was a saint in the true sense, not the kind whose sectarian outlook exacerbates religious polarisation in society, resulting in strife. In fact, Professor Agrawal was against exhibitionist tendencies of religion. The death of such a saintly figure is going to cost the government dear. The saints of Matre Sadan have decided to continue the struggle of Professor Agrawal by resorting to fasting from 24 October, 2018.

The outlook of Professor Agrawal was at variance with that of government, because of which no reconciliation was possible. To

give an example, during his fast, a copy of the draft 'The National River Ganga (Rejuvenation, Protection and Management) Bill, 2018', prepared by the government was given to him by Rajiv Ranjan Mishra, Director General of National Mission for Clean Ganga, for his comments. In this, he changed the sentence 'Parliament declared it expedient and in larger public interest to take control for prevention, control, abatement of pollution and rejuvenation of river Ganga,' to 'Parliament declared it expedient and in larger public interest to lay down the responsibility for maintaining desirable flows and water, sediment and ecological quality and thus rejuvenation of river Ganga.' The government has conceived of a 'Ganga Protection Corps' as an armed force which shall follow the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973, for the purpose of enforcement, rejuvenation, protection and management of river Ganga under the proposed Act and treat offences under this Act punishable as cognisable and non-bailable. Professor Agrawal on the contrary wanted people sensitive to and with a deep understanding about Ganga to form a council which would take responsibility for protection of the river. It has been alleged that Professor Agrawal wanted a religious body to decide on how Ganga ought to be taken care of. This is not true. He wanted the PM to provisionally nominate a 20 member Ganga Bhakta ('Devotee') Parishad (till June 2019), who were to take an oath standing in the waters of Ganga to act in its interest. He nowhere said that these 20 people have to be necessarily religious. In fact, Professor Agrawal didn't want pliant bureaucrats, who have been commercially exploiting

Ganga in nexus with their political masters, to head the body tasked with taking care of Ganga's interest. In less than five years, the head of National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) has been changed seven times. Professor Agrawal wanted autonomy on the lines of that given to Indian Institute of Technology for this supreme body on Ganga. Thus, in contrast to the bureaucratic approach of the Government, that wanted to protect Ganga by policing, Professor Agrawal's outlook was humane and ecological and he wanted to protect Ganga by people's participation.

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From Allahabad to Prayagraj: What's in the Name?

Ram Puniyani

Adityanath Yogi, the Chief Minister of UP, seems to be on a name changing spree. In his latest move, he has changed the name of Allahabad, a famous city of UP, to Prayagraj. Prayag is the meeting point of rivers and since this city is the meeting point of Ganga, Yamuna and probably of the invisible Sarswati, this name might have been chosen by him in his attempts to remove the Islamic touch to the names of our cities. There are many versions about the origins of the name Allahabad. One is that it was Ila-vas, Ila being the mother of mythological Pururva. Another version says it was named after Alha of Alha-Udal (part of popular folklore) fame. Historical records and the coins of that time tell us that Akbar had named it Illaha-bad or Illahi-bas. Illaha is a generic term for God. He regarded this city as a holy city of Hindus and Illah-bas in Persian means 'abode of Gods'. This reflects the inclusive spirit of Akbar. Before this, the Yogi had changed the name of Mughal Sarai to Pundit Deendayal Upadhyay Junction, Urdu Bazar to Hindi Bazar, Ali Nagar to Arya Nagar, etc. He regards all Muslim sounding names as being alien.

In an interview, Yogi said he has to change many more names. On his agenda is to change the name Taj Mahal to Ram Mahal, Azamgarh to Aryamgarh, and to cap it all, change the name India in our Constitution to Hindustan. According to him, these places were renamed after invasion of Muslim kings, so there is a need

to re-change them. Before Yogi, Mayawati had indulged in this name changing game, which was to some extent reversed by her successor Akhilesh Yadav. Now, in a more persistent way, Yogi is identifying the Muslim sounding names and changing them one by one.

Adityanath Yogi is the Mahant of the famous Gorakhnath Math. His predecessor in the Math was also in politics, and the Yogi has been a major player on the political chess board in UP. He comes from the Hindu Mahasabha stream of politics. His dominance has been very visible as his slogan, *UP mein rahna hai to Yogi Yogi kahna hoga* (If you want to stay in UP, you have to chant Yogi-Yogi) had been prevalent in parts of UP. His Hindu Yuva Vahini has been in the news off and on, not for right reasons. He is one among the large number of holy men like Sakshi Maharaj, Sadhvi Uma Bharati, Sadhvi Niranjan Jyoti, etc. who have been a part of the Hindu nationalist agenda. As such, holy men are supposed to have renounced the world to focus on spiritual pursuits, but this lot seems to be more active in worldly pursuits.

This phenomenon of holy men-women entering politics seems to be there in many post-colonial states. In these countries, there has been an absence of radical land reforms and the hold of the landlord-clergy has continued, which seems to be the reason for holy people to be in the political arena. These holy men and women oppose democratic values as being Western or alien, and claim

that these values are against the spirit of 'our' land. They in a way harp on the pre-industrial values of birth based hierarchies. One of the most prominent of these holy men was Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran, who was later succeeded by many Ayatollahs. In Pakistan, the Mullahs have been working closely with the military and landlord elements to undermine democratic possibilities in society. A prominent name that emerged there was that of Maulana Maududi, who worked closely with Zia Ul Haq to further Islamisation of Pakistan. In neighboring Myanmar, monks like Ashin Wirathu, also called 'Burma's Bin Laden', are active in politics and oppose democracy and target the religious minorities there.

In India, we see these holy men dominating the political scene in various ways. Most of these godmen-women have been part of Hindu nationalist movement and are very vicious as far as hate speech is concerned. One recalls that Sadhvi Niranjana Jyoti had used the word *haramzade*, while Sakshi Maharaj was booked for blaming Muslims for population growth. Yogi himself has many cases pending against as far as hate speech is concerned. The worst of these was when he advised the rape of dead Muslim women.

Yogi has intensified the communal agenda to no end. The UP state is organising Hindu religious festivals. One recalls that on the occasion of Diwali, a helicopter carrying Lord Ram and Sita landed and the gods were received by Yogi himself. UP State also organised the lighting of lamps in big numbers. Recently Yogi has again been in the news for declaring that the state government will spend Rs 5,000 crores for the Kumbh mela. All this is taking place at a time when the

state is suffering a severe crunch with regards to health care and other infrastructure related issues. There have been several incidents of young children and infants dying in hospitals for lack of facilities. The cities whose names have been changed languish because of bad infrastructure. UP state continues to rank at the bottom in human growth indices. The human rights condition in the state continues to be abysmal. The condition of minorities is worsening because of

state sponsored moves to trample on their livelihood, such as the order to shut down 'illegal' slaughter houses and meat shops that was issued soon after Yogi came to power in UP.

Yogi has also bluntly stated that secularism is a big lie. His actions are showing how he is forcing the march of the state in the direction of Hindu nation, without any qualms for the secular values enshrined in our Constitution!

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Backdoor Entry of GM Foods into India

Bharat Dogra

The ability of civil society to prevent the cultivation of genetically modified (GM) brinjal and mustard was so far seen as a big achievement of India's democracy as, in a David vs. Goliath fight, activist groups had managed somehow to defeat very powerful lobbies with huge moneybags. However, as more and more evidence of the backdoor entry of GM foods into India surfaces, the earlier feeling of pride in a hard-won battle is being replaced by a deep worry that very serious risks related to GM foods already exist on a large-scale in India.

This backdoor entry of GM foods has taken place in five ways. (i) Due to glaring failures on the part of regulating agencies, GM food imports have been taking place in a big way for several years. These include edible oils (mainly canola and soyabean oil), several breakfast foods and snacks and even infant formulas. (ii) Several domestic food processing units have been using these imported GM oils to produce snacks and other food products on a large scale. (iii) While GM cotton

grown in our country is generally regarded as only a commercial crop and not a food crop, the cottonseed oil obtained from this home-grown crop is being widely used to produce snack foods and other commonly used foods as it is much cheaper than other edible oils. (iv) Because they are much cheaper, both imported and domestic GM oils are being used in a big way to prepare hydrogenated oil or the so-called vanaspati ghee. (v) The dairy animals which feed on GM cotton crop residues and GM cottonseed oilcake are likely to produce milk which has GM ingredients. In fact research at several places has already revealed that a large number of farm animals who fed on GM cotton crop residues have suffered serious health problems.

It is truly shocking that the food safety implications of growing GM cotton have been ignored for so long by the regulating agencies. It is equally inexplicable how, despite GM foods being illegal in India, the import of GM foods has been allowed for so long on a large

scale. All available evidence points to massive negligence and worse. While closing their eyes to GM imports, the very same authorities at the same time illiberally placed many curbs on organic farmers in India and the marketing of their produce.

Recent testing by the Centre for Science and Environment of 65 food products (35 imported, 30 domestic) suspected to be GM contaminated found evidence of GM ingredients in 32 per cent of these 65 products. Almost 80 per cent of these products were imported. Only 4 packaged foods admitted to the presence of GM ingredients. Most of these products simply did not carry any information about GM content; while in 2 cases, false information was provided. GM ingredients were found even in imported infant formulas for very vulnerable children.

All this is very disturbing as the high health risks of GM foods have been well-established by the work of several senior scientists who refused to accept the sponsorship of very powerful multinational companies promoting GM foods and crops. Eminent scientists from several countries, who came together to launch an Independent Science Panel on GM, said about GM crops, "Sufficient evidence has emerged to raise serious safety concerns that if ignored could result in irreversible damage to health and the environment. GM crops should be firmly rejected now." This is confirmed by dozens of studies and reviews of these studies by very eminent scientists. What is most worrying in the context of India is that most of the millions of consumers of GM foods are not even aware that they are consuming GM food, as in most cases it is

being sold without any labeling, and even in the very few cases where some information is given on the packaging, people are not aware of its implications. Clearly we need a big campaign to make people aware

of all health implications and at the same time make the regulating authorities more committed to fulfilling their responsibilities in more honest and careful ways.

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Who Will Speak Truth to Unfreedom?

Neera Chandhoke

It is time to re-read the politically charged play, *The House of Bernarda Alba* (1936), by Federico García Lorca. After their father's death, five young women are forced to live in a barricaded house of mourning for eight years. The doors are latched, windows are curtained with thick black fabric, and every nook and cranny closed. The consequences of living in claustrophobic spaces without men are tragic. The sisters repeatedly attack each other in grotesque performances of frustrated desire.

Bernarda, the mother, is the poster-girl of fascism. One of her daughters dares to wear make-up, Bernarda snatches the make-up and viciously smears it on the face of the young woman. Beyond the barred room, we catch tantalising glimpses of sunlight. Within the house we encounter pitifully deformed psyches and disturbed minds. Lorca authored a formidable play. It was to be his last. Shortly after, he was murdered by fascist forces in Spain. His message remains with us, repressed sexuality is a powerful metaphor for political frustration.

Costs of subjugation

Lorca proved prophetic. Open societies encourage us to accept and welcome different ideas and practices. They liberate and

expand our imaginations and our commitments. When societies turn inwards, they construct barricades between themselves and the outside world. At some point members transfer the notion of the outsider to parts of the collective self. Political subjugation carries heavy costs.

Ruled by a government that verges on authoritarianism, Indians have turned savagely on their own fellow citizens, sometimes in the name of cow-protection, and often because someone has identified A or B as a kidnapper. Sometimes individuals are attacked because they are migrant workers and therefore 'outsiders', and often because they are represented as 'infiltrators'. Disorder is the order of the day, and violence is the currency of social transactions. Sane voices have to speak up.

But where will these sane voices come from? The party in power has identified and cracked down on three sites of debate and dissent, the media, civil society and the public university. Incalculable damage has been done. Public universities are accessible and affordable. They provide training in skills, but more importantly, they expose young minds to nuanced debates in the social sciences and the humanities. The objective is to fine-tune sensibilities and push back

horizons, familiarise young people with the best in literature, philosophy, political science, history, sociology, aesthetics and psychology, and keep alive the spirit of critical inquiry.

Power of the humanities

That is why imaginatively designed courses in the humanities and social sciences lie at the heart of any university worth its name. They encourage students to challenge and interrogate, even as they explore the past and the present. Teachers inspire students to understand the complexities of the human condition, to know what should be done for human beings, and what should not be done to them. Above all students are introduced to categories that allow them to think, reflect, and critically engage with people, places and things.

When academics acquaint students with Indian politics through the searing prose of Shrilal Shukla's *Raag Darbari*, communicate the densities of human emotions through *King Lear*, acquaint them with spectres of domination and the exhilarating prospect of resistance through the poetic lens of *Antigone*, or convey the horrors of communal conflagration through the powerful pen of Yashpal in his *Jhootha Sach*, they do not just transmit information—they contribute to the making of knowledge. In the process, university teachers promote the notion of citizenship as solidarity with the less advantaged and warn students of the horrors of authoritarian rule that seeks to control and dominate. The idea is to produce aware and enlightened citizens conscious of their own power and the responsibilities of an elected government.

This is precisely why the

latest avatar of capitalism in the 1990s, neoliberalism, devalued social sciences and humanities. Capitalism demands docile bodies and submissive minds. In 2010, Terry Eagleton, the celebrated literary critic, spoke of the death of universities. Academia, he rued, has become a servant of the status quo. Can we have a university without the humanities? It would be like a bar without alcohol! If history and philosophy vanish from academic life, they may be replaced by a technical training facility or corporate research institute, he wrote. But this will not be a university in the classic sense of the term. Eagleton is perceptive. Without critical disciplines, universities are no more than teaching shops, producing so much unthinking labour for the market.

The second attack on the university has come from the current government. Shortly after they came to power in 2014, leaders of the Bharatiya Janata Party began to demonise one of the finest centres of academic excellence and enlightened debate, the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU). Ignoble attempts to subjugate the faculty and students followed. This was replicated in other Central universities by the appointment of Vice-Chancellors of questionable merit, and the elevation of storm troopers of the ruling party to faculty positions.

Now the government has decided that teaching and research have to be controlled. University administrations have ruled that faculties of Central universities will be subject to Central Civil Services (Conduct) Rules. This, it is said, is the diktat of the University Grants Commission, which is at best a funding and administrative

organisation. In JNU, the decision has been adopted without regard for procedures of rule-making: the passage of a proposed policy through the Academic Council, the Executive Council and the University Court.

Starkly put, these regulations stipulate that academics cannot protest, howsoever grave be the provocation. In the academic world, invitations to join editorial boards of prestigious journals are rightly seen as a justifiable reward for academic excellence. This is now banned. Faculty members cannot criticise the policies of the government in their research work. Nor can they dare to critique a flawed foreign policy. And they cannot join political parties.

Just court history

The policy strikes at the very idea of a public university that embodies the spirit of critical inquiry. Now no academic can ask her students to reflect on the shortcomings of economic policies that reproduce inequality, on social practices that foster gender and caste discrimination, on the politics of intolerance, on historical inquiry, or on cultural practices that disable rights in the name of tradition. Academic research has been reduced to court history.

It is clear that holders of power and their academic courtiers have extracted retribution and punished those who have dared to speak back to unfreedom. But in the process, the ruling party and compliant Vice-Chancellors have shot themselves in the foot. A society is known ultimately by the knowledge its universities and research centres produce, by the excellence of the faculty and by the curiosity of the students. Today, knowledge has been replaced with trite information.

Mediocrity rules, and eminent academics are crudely harassed. Above all, the order demeans reputed academics the precise way in which Bernarda, the mother in Lorca's play, humiliated her

daughter. The difference is that now the censor board will gag analytical and insightful scholarship. Instead of strengthening the public university, which was meant to be

a training ground for citizenship, the government has deliberately weakened an academic structure that has great potential to chart a route to opportunity and social justice.

Jayaprakash Narayan: An Idealist Betrayed – Part III

M.G. Devasahayam

The third part of a personal epitaph on Jayaprakash Narayan by former civil servant M.G. Devasahayam.

RSS—A Reality Check

This is what RSS claims itself to be in its website: "A unique phenomenon in the history of Bharat in the twentieth century is the birth and unceasing growth of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. The Sangh's sphere of influence has been spreading far and wide, not only inside Bharat but also abroad, like the radiance of a many-splendoured diamond. Sangh-inspired institutions and movements today form a strong presence in social, cultural, educational, labour, developmental, political and other fields of nationalist endeavour. Sangh-initiated movements—be they social-reformist or anti-secessionist—evoke a ready response and approbation from the common multitudes as well as from vast numbers of the elite of different shades. It has increasingly been recognised that the Sangh is not a mere reaction to one or another social or political aberration. It represents a corpus of thought and action firmly rooted in genuine nationalism and in the age-old tradition of this country."

Indeed, RSS has grown phenomenally during the past five

decades. Its swyamsewaks now hold the top four constitutional posts of President, Vice President, Prime Minister and Lok Sabha speaker. They occupy 20 Raj Bhawans as Governors, some of whom even actively participate in and manage shakhas!

Eighteen of them are chief ministers. Half the Union Cabinet comprises RSS members. The political initiation of over 1,000 MLAs and 250 MPs has been through the RSS. About a million Indians daily attend the over 55,000 shakhas across the country. Its 500-odd frontal organisations manage colleges, schools, media, hospitals, and tribal and Dalit NGOs. Ten thousand full-time pracharakas are active in politics, culture and various think tanks at home and abroad.

Despite such impressive achievements and claims, there is a sense of guilt among the RSS brass and it feels isolated. To undo this, RSS chief Dr Mohanrao Bhagwat organised the Bhavishya Ka Bharat (India of the Future) talk-show to over 1,000 prominent citizens from across the national spectrum at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi, from September 17 to 19, 2018. The idea was to start a meaningful dialogue between the powerful and the hopeful. Bhagwat took an array of questions and responded to them with aplomb. He made it a point to

emphasise that RSS is the "most democratic organisation" with a past in the freedom struggle and a desire to work for society while shunning all publicity.

Bhagwat also came out with several sweeping statements on Hindutva, Ram Mandir dispute, mob lynchings, women empowerment and religious conversions which were in sharp contrast to the actions of the Sangh parivar on the ground, indicating callous hypocrisy! Here are few instances:

- Mohan Bhagwat said, "We want a Hindu Rashtra but that does not mean we don't want Muslims in it." In 2017, RSS leader Kundan Chandrawat boasted of killing 2,000 Muslims in Gujarat and said, "Have you forgotten Godhra? You killed 56, we sent 2,000 to the graveyard. We—this same Hindu community—shoved [their corpses] underground."
- On Mob lynchings, he said: "Why just cows, taking law into one's own hand, violence, destroying property for any reason are totally unacceptable." In 2015, the RSS chief called the lynching of Mohammed Akhlaq in Dadri a "small episode" that cannot damage "Hindu culture". After another Muslim man, Rakbar Khan, was lynched in Alwar over suspicion of cow

slaughter, RSS leader Indresh Kumar remarked that lynchings would stop if people stopped eating cow meat and protected them instead.

- On conversions, Mohan Bhagwat said, “If all religions are equal, then what is the need for conversion?” And he added, “Gods cannot be sold in markets or forcefully worshipped, hence forceful conversions must stop.” In 2014, according to India Today, an offshoot of the RSS claimed to have converted at least 57 Muslim families to Hinduism at a Purkhon ki ghar vapsi ceremony in Uttar Pradesh's Agra district.
- On gender equality, Mohan Bhagwat said, “Women are also coming out in the field and working equally with men and they must do that. So, we need to ensure they are secure. Hence, empowerment of both men and women are needed.” The sarsanghchalak himself has been in the eye of a storm for his controversial remarks on women and rape. In 2013, he blamed western culture for incidents of crimes against women.
- On the RSS' role during freedom struggle, Mohan Bhagwat went ballistic and said: “When the Congress passed the resolution for Purna Swaraj [complete independence], Doctor Saheb [Hegdewar] issued a circular asking all [RSS] shakhas to march past with the tricolour.”

RSS and Freedom Struggles

All pretensions notwithstanding, it is an open secret that the RSS is averse to the concept of freedom as expounded by JP. But the ideologues of the RSS clan are working overtime

to create a narrative of the RSS's participation in India's anti-colonial freedom struggle. This project got impetus after the electoral victory in 2014 of the RSS / BJP (which was celebrated as the return of Hindu rule after 1,000 years). But there is overwhelming evidence to the contrary and a lot has been written and spoken on the subject. The fact is that the RSS did not participate in the first freedom struggle and, in fact, had colluded with the British in perpetuating the colonial rule!

What we should be concerned with now is the role played by the RSS in the second freedom struggle—the JP Movement, the Emergency and after. The fact is that the Emergency rendered the Jana Sangh, the BJP's predecessor, respectable and paved the way for it to enter the mainstream of Indian politics. Indeed, RSS literature describes the Emergency as the "second freedom struggle", with the Sangh at the head of it. The struggle of others in opposing the Emergency, in this account, was incidental; it was the RSS that saved democracy, it claims. The role of peoples' movements is erased here; the Sangh itself is the people.

The reality is that the RSS and its flock in the BJP have no locus standi to make such claims about Emergency, because its own leaders groveled before the Congress dispensation to win reprieves from jail terms and have the ban lifted on their organisation.

Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's imposition of the Emergency was no mere mistake; it was a sin, a constitutional crime committed for purely personal reasons, namely, to nullify the judgment of the Allahabad High Court of June 12, 1975 declaring her election

to the Lok Sabha to be void. She put her political opponents behind bars, imposed press censorship, suspended fundamental rights, extended the life of the Lok Sabha, rushed through the Parliament the 42nd Constitutional amendment to undermine our democracy, attempted to give herself immunity from criminal proceedings, nullified the High Court judgment, and even made serious moves to discard the Constitution itself by convening a Constituent Assembly to establish a presidential system.

But, in his correspondence with Indira Gandhi during the Emergency, the RSS boss, Balasaheb Deoras, never criticised these sordid moves nor called for a return to the democratic order. Instead, on his advice and instructions, his men from the RSS gave unconditional undertakings to get out of prison. The government prepared a standard form which RSS detenus happily signed. Some of them did not wait for the form. They gave unqualified undertakings in their own language, if only to get out.

The Government's draft “pro-forma undertaking” read thus:

I, Shri..... Detenu Class I..... prisoner agree on affidavit that in case of my release I shall not do anything which is detrimental to internal security and public peace. Similarly, I shall not do anything which would hamper the distribution of essential goods. So also, I shall not participate in any illegal activities. I shall not indulge in any activities which is prejudicial to the present emergency.

The RSS men did not opt for prison. They were thrown into prison. The Emergency was declared on June 25, 1975. Deoras was arrested and put into prison on June

30. The RSS was banned, along with 23 other bodies, on July 4. The RSS' initial response was to wait and watch. Then they decided to compromise. Accordingly, Deoras began shooting off letters to Indira Gandhi, S.B. Chavan, Chief Minister of Maharashtra, and the 'Sarkari Sant' Vinoba Bhave. These letters, along with letters by others, were placed on the table of the Maharashtra Assembly by Chavan.

The very first para of Deoras' first letter to Indira Gandhi, dated August 22, 1975, read: "I have heard the speech you delivered on August 15, 1975, from the Red Fort, Delhi on A.I.R. The speech was balanced and befitting to the occasion and has prompted me to write this letter to you." Unctuous and false, as ever.

"The aim of the RSS is to unify and organise Hindu society. . . . There are people who allege that RSS is a communal organisation. This also is a baseless charge. Although at present the activities of the Sangh are confined to the Hindu society, the Sangh never preaches anything against any non-Hindu. It is absolutely wrong that the Sangh is anti-Muslim. We don't even use an improper word regarding Islam, Mohammad, Kuran, Christianity, Christ or the Bible." M.S. Golwalkar's books *We or Our Nationhood Defined* and *Bunch of Thoughts* expose the falsity of the denial.

The concluding para of Deoras' letter read: "I request you to please reconsider the case of the Sangh without any prejudice. In the light of the democratic right of freedom to organise, I beseech you to rescind the ban imposed upon the RSS." And no more. Not a word about lifting the Emergency or releasing others from prisons.

This letter, indeed, the entire correspondence, was conducted behind the back of the members of the Lok Sangarsh Samiti, with whom the RSS and its pointsman, Nanaji Deshmukh, were associated. They were all stabbed in the back by the RSS' cowardly betrayal. Indira Gandhi ignored him and his letters. Deoras' first letter to S.B. Chavan, dated July 15, 1975, said: "The Sangh has done nothing against the government or society even remotely. There is no place for such things in the Sangh's programme. The Sangh is engaged only in social and cultural activities."

Former Intelligence Bureau chief T.V. Rajeswar has claimed that the RSS had supported the Emergency and the then Sangh chief Balasaheb Deoras had tried to establish contact with Indira Gandhi and Sanjay Gandhi.

I am myself privy to such surrenders and apologies. RSS activists detained in Chandigarh were only a handful and all of them except one gave apology letters requesting for pardon and release. Needless to say, these requests were rejected. When I told JP that many RSS / Jan Sangh activists detained under MISA were tendering unconditional apology and were resigning from their party in order to get released, he just called them traitors.

As against the letters of surrender by 'RSS-nationalists' to the Emergency regime, this is a brief extract from the letter JP wrote from jail to Indira Gandhi on 21 July, 1975:

You know I am an old man. My life's work is done. And after Prabha's going I have nothing and no one to live for. . . I have given all my life, after finishing education, to

the country and asked for nothing in return. So, I shall be content to die a prisoner under your regime . . .

Would you listen to the advise of such a man? Please do not destroy the foundation that the Fathers of the Nation, including your own noble father, had laid down. There is nothing but strife and suffering along the path that you have taken. You inherited a great tradition, noble values and a great democracy. Do not leave behind a miserable wreck of all that. It would take long time to put that all together again. For it would be put together again I have no doubt. A people who fought British imperialism and humbled it cannot accept the indignity and shame of totalitarianism.

The spirit of man can never be vanquished, no matter how deeply suppressed. In establishing your personal dictatorship, you have buried it deep. But it will rise from the grave . . .

While 73-year old JP, despite his poor health, refused to ask for parole, defied the Emergency and struggled to make India free, a bulk of the RSS 'sevak's' were prostrating and surrendering before the Imperial Indira. There were also reports that some top brasses of the RSS were in cohort with Sanjay Gandhi, the real Emergency master trying to run a fascist state! Such an entity whom JP called 'traitors' claim that they fought the Emergency and were the ones to win India's Second Freedom struggle! What a nerve!

Spectre of Fascism

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The American Economy is Rigged

Joseph E. Stiglitz

The US Census Bureau recently released 2017 statistics which showed that almost 45 million Americans are living in poverty and 28 million do not have healthcare.

Americans are used to thinking that their nation is special. In many ways, it is: the US has by far the most Nobel Prize winners, the largest defense expenditures (almost equal to the next 10 or so countries put together) and the most billionaires (twice as many as China, the closest competitor). But some examples of American Exceptionalism should not make us proud. By most accounts, the US has the highest level of economic inequality among developed countries. It has the world's greatest per capita health expenditures yet the lowest life expectancy among comparable countries. It is also one of a few developed countries jostling for the dubious distinction of having the lowest measures of equality of opportunity.

The notion of the American Dream—that, unlike old Europe, we are a land of opportunity—is part of our essence. Yet the numbers say otherwise. The life prospects of a young American depend more on the income and education of his or her parents than in almost any other advanced country. When poor-boy-makes-good anecdotes get passed around in the media, that is precisely because such stories are so rare.

Things appear to be getting worse, partly as a result of forces, such as technology and globalisation, that seem beyond our control, but most disturbingly because of those

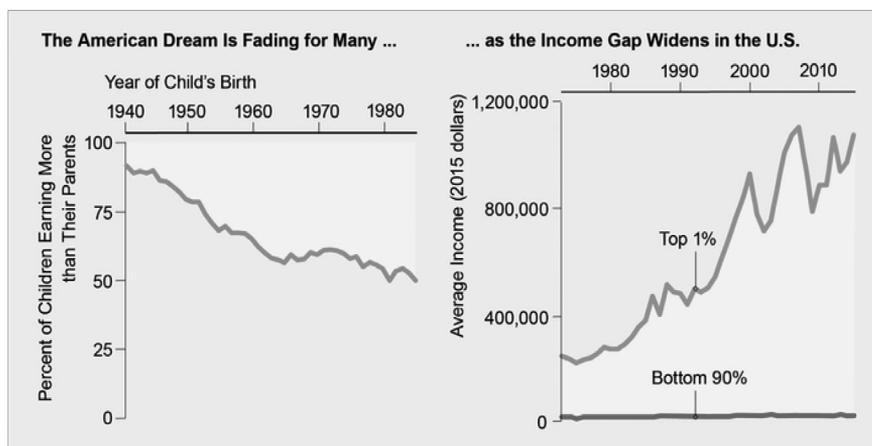
within our command. It is not the laws of nature that have led to this dire situation: it is the laws of humankind. Markets do not exist in a vacuum: they are shaped by rules and regulations, which can be designed to favor one group over another. President Donald Trump was right in saying that the system is rigged—by those in the inherited plutocracy of which he himself is a member. And he is making it much, much worse.

America has long outdone others in its level of inequality, but in the past 40 years it has reached new heights. Whereas the income share of the top 0.1 percent has more than quadrupled and that of the top 1 percent has almost doubled, that of the bottom 90 percent has declined. Wages at the bottom, adjusted for inflation, are about the same as they were some 60 years ago! In fact, for those with a high school education or less, incomes have fallen over recent decades. Males have been particularly hard hit, as the US has moved away from manufacturing industries into an economy based on services.

Deaths of Despair

Wealth is even less equally distributed, with just three Americans having as much as the bottom 50 percent—testimony to how much money there is at the top and how little there is at the bottom. Families in the bottom 50 percent hardly have the cash reserves to meet an emergency. Newspapers are replete with stories of those for whom the breakdown of a car or an illness starts a downward spiral from which they never recover.

In significant part because of high inequality, US life expectancy, exceptionally low to begin with, is experiencing sustained declines. This in spite of the marvels of medical science, many advances of which occur right here in America and which are made readily available to the rich. Economist Ann Case and 2015 Nobel laureate in economics Angus Deaton describe one of the main causes of rising morbidity—the increase in alcoholism, drug overdoses and suicides—as “deaths of despair” by those who have given up hope.



Defenders of America's inequality have a pat explanation. They refer to the workings of a competitive market, where the laws of supply and demand determine wages, prices and even interest rates—a mechanical system, much like that describing the physical universe. Those with scarce assets or skills are amply rewarded, they argue, because of the larger contributions they make to the economy. What they get merely represents what they have contributed. Often they take out less than they contributed, so what is left over for the rest is that much more.

This fictional narrative may at one time have assuaged the guilt of those at the top and persuaded everyone else to accept this sorry state of affairs. Perhaps the defining moment exposing the lie was the 2008 financial crisis, when the bankers who brought the global economy to the brink of ruin with predatory lending, market manipulation and various other anti-social practices walked away with millions of dollars in bonuses just as millions of Americans lost their jobs and homes and tens of millions more worldwide suffered on their account. Virtually none of these bankers were ever held to account for their misdeeds.

I became aware of the fantastical nature of this narrative as a schoolboy, when I thought of the wealth of the plantation owners, built on the backs of slaves. At the time of the Civil War, the market value of the slaves in the South was approximately half of the region's total wealth, including the value of the land and the physical capital—the factories and equipment. The wealth of at least this part of this nation was not based on industry, innovation and commerce but rather on exploitation.

Today we have replaced this open exploitation with more insidious forms, which have intensified since the Reagan–Thatcher revolution of the 1980s. This exploitation, I will argue, is largely to blame for the escalating inequality in the US

After the New Deal of the 1930s, American inequality went into decline. By the 1950s inequality had receded to such an extent that another Nobel laureate in economics, Simon Kuznets, formulated what came to be called Kuznets's law. In the early stages of development, as some parts of a country seize new opportunities, inequalities grow, he postulated; in the later stages, they shrink. The theory long fit the data—but then, around the early 1980s, the trend abruptly reversed.

Explaining Inequality

Economists have put forward a range of explanations for why inequality has in fact been increasing in many developed countries. Some argue that advances in technology have spurred the demand for skilled labor relative to unskilled labor, thereby depressing the wages of the latter. Yet that alone cannot explain why even skilled labor has done so poorly over the past two decades, why average wages have done so badly and why matters are so much worse in the US than in other developed nations. Changes in technology are global and should affect all advanced economies in the same way. Other economists blame globalisation itself, which has weakened the power of workers. Firms can and do move abroad unless demands for higher wages are curtailed. But again, globalisation has been integral to all advanced economies. Why is its impact so much worse in the US?

The shift from a manufacturing

to a service-based economy is partly to blame. At its extreme—a firm of one person—the service economy is a winner-takes-all system. A movie star makes millions, for example, whereas most actors make a pittance. Overall, wages are likely to be far more widely dispersed in a service economy than in one based on manufacturing, so the transition contributes to greater inequality. This fact does not explain, however, why the average wage has not improved for decades. Moreover, the shift to the service sector is happening in most other advanced countries: Why are matters so much worse in the US?

Again, because services are often provided locally, firms have more market power: the ability to raise prices above what would prevail in a competitive market. A small town in rural America may have only one authorised Toyota repair shop, which virtually every Toyota owner is forced to patronise. The providers of these local services can raise prices over costs, increasing their profits and the share of income going to owners and managers. This, too, increases inequality. But again, why is US inequality practically unique?

In his celebrated 2013 *treatise Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, French economist Thomas Piketty shifts the gaze to capitalists. He suggests that the few who own much of a country's capital save so much that, given the stable and high return to capital (relative to the growth rate of the economy), their share of the national income has been increasing. His theory has, however, been questioned on many grounds. For instance, the savings rate of even the rich in the US is so low, compared with the rich in other countries, that the increase in inequality should be lower here, not greater.

An alternative theory is far more consonant with the facts. Since the mid-1970s the rules of the economic game have been rewritten, both globally and nationally, in ways that advantage the rich and disadvantage the rest. And they have been rewritten further in this perverse direction in the US than in other developed countries—even though the rules in the US were already less favorable to workers. From this perspective, increasing inequality is a matter of choice: a consequence of our policies, laws and regulations.

In the US, the market power of large corporations, which was greater than in most other advanced countries to begin with, has increased even more than elsewhere. On the other hand, the market power of workers, which started out less than in most other advanced countries, has fallen further than elsewhere. This is not only because of the shift to a service-sector economy—it is because of the rigged rules of the game, rules set in a political system that is itself rigged through gerrymandering, voter suppression and the influence of money. A vicious spiral has formed: economic inequality translates into political inequality, which leads to rules that favor the wealthy, which in turn reinforces economic inequality.

Feedback Loop

Political scientists have documented the ways in which money influences politics in certain political systems, converting higher economic inequality into greater political inequality. Political inequality, in its turn, gives rise to more economic inequality as the rich use their political power to shape the rules of the game in ways that favor them—for instance, by softening

anti-trust laws and weakening unions. Using mathematical models, economists such as myself have shown that this two-way feedback loop between money and regulations leads to at least two stable points. If an economy starts out with lower inequality, the political system generates rules that sustain it, leading to one equilibrium situation. The American system is the other equilibrium—and will continue to be unless there is a democratic political awakening.

An account of how the rules have been shaped must begin with anti-trust laws, first enacted 128 years ago in the US to prevent the agglomeration of market power. Their enforcement has weakened—at a time when, if anything, the laws themselves should have been strengthened. Technological changes have concentrated market power in the hands of a few global players, in part because of so-called network effects: you are far more likely to join a particular social network or use a certain word processor if everyone you know is already using it. Once established, a firm such as Facebook or Microsoft is hard to dislodge. Moreover, fixed costs, such as that of developing a piece of software, have increased as compared with marginal costs—that of duplicating the software. A new entrant has to bear all these fixed costs up front, and if it does enter, the rich incumbent can respond by lowering prices drastically. The cost of making an additional e-book or photo-editing program is essentially zero.

In short, entry is hard and risky, which gives established firms with deep war chests enormous power to crush competitors and ultimately raise prices. Making matters worse, US firms have been

innovative not only in the products they make but in thinking of ways to extend and amplify their market power. The European Commission has imposed fines of billions of dollars on Microsoft and Google and ordered them to stop their anti-competitive practices (such as Google privileging its own comparison shopping service). In the US, we have done too little to control concentrations of market power, so it is not a surprise that it has increased in many sectors.

Rigged rules also explain why the impact of globalisation may have been worse in the US. A concerted attack on unions has almost halved the fraction of unionised workers in the nation, to about 11 percent. (In Scandinavia, it is roughly 70 percent.) Weaker unions provide workers less protection against the efforts of firms to drive down wages or worsen working conditions. Moreover, US investment treaties such as the North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement—treaties that were sold as a way of preventing foreign countries from discriminating against American firms—also protect investors against a tightening of environmental and health regulations abroad. For instance, they enable corporations to sue nations in private international arbitration panels for passing laws that protect citizens and the environment but threaten the multinational company's bottom line. Firms like these provisions, which enhance the credibility of a company's threat to move abroad if workers do not temper their demands. In short, these investment agreements weaken US workers' bargaining power even further.

Liberated Finance

Many other changes to our norms, laws, rules and regulations

have contributed to inequality. Weak corporate governance laws have allowed chief executives in the US to compensate themselves 361 times more than the average worker, far more than in other developed countries. Financial liberalisation—the stripping away of regulations designed to prevent the financial sector from imposing harms, such as the 2008 economic crisis, on the rest of society—has enabled the finance industry to grow in size and profitability and has increased its opportunities to exploit everyone else. Banks routinely indulge in practices that are legal but should not be, such as imposing usurious interest rates on borrowers or exorbitant fees on merchants for credit and debit cards and creating securities that are designed to fail. They also frequently do things that are illegal, including market manipulation and insider trading. In all of this, the financial sector has moved money away from ordinary Americans to rich bankers and the banks' shareholders. This redistribution of wealth is an important contributor to American inequality.

Other means of so-called rent extraction—the withdrawal of income from the national pie that is incommensurate with societal contribution—abound. For example, a legal provision enacted in 2003 prohibited the government from negotiating drug prices for Medicare—a gift of some \$50 billion a year or more to the pharmaceutical industry. Special favours, such as extractive industries' obtaining public resources such as oil at below fair-market value or banks' getting funds from the Federal Reserve at near-zero interest rates (which they relend at high interest rates), also amount to rent extraction. Further

exacerbating inequality is favorable tax treatment for the rich. In the US, those at the top pay a smaller fraction of their income in taxes than those who are much poorer—a form of largesse that the Trump administration has just worsened with the 2017 tax bill.

Some economists have argued that we can lessen inequality only by giving up on growth and efficiency. But recent research, such as work done by Jonathan Ostry and others at the International Monetary Fund, suggests that economies with greater equality perform better, with higher growth, better average standards of living and greater stability. Inequality in the extremes observed in the US and in the manner generated there actually damages the economy. The exploitation of market power and the variety of other distortions I have described, for instance, makes markets less efficient, leading to underproduction of valuable goods such as basic research and overproduction of others, such as exploitative financial products.

Moreover, because the rich typically spend a smaller fraction of their income on consumption than the poor, total or “aggregate” demand in countries with higher inequality is weaker. Societies could make up for this gap by increasing government spending—on infrastructure, education and health, for instance, all of which are investments necessary for long-term growth. But the politics of unequal societies typically puts the burden on monetary policy: interest rates are lowered to stimulate spending. Artificially low interest rates, especially if coupled with inadequate financial market regulation, often give rise to bubbles, which is what happened with the 2008 housing crisis.

It is no surprise that, on average, people living in unequal societies have less equality of opportunity: those at the bottom never get the education that would enable them to live up to their potential. This fact, in turn, exacerbates inequality while wasting the country's most valuable resource: Americans themselves.

Restoring Justice

Morale is lower in unequal societies, especially when inequality is seen as unjust, and the feeling of being used or cheated leads to lower productivity. When those who run gambling casinos or bankers suffering from moral turpitude make a zillion times more than the scientists and inventors who brought us lasers, transistors and an understanding of DNA, it is clear that something is wrong. Then again, the children of the rich come to think of themselves as a class apart, entitled to their good fortune, and accordingly more likely to break the rules necessary for making society function. All of this contributes to a breakdown of trust, with its attendant impact on social cohesion and economic performance.

There is no magic bullet to remedy a problem as deep-rooted as America's inequality. Its origins are largely political, so it is hard to imagine meaningful change without a concerted effort to take money out of politics—through, for instance, campaign finance reform. Blocking the revolving doors by which regulators and other government officials come from and return to the same industries they regulate and work with is also essential.

Beyond that, we need more progressive taxation and high-quality federally funded public education, including affordable access to universities for all, no

ruinous loans required. We need modern competition laws to deal with the problems posed by 21st-century market power and stronger enforcement of the laws we do have. We need labor laws that protect workers and their rights to unionise. We need corporate governance laws that curb exorbitant salaries bestowed on chief executives, and we need stronger financial regulations that will prevent banks from engaging in the exploitative practices that have become their hallmark. We need better enforcement of antidiscrimination laws: it is unconscionable that women and minorities get paid a mere fraction of what their white male counterparts receive. We also need more sensible inheritance laws that will reduce the intergenerational transmission of advantage and disadvantage.

The basic perquisites of a middle-class life, including a secure old age, are no longer attainable for most Americans. We need to guarantee access to health care. We need to strengthen and reform retirement programs, which have put an increasing burden of risk management on workers (who are expected to manage their portfolios to guard simultaneously against the risks of inflation and market collapse) and opened them up to exploitation by our financial sector (which sells them products designed to maximise bank fees rather than retirement security). Our mortgage system was our Achilles' heel, and we have not really fixed it. With such a large fraction of Americans living in cities, we have to have urban housing policies that ensure affordable housing for all.

It is a long agenda—but a doable one. When skeptics say it is nice but not affordable, I reply: We cannot

afford to not do these things. We are already paying a high price for inequality, but it is just a down payment on what we will have to pay if we do not do something—and quickly. It is not just our economy that is at stake; we are risking our democracy.

As more of our citizens come to understand why the fruits of

economic progress have been so unequally shared, there is a real danger that they will become open to a demagogue blaming the country's problems on others and making false promises of rectifying “a rigged system.” We are already experiencing a foretaste of what might happen. It could get much worse.

Socialism frightens Trump

Martin Varese, Michael Blosser

The White House's Council of Economic Advisers (CEA) released a report towards the end of October 2018 on “The Opportunity Costs of Socialism,” apparently based on the fact that “coincident with the 200th anniversary of Karl Marx's birth, socialism is making a comeback in American political discourse,” even though Marx's birth was in May (1818).

Reading through the report, it becomes abundantly clear that the Trump administration is afraid of this “comeback” of socialism in the US, as more left-leaning and self-proclaimed politicians are gaining space in the country's politics.

The Democratic Socialists of America has grown to more than 50,000 members, with socialist policies such as universal healthcare, free education and taxes on the rich and corporations now being supported by the majority of the US population. The study equates this rise of socialism to the 200th anniversary of Marx; however, it conveniently “forgets” to mention the rise of fascism and discriminatory politics, ascendent since the electoral triumph of Donald Trump in November 2016.

This “coincidental” report was published just before November's midterm elections, at a time when

progressive candidates are rising in the polls and gaining popularity with more people. The CEA thought it would be a good idea to use tactics from the 1950s when the “red scare” and the “witch hunt” against communism and communists were a horrifying reality during McCarthyism.

The report comes weeks before the elections, and weeks after a new study from the Pew Research Center unveiled that “six-in-ten Americans say it is the federal government's responsibility to make sure all Americans have health care coverage, including 31% who support a ‘single payer’ approach to health insurance.” Whereas 30 percent of voters believe that health care is the “most important” issue, followed by jobs and economy with 21 percent, while both immigration and gun policy are at 15 percent.

Republicans, represented by the Trump administration and the White House, are trying to minimise the rise of the “self-declared socialists (that) are gaining support in Congress and among much of the electorate,” which really explains the sole purpose of the CEA's report.

The words of Democratic congressional candidate Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez given in August seem to be more appropriate now

than ever:

Why is it that our pockets are only empty when it comes to education and health care for our kids? Why are our pockets only empty when we talk about 100 percent renewable energy that is going to save this planet and allow our children to thrive, (but) we write unlimited blank checks for war. We just wrote a US\$2 trillion check for that GOP tax cut and nobody asked those folks how they are going to pay for it.

This report tries to cloak itself in an allegedly “academic” aura, and is essentially based on Milton Friedman’s economic system, an extremist free market and minimal intervention policy. Friedman’s thesis promotes the dismantling of public services like firefighters, police, libraries, schools, hospitals, or anything else that can save or help people that can’t afford it. The benefits go to a rich minority in society, to the detriment of the masses.

The report first talks about countries like Cuba, calling them “nondemocratic governments” and rapidly discrediting them for “substantially less food production and tens of millions of deaths by starvation.”

The authors of this report conveniently fail to mention US involvement in the murderous 60-year US-backed blockade imposed on the island, and of course, they refuse to mention the various achievements that the Cuban Revolution has accomplished. A 99-percent literacy rate, free education from elementary school through university, universal health care praised by the United Nations, and one of the lowest infant mortality rates in the world. All of these achievements despite the genocidal US blockade that has cost the island \$134.5 billion over six decades.

The CEA report wants people to think that Cuba has no freedom, which isn’t actually true. Not only is there a solid democracy in Cuba, but also the basic needs of the country’s population are satisfied. “To many, freedom is an absence of worry. The desire and need for a social fabric knit well to support the basic prerequisites: food, shelter, health and education. None of them are a charity, because they are an investment in the fundamental source of a society’s well-being: human capital,” wrote Dr. Arshad M. Khan in 2017.

The report later takes on Venezuela, a country with “highly socialist policies (that) are peacefully implemented under the auspices of democracy,” to try and debunk the Bolivarian Revolution specifically, and generally the “XXI Century Socialism” or “National and Popular Projects” of the Latin American countries. “These countries are examples of a more general pattern of socialism’s negative output effects,” reads the report.

However, it also conveniently leaves out a staggering number of facts. First, it omits yet another murderous blockade and economic war waged by the US against Venezuela; the same Venezuela that has built over two million houses for the poor, and who, with Cuba’s help, gave medical care to people who had never seen a doctor in their life; the same Venezuela that managed to redistribute for the sake of wellness and raise millions out of poverty.

The report also erases Bolivia, a country that has democratically and independently achieved the highest economic growth rate in South America. Under the first indigenous President Evo Morales, the country instituted a series of economic and social reforms that encapsulated and faithfully executed theories of 21st Century Socialism; a different way

of facing Latin America’s problems; and the path farthest away from the neoliberalism practiced and praised by Friedman and implemented in other parts of Latin America by his apprentices, “the Chicago Boys.”

With sovereign initiatives enacted by President Evo Morales, Bolivia’s socio-economic model used income from export resources to diversify the economy, created social programs aimed at redistributing riches, and reduced poverty over the last decade.

The report also neglects to mention Argentina, Brazil, Peru, Colombia and Mexico, countries currently suffering under governments that unequivocally follow neoliberal recipes mainly backed by the US and enforced by the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

These right-wing governments lay the foundation for their economic model in inequality, disguised in free-market policies, and the idea that the state must not intervene—exactly the opposite of those qualities the CEA’s defines as “socialism.” Similarly, during the “golden” decade of neoliberalism in Latin America in the 90s, in which right-wing governments implemented Structural Adjustment Programs by the IMF and the World Bank and followed the wishes of their US and Western European capitalist masters, the region became one of the poorest and most unequal in the world and also demonstrated poor or negative economic growth.

Latin America has shown to the world, during more or less the past decade, that socialism can work and indeed, works better than capitalism. During the past few years (depending on which country we are talking about) the return of neoliberalism has brought back crisis, poverty, and inequality to the region.



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