

# janata

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Editor : **G. G. Parikh**

Associate Editor : **Neeraj Jain**

Managing Editor : **Guddi**

Editorial Board :

**B. Vivekanandan, Qurban Ali Anil Nauriya, Sonal Shah Amarendra Dhaneshwar, Sandeep Pandey**

D-15, Ganesh Prasad,  
Naushir Bharucha Marg,  
Mumbai - 400 007.

Email : [janataweekly@gmail.com](mailto:janataweekly@gmail.com)  
Website: [www.janataweekly.org](http://www.janataweekly.org)

## Manifesto of Indian Farmers

*Adopted by an assembly representing the farmers of India on the occasion of the historic Kisan Mukti March organised by the All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee, Delhi, 30 November 2018.*

### We, The Farmers of India,

The producers of primary agricultural commodities;

- including women, dalit, nomadic and adivasi farmers;
- landowners, tenants, sharecroppers, agricultural labourers and plantation workers;
- fishworkers, milk producers, poultry farmers, livestock rearers, pastoralists, and collectors of minor forest produce; and,
- everyone engaged in crop cultivation, shifting cultivation, apiculture, sericulture, vermiculture, and agro-forestry;

### Convinced that

- well-being of farmers is not just about economic survival of a majority of Indian households, it is about retaining our national dignity and our civilisational heritage;
- farmers are not just a residue from our past; farmers, agriculture and village community are integral to the future of India and the world; and,
- the demands of the farmers' movements are fully consistent with our Constitutional Vision,

Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles of State Policy;

### Recognising Our Responsibility

- as honest hard workers who face numerous odds;
- as bearers of historical knowledge, skills and culture;
- as agents of food safety, security and sovereignty; and
- as guardians of biodiversity and ecological sustainability;

### Recalling the Principles of

- economic viability;
- ecological sustainability; and
- equality with social and economic justice;

### Yet Alarmed at

- economic, ecological, social and existential crisis of Indian agriculture;
- ecological degradation and destruction affecting farmers and their livelihoods;
- unprecedented increase in diversion and destruction of agricultural land, privatisation of water, forced displacement, deprivation and migration affecting security of food and livelihood;

- persistent state of neglect of agriculture and discrimination against farming communities;
- increasing vulnerability of farmers to extortion by powerful village and government officials;
- deepening penetration of large, predatory and profiteering corporations that are already in control of significant sectors of Indian agriculture;
- spate of farmers' suicides across the country and unbearable burden of indebtedness;
- widening disparities between farmers and other sectors in our society; and,
- growing attack of governments on the farmers' struggles;

Solemnly Affirm Our Constitutional Right to

- life and dignified livelihood;
- social security and protection against natural and other calamities;
- land, water, forest and all natural resources including common property resources;
- diversity in seeds, food systems and sustainable technological choices; and,
- freedom of expression, organisation, representation and struggle through constitutional means for realisation of our demands and shaping our future;

**Therefore, Call Upon the Parliament of India to Immediately**

Hold a Special Session to address the agrarian crisis by passing and enacting the two Kisan Mukti Bills that are of, by and for the farmers of India, namely,

1. The Farmers' Freedom from Indebtedness Bill, 2018; and
2. The Farmers' Right to Guaranteed Remunerative Minimum Support Prices for

Agricultural Commodities Bill, 2018.

**And Also Demand that the Government of India Must:**

1. Increase the number of guaranteed employment days under MGNREGS to 200 days per family, and ensure wage payment within the period guaranteed by statute and at par with legal minimum wages for unskilled farm labour;
2. Reduce the cost of inputs for farmers either by regulating industry price or offering subsidy directly to farmers;
3. Provide comprehensive social security for all farm households including pension @ at least Rs. 5,000 per month per farmer above the age of 60;
4. Universalise the benefits of the Public Distribution System including cereals and nutri-cereals, pulses, sugar and oils without linking it to Aadhar or biometric identification and without shifting to direct cash transfer;
5. Address the menace of stray animals by removing all legal and vigilante-imposed restrictions on cattle trade, compensating farmers for destruction of crops by wild and stray animals and supporting animal shelters;
6. Stop land acquisition or land pooling without informed consent of the farmers; no acquisition or diversion of agricultural land for commercial land development or for creation of land banks; prevent the bypassing or dilution of The Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and

Resettlement Act, 2013 at the state level; and evolve land use and agricultural land protection policy;

7. Mandate the sugar mills to pay interest @ 15% p.a. if cane dues are not paid to the cane-growers within 14 days of the delivery of cane; FRP of cane to be fixed by linking it to 9.5% recovery of sugar;
8. Withdraw pesticides that have been banned elsewhere and not approve GM seeds without a comprehensive needs, alternatives and impact assessment;
9. Disallow Foreign Direct Investment in agriculture and food processing, and remove agriculture from Free Trade Agreements, including the proposed Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP);
10. Require identification and registration of all real cultivators including tenant farmers, sharecroppers, women farmers, lessee cultivators and rural workers etc. for purposes of accessing benefits of all government schemes; and
11. Stop uprooting adivasi farmers in the name of afforestation, ensure strict implementation without dilution of Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act and Forests Rights Act, 2006;

**And, Further, Urge the Government to Evolve Policies to**

12. Provide land and livelihood rights to the landless, including agricultural and homestead land, water for fishing, mining of minor minerals etc;

13. Ensure timely, effective and adequate compensation for crop loss due to natural disasters; implement a comprehensive crop insurance that benefits farmers and not just insurance companies and that covers all types of risks for all crops and for all farmers, with individual farm as the unit of damage assessment; reverse anti-farmer changes in the Manual for Drought Management;
14. Build assured protective irrigation through sustainable means for farmers, especially in the rain-fed areas;
15. Ensure remunerative guaranteed prices for milk and its procurement for dairies and to supplement nutritional security through Mid Day Meal Scheme and Integrated Child Development Scheme etc;
16. Waive off all outstanding agricultural loans of farmers from suicide-affected families and provide special opportunities to children of such families;
17. Protect the farmers from corporate plunder in the name of contract farming by reviewing the Contract Farming Act 2018;
18. Promote procurement, processing and marketing under Farmer Producer Organisations and Peasant Cooperatives instead of corporatisation of agriculture and takeover by MNCs; and
19. Promote an agro-ecology paradigm that is based on suitable cropping patterns and local seed diversity revival, so as to build economically viable, ecologically sustainable, autonomous and climate resilient agriculture.

## Babri Masjid: What Should Muslims do?

**Irfan Engineer**

A section of Hindu supremacist organisations are once again mobilising to demand the construction of Ramjanmabhoomi temple (RJT) in Ayodhya on the spot where Babri Masjid once stood and was demolished on 6 December 1992. Provocative speeches are being made and threats are being issued. Sentiments of Hindus are being aroused around the construction of Ramjanmabhoomi temple. Media too is playing the ball and faithfully publicising the claims of Hindu supremacists that sentiments of all Hindus are being hurt and that the temple needs to be constructed immediately. The Hindu supremacists remember RJT as elections approach.

Most of the public speeches seeking to arouse the sentiments of Hindus around RJT accuse the Supreme Court of India to be insensitive to the feelings of Hindus and even discriminating against them. They argued that a terrorist, Yakub Memon, was given hearing at 3.00 am on 30 July 2015, as he was to be hanged till death the following morning. Adjourning the matter would have required a stay on his hanging, and not hearing his final plea would have left the court open to the charge of not doing justice. Therefore, the charge that the apex court does not have time to hear the “issues of Hindus” is without any basis.

Besides comparing apples and oranges, their outbursts also amount to contempt of court as they are discourteous towards the court and seek to lower the dignity of the

court. They are also interfering in the dispensation of justice by resorting to intimidation. Why is the apex court not proceeding for contempt of court suo moto against all those who make such provocative statements perhaps tells its own story.

The Hindu supremacists are deliberately twisting the facts about the issues involved in the Babri Masjid–RJT case. Basically the case pertains to title suit of 2.77 acres of land on which Babri Masjid once stood and was demolished on 6 December 1992. Who was the legal owner of the parcel of land in question and the structure on it?

Through political mobilisation, the Hindu supremacists have been successful in converting the title suit into an issue of faith according to which Hindus believe the land parcel to be the birth place of Lord Ram. Since they believe so, their faith should reign supreme, and disregarding legal issues, the parcel of land should be handed over to them for construction of RJT. They further argue that Muslims have not prayed in the Babri Masjid since 1949 and therefore the place is not a mosque any more. Further, they argue that Muslims can pray anywhere and therefore it is not essential and integral part of their religion. Some even argue that since the Babri Masjid was constructed after the demolition of a temple, it was done so in violation of tenets of Islam and therefore it was never a mosque. Be as it may, it is for the apex court to do justice on the basis of laws as applicable in the land.

### **The dispute is not for temple or mosque anymore**

Although the dispute appears to be between the Hindu community and the Muslim community, it is not so! That is what the Hindu supremacists want to turn the dispute into. If it becomes one between the two communities, then on the basis of sheer might of numbers and levers of power controlled by the elite of the Hindu community, the Hindu supremacists stand to win hands down! Construction of RJT has become a milestone in asserting 'faith' and power of the Hindu supremacists. All Hindus are not Ram bhaktas and all Ram bhaktas are not in favour of the RJT on the very spot where Babri Masjid was demolished.

Although the issue—whether Hindus believe that Lord Ram was born on the very spot where Babri Masjid once stood, was answered by the Allahabad High Court in affirmative, the Hon'ble court did not have any sufficient material to reach the conclusion. There was no referendum or even a fairly representative survey carried out to ascertain beliefs of the members of Hindu community on the issue. The constant mobilisation by Hindu supremacist and the nature of media coverage may have coloured the judgement of the court. South of Vindhyas, the issue of RJT and place of birth of Lord Ram is of much less consequence than the north. The working classes and castes are much less bothered as to where Lord Ram was born, although they have firm faith in Lord Ram. Dalit leader Chandrashekhar Azad has in fact named himself "Ravan".

Before the year 1985, the question, 'where precisely was Lord Ram born?' would not have

been answered with certainty by most Hindus, including those in Ayodhya. Overwhelming number of Hindus would have been clueless, except saying that the Lord was born in Ayodhya. Ayodhya city has more than 14 temples located in various places claiming to be on Ramjanmabhoomi which have now been demolished to make way for another one. The faith pertaining to a precise spot where Lord Ram was born has been constructed in the late eighties using mobilisation for political outcomes aided by the mass media.

The plea of supremacy of faith over facts and law is not a religious project but a political agenda. For, to privilege faith of one section of populace sharing a particular religion over other faiths, and more importantly over demonstrable truths, requires a theocratic state, not a democratic state which gives space to all religions, faiths and beliefs subject to certain reasonable restrictions in the interest of peace, harmony, equality, liberties and dignity of all individuals. The mobilisation of gullible sections willing to subscribe to the faith being propounded by Hindu supremacists, forcing the state to hand over the parcel of land based on their faith for construction of RJT, is therefore a political mobilisation to hammer nails in the coffin of democracy. More than construction of RJT, the Hindu supremacists are keen on dismantling the democratic state which affords more or less equal space to all faiths subject to certain reasonable restrictions. That is why there were series of mobilisations and show of strength by various Hindu supremacist organisations, including Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Hindu Mahasabha, Dharmasabha

and Shiv Sena. Their target was the Supreme Court which they do not seem to trust, fearing that Supreme Court's outcome might not be based on faith but law and justice. Their demand was that the Parliament pass a legislation to hand over the entire land on which Babri Masjid once stood for the construction of RJT. Construction of RJT on ruins of Babri Masjid is simultaneously laying the foundation stone of Hindu Rashtra, a communal state that privileges the elite of Hindu community and relegates the rest who do not subscribe to Hindutva political ideology and its faith to second class citizens without any rights.

The conflict therefore is not between Hindu community and Muslim community, but between those who want India to be democratic, diverse and liberal, respecting all faiths, including that of rationalists and atheists, dignity of all individuals and equality of all citizens on the one hand, and those who want India to be one homogenous society with the state regimenting religion, where state and community elders overlook matrimonial alliances, where faith and truth are what the community elites declare them to be so. That latter notion is against Hindu religion as propounded by great saints like Kabir, Ravi Das, Mirabai, Chokha Mela, Aakho, Narsi Mehta, Sree Naryana Guru, Basavanna, Swami Vivekananda, Guru Nanak, Buddha, and many other saints.

Muslims should leave resolution of the dispute regarding Babri Masjid-RJT to the Supreme Court and to those Hindus who follow the saints mentioned above. It is more important to defend the Constitution and constitutional idea of diverse,

inclusive India where all citizens enjoy equal rights, liberties of thought, expression and conscience, where dignity of all citizens is upheld and there is social justice. The difficulty is that the religious leaders and political elite of the Muslim community also do not desire the idea of India which is democratic and respects the Constitution. They too give precedence to their faith over the Constitution, law, liberties and social justice. This was evident from the affidavit they filed in the Supreme Court in support of triple talaq denying equality to women on the plea of right to follow their religious laws or Muslim Personal Law. This was also in evidence when they demanded ban on Salman Rushdie's book *Satanic Verses*, and when they mobilised to oppose the Shah Bano judgement that granted maintenance to a divorced Muslim woman under section 125 of the Indian Penal Code.

In fact the demand to open the locks of RJT for darshan and worship of Lord Ram and construction of a grand RJT got a tremendous boost after they forced the Rajiv Gandhi Government to bring in a law in Parliament to reverse the Shah Bano judgement of the Supreme Court.

The Muslim community and its political leaders are doing well by maintaining silence over the Babri Masjid–Ramjanmabhoomi dispute. They are neither giving in to the pressure of mobilisation by Hindu supremacists, nor are they defiantly opposing construction of the RJT, and instead are subjecting themselves to the judgment of the Supreme Court. The Hindu supremacist have succeeded only in getting some degenerate leaders of the community to do the bidding for them.

The Muslim community needs to focus on secular education as Sir Sayyid did in the late 19th century. Education would enable members of the community to join the civil services and other important professions. Matured intellectual leadership of the community can come only from the educated class that can steer them out of their social and educational backwardness.

The political leadership of the community needs to address itself to the issues of security and communal violence along with discrimination, seeking justice and remedies through constitutional mechanisms. In order to be able to do so, the leadership will have to build alliances with other marginalised classes who face similar discrimination, oppression and violence in their daily life. The alliance with other marginalised groups should not be opportunistic and only for political power, but should seek political power to build robust democratic institutions that defend human rights of all citizens,

deepen democracy and build a democratic state that is accountable to its citizens. The Muslim political leadership should apply itself to building structures of accountability and institutional mechanisms like Equal Opportunity Commission.

The political, intellectual and religious leadership of the community needs to apply itself to reforms in family laws that are within the framework of Islam as well as the Constitution. Presently, it resists any reforms even though many Muslim countries have carried out reforms. Reforms should particularly ensure equality and equal status of women in the community in accordance with the Quranic spirit.

If these steps are debated within the community and followed, it would go a long way in weakening the Hindu supremacists. More than Babri Masjid, we need a democratic India, educated India and an India that embraces gender justice and diversity.

Email: [irfanengi@gmail.com](mailto:irfanengi@gmail.com)

## **The Ease of Killing a Policeman in Adityanath's Uttar Pradesh**

**Harish Khare**

A warning shot has been fired. The bullet that killed inspector Subodh Kumar Singh in Bulandshahr carries a chilling message for every policeman and policewoman across the nation: don't mess with the Hindutva warrior, he is armed with a gun. And this is New India, where impunity has already been granted to one and all for killing any Muslim in the name of protecting the cow. Now, an entitlement is being claimed for meting out mob justice in defence of the cow.

The warning is unmistakable: police officers who dare to stand up to the lumpen 'gau raksha' mobs and try to enforce the law do so at their own risk. And the risks will multiply. May be the nation has been repaid a hefty Yogi Dividend.

Perhaps it can be argued that ruling India is no longer just the business of a Narendra Modi–Amit Shah holding company. A new, aggressive partner, Yogi Adityanath, has crow-barred his way into this exclusive partnership. No doubt,

the Uttar Pradesh chief minister has infused new energy and new verve in an otherwise bankrupt and faltering enterprise; suddenly, this mofussil man has become the defining voice of the New India, and he is painting the Modi dispensation in the colours of his own medieval nastiness.

Yogi Adityanath is an incongruity in any civilised, modern polity, and his ascendancy to the Uttar Pradesh gaddi mocks all our pretence at being a 'world power'. Yet this mahant has been elevated as a star campaigner in the Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan and Telangana assembly elections; he seems to have been armed with a licence to inject communal venom and divisiveness, all cynically aimed at preserving the BJP's crumbling Hindu vote-bank.

It should be no surprise that the Yogi's onward march has worked up a stink beyond the poll-bound states. The Uttar Pradesh chief minister has managed to carve out a national presence only because the Modi regime's romance with violence has prepared the nation for Yogi's blunt messages. In the past four years, mobs have been empowered as an instrument of intimidation and retribution.

The ceaseless invocation of "terror," Pakistan and Islam has produced a psychology of implacable anger and animosity towards India's own minorities. Starting with the discovery of 'sedition' at Jawaharlal Nehru University, we have established a protocol that anyone suspected of lacking in deshbhakti can be placed at the mercy of the 'nationalist' mob; suspects can be lynched on campus and in television studios. And recently, we have discovered the overriding appeal of aastha, or faith, which must be asserted in the

streets and in defiance of the apex court when necessary.

In this officially sanctioned climate of retaliation and vengeance, it was only natural that a mob of 'gau rakshaks' should have shot dead police inspector Singh. The killer mob must have felt totally at ease in Yogi's Uttar Pradesh.

The Modi dispensation has brought to India a new ease of killing policemen, just as it has the much touted 'ease of doing business' in India. We must wait for those hired economists and other pamphleteers at the NITI Aayog to square the two "eases", but it can be easily predicted that the global community is not going to be exactly thrilled with an India that is degenerating effortlessly into a battleground for settling medieval scores.

No foreign businessman is going to come and 'make it in India' if the headlines continue to sizzle with reports of violence and lawlessness. And, the Modi-Yogi-Shah regime would not be the first cabal to overestimate its capacity to roll-back marauding crowds. No regime has ever succeeded in calibrating mobs on the streets.

Whatever narrative the Sangh parivar spin-masters may be able to invent for the cold-blooded murder of a police officer, the reverberations from Bulandshahr will continue to linger. We do not know if the emergence of Yogi Adityanath as the new mascot of our New India has caused any disquiet among all those who desperately want to believe in Modi and his promise of economic modernisation. For many of them, their hopes stood belied when Modi inflicted on India that experiment in Fiscal Maoism called demonetisation. Every businessman is discovering that the dreaded

inspector raj is back with a bang. And now, we have Adityanath mocking the dreams and designs of the 'Modi-the-moderniser' constituency, located mostly in Corporate India.

While the corporates have insulated themselves in their own islands of security and prosperity, it is the vast middle classes who would be frightened to the very core at the prospect of empowered mobs gunning down police inspectors. They may have a very justifiable anxiety about terrorism from across the border but they can be relied upon to figure out for themselves that what happened in Bulandshar was terror in the streets. This kind of killing will not be acceptable to them.

India's middle classes—who are, incidentally, overwhelmingly Hindu—desperately crave stability and peace in their neighbourhood, in their city and in the nation. They want to be assured of some kind of peaceful order prevailing. Because they are keenly conscious of the precariousness of our civic order, they have a vested interest in preserving the efficacy and ability of the policeman to uphold the magistracy of the law. They frown upon and disapprove of all those who appear to be countenancing lawlessness.

They can see that lawlessness and defiance of the courts seem to be main working principles in New India. The Modi-Yogi-Shah dispensation is quietly encouraging the 'mandir crowd' to ratchet up the truculence in Ayodhya. It is this cynical molly-coddling of assorted sadhus and sants, all chanting the 'aastha' mantra, that has emboldened the murderous mob in Bulandshahr. What should be truly worrisome to the middle classes is that the gau

rashak's violence and intimidation have come to be valued as tools of electoral mobilisation.

The message from Bulandshahr is that our new saviours in this New

India will go to any length to try to perpetuate themselves in power, even if it means unleashing chaos and violence in the cities and villages

across the land. This all adds up to a calculated suborning of public authority, inspired from above. Bulandshahr today, India tomorrow.

## Another Time, Another Mosque

Dilip Simeon

### Gandhi's Last Fast: January 13–18, 1948

From September 1947, the communal situation in north India became grievous. Massacres were taking place in Punjab and Sindh, sparking off the migration of over ten million Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims. In September, hundreds of Muslims of Delhi had been killed in Karol Bagh, Subzi Mandi and Paharganj. Tens of thousands of Hindu and Sikh refugees from Punjab were crammed into Diwan Hall, Chandni Chowk and Kingsway Camp; while thousands of Muslims, including Meos from Alwar and Bharatpur, camped in fear in Jamia Millia, Puran Qila and Humayun's Tomb. The life of Dr Zakir Husain, VC of Jamia Millia and president of the Hindustani Talimi Sangh, was saved by a Sikh army captain and a Hindu railway official. Upon arrival in Delhi on September 9, Gandhi was asked to stay not in the sweepers colony (his preferred residence in the city), but in Birla House. Gandhi plunged into the turmoil around him, travelling to nearby places, talking to refugees and cadres of social organisations. On December 22, he made this announcement at his prayer meeting:

"Some eight or ten miles from here, at Mehrauli, there is a shrine of Qutubuddin Bakhtiyar Chisti. Esteemed as second only to the shrine at Ajmer, it is visited every

year not only by Muslims but by thousands of non-Muslims too. Last September this shrine was subjected to the wrath of Hindu mobs. The Muslims living in the vicinity of the shrine for the last 800 years had to leave their homes. I mention this sad episode to tell you that, though Muslims love the shrine, today no Muslim can be found anywhere near it. It is the duty of the Hindus, Sikhs, the officials and the Government to open the shrine again and wash off this stain on us. The same applies to other shrines and religious places of Muslims in and around Delhi. The time has come when both India and Pakistan must unequivocally declare to the majorities in each country that they will not tolerate desecration of religious places, be they small or big. They should also undertake to repair the places damaged during riots."

This was the background to his last protest. There was also the matter of the Government's decision to withhold payment of Pakistan's share of undivided India's sterling balance. We may take it that the fast was undertaken both to restore the mosque and to convey to the public his feelings about ongoing events. It began on January 13, 1948 and was announced at his prayer meeting that evening. He said: "Now that I have started my fast many people cannot understand what I am doing, who are the offenders—Hindus or Sikhs or Muslims. How long will the fast

last? I say I do not blame anyone. Who am I to accuse others? I have said that we have all sinned."

He continued: "I shall terminate the fast only when peace has returned to Delhi. If peace is restored to Delhi it will have effect not only on the whole of India but also on Pakistan and when that happens, a Muslim can walk around in the city all by himself. I shall then terminate the fast. Delhi is the capital of India. It has always been the capital of India. So long as things do not return to normal in Delhi, they will not be normal either in India or in Pakistan. Today I cannot bring Suhrawardy here because I fear someone may insult him. Today he cannot walk about in the streets of Delhi. If he did he would be assaulted. What I want is that he should be able to move about here even in the dark. It is true that he made efforts in Calcutta only when Muslims became involved. Still, he could have made the situation worse, if he had wanted, but he did not want to make things worse. He made the Muslims evacuate the places they had forcibly occupied and said that he being the Premier could do so. Although the places occupied by the Muslims belonged to Hindus and Sikhs, he did his duty. Even if it takes a whole month to have real peace established in Delhi, it does not matter. People should not do anything merely to have me terminate the fast. So my wish is that

Hindus, Sikhs, Parsis, Christians and Muslims who are in India should continue to live in India and India should become a country where everyone's life and property are safe. Only then will India progress."

### **The People's Reaction**

Delhi was visibly affected by Gandhi's fast. Addressing a gathering of three hundred thousand people on January 17, Maulana Azad announced seven tests given him by Gandhi to be fulfilled and guaranteed by responsible people. They included freedom of worship to Muslims at the tomb of Khwaja Bakhtiar Chishti; non-interference with the Urs festival due to be held there; the voluntary evacuation by non-Muslims of all mosques in Delhi that were being used as houses or which had been converted into temples; free movement of Muslims in areas where they used to stay; complete safety to Muslims while travelling by train; no economic boycott of Muslims; and, freedom to Muslim evacuees to return to Delhi." That evening a procession of citizens walked to Birla House where Jawaharlal Nehru addressed them. Gandhi's speech was read out at the prayer meeting, attended by some four thousand people. Among other things, he said:

"My fast should not be considered a political move in any sense of the term. It is in obedience to the peremptory call of conscience and duty. It comes out of felt agony. I call to witness all my numerous Muslim friends in Delhi. Their representatives meet me almost every day to report the day's events. Neither Rajas and Maharajas nor Hindus and Sikhs or any others would serve themselves or India as a whole, if at this, what is to me

a sacred juncture, they mislead me with a view to terminating my fast."

On January 18, Gandhi ended his fast. Over a hundred representatives of various groups and organisations including the Hindu Mahasabha, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and Jamiat-ul-Ulema who had assembled at Rajendra Prasad's residence, called on Gandhiji at 11.30 am. Those present included Jawaharlal Nehru, Abul Kalam Azad, Rajendra Prasad, INA General Shah Nawaz Khan, Hifzur Rahman and Zaheed Hussain, Pakistan's High Commissioner. Dr Rajendra Prasad reported that even those who had some doubts on the previous night were confident that they could ask Gandhiji with a full sense of responsibility to break the fast. As the President of the Congress, Rajendra Prasad said that he had signed the document in view of the guarantee which they had all jointly and severally given. Khurshid, the Chief Commissioner and Randhawa, Deputy Commissioner of Delhi, had signed the document on behalf of the administration. It had been decided to set up a number of committees to implement the pledge. Rajendra Prasad hoped that Gandhiji would now terminate his fast. Deshbandhu Gupta described scenes of fraternisation between Hindus and Muslims which he had witnessed when a procession of Muslims was taken out that morning in Subzimandi and was received with ovation and offered fruit and refreshments by the Hindu inhabitants. A seven-point declaration in Hindi was read out solemnly affirming the people's desire for communal harmony and civic peace. This read as follows:

### **Seven-Point Delhi Declaration of January 18, 1948**

"We wish to announce that it is our heart-felt desire that the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs and members of the other communities should once again live in Delhi like brothers and in perfect amity and we take the pledge that we shall protect the life, property and faith of Muslims and that the incidents which have taken place in Delhi will not happen again.

"We want to assure Gandhiji that the annual fair at Khwaja Qutub-ud-Din Mazar will be held this year as in the previous years.

"Muslims will be able to move about in Subzimandi, Karol Bagh, Paharganj and other localities just as they could in the past.

"The mosques which have been left by Muslims and which now are in the possession of Hindus and Sikhs will be returned. The areas which have been set apart for Muslims will not be forcibly occupied.

"We shall not object to the return to Delhi of the Muslims who have migrated from here if they choose to come back and Muslims shall be able to carry on their business as before.

"We assure that all these things will be done by our personal effort and not with the help of the police or military.

"We request Mahatmaji to believe us and to give up his fast and continue to lead us as he has done hitherto."

### **Gandhi's Speech on the Delhi Declaration**

In his reply, Gandhi said:

"I am happy to hear what you have told me, but if you have overlooked one point all this will be worth nothing. If this declaration means that you will safeguard Delhi and whatever happens outside Delhi will be no concern of yours, you

will be committing a grave error and it will be sheer foolishness on my part to break my fast. You must have seen the Press reports of the happenings in Allahabad. If not, look them up. I understand that the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and the Hindu Mahasabha are among the signatories to this declaration. It will amount to breach of faith on their part if they hold themselves responsible for peace in Delhi, but not in other places. I have been observing that this sort of deception is being practised in the country these days on a large scale. Delhi is the heart—the capital of India. The leaders from the whole of India have assembled here. Men had become beasts. But if those who have assembled here, who constitute the cream among men, cannot make the whole of India understand that Hindus, Muslims and followers of other religions are like brothers, it bodes ill for both the Dominions. What will be the fate of India if we continue to quarrel with one another? . . . Let us take no step that may become a cause for repentance later on. The situation demands courage of the highest order from us. We have to consider whether or not we can accomplish what we are going to promise. If you are not confident of fulfilling your pledge, do not ask me to give up my fast. It is for you and the whole of India to translate it into reality. It may not be possible to realise it in a day. I do not possess the requisite strength for it. But I can assure you that till today our face was turned towards Satan, we have now resolved to turn towards God. If what I have told you fails to find an echo in your hearts or if you are convinced that it is beyond you, tell me so frankly.

“What greater folly can there

be than to claim that Hindustan is only for Hindus and Pakistan is for Muslims alone? The refugees here should realise that things in Pakistan will be set right by the example set in Delhi. I am not one to be afraid of fasting. Time and again I have gone on fasts and if occasion arises I may again do so. Whatever therefore you do, do after careful thought and consideration. The Muslim friends frequently meet me and assure me that peaceful atmosphere has been restored in Delhi and Hindus and Muslims can live in amity here. If these friends have any misgivings in their hearts and feel that today they have perforce to stay here—as they have nowhere else to go to—but ultimately they will have to part company, let them admit it to me frankly. To set things right in the whole of India and Pakistan is no doubt a Herculean task. But I am an optimist. Once I resolve to do something I refuse to accept defeat. Today you assure me that Hindus and Muslims have become one, but if Hindus continue to regard Muslims as Yavans and asuras, incapable of realising God, and Muslims regard Hindus likewise, it will be the worst kind of blasphemy. A Muslim friend presented me with a book in Patna. Its author is an eminent Muslim. The book says: ‘God ordains that a kafir—and a Hindu is a kafir—is worse than a poisonous creature. He should be exterminated. It is one’s duty to be treacherous to him. Why should one treat him with any courtesy?’ If Muslims still harbouring such thoughts assure Hindus about their good behaviour, they will only be deceiving Hindus. If you betray one you betray all. If I truly worship a stone image I deceive no one. For me God resides in that stone image. I feel that if the hearts

of both Hindus and Muslims are full of deceit and treachery, why need I continue to live? . . .

“After listening to all that I have said, if you still ask me to end my fast I shall end it. Afterwards you have to release me. I had taken the vow to do or die in Delhi and now if I am able to achieve success here I shall go to Pakistan and try to make Muslims understand their folly. Whatever happens in other places, people in Delhi should maintain peace. The refugees here should realise that they have to welcome as brothers the Muslims returning from Pakistan to Delhi. The Muslim refugees in Pakistan are suffering acute hardships and so are the Hindu refugees here. Hindus have not learnt all the crafts of Muslim craftsmen. Therefore they had better return to India. There are good men as well as bad men in all the communities. Taking into consideration all these implications, if you ask me to break my fast I shall abide by your wish. India will virtually become a prison if the present conditions continue. It may be better that you allow me to continue my fast and if God wills it He will call me.”

Maulana Azad said that the remarks about non-Muslims to which Gandhiji had referred were abhorrent to Islam. They were symptoms of the insanity that had seized some sections of the people. Maulana Hifzur Rahman insisted that Muslims wanted to remain in India as citizens with self-respect and honour. He welcomed the changed atmosphere in the city as a result of Gandhi’s fast and appealed to Gandhi to break the fast. On behalf of the Hindu Mahasabha and the RSS, Ganesh Datt reiterated the appeal. Pakistan’s High Commissioner Zaheed Hussain

addressed a few words to Gandhiji. He said he was there to convey the deep concern of the Pakistani people about him and the anxious inquiries they made every day about his health. It was their hearts' desire that circumstances might soon enable him to break the fast. If there was anything that he could do towards that end he was ready and so were the people of Pakistan. Zaheed Hussain was followed by Khurshid and Randhawa who on behalf of the administration reiterated the assurance that all the conditions mentioned in the citizens' pledge would be implemented, and no effort would be spared to restore the Indian capital to its traditional harmony and peace. Sardar Harbans Singh endorsed the appeal on behalf of the Sikhs. When Rajendra Prasad said: "I have signed on behalf of the people, please break your fast," Gandhi replied: "I shall break my fast. Let God's will prevail. You all be witness today."

Twelve days later, on January 30, 1948, Gandhi was murdered at his daily prayer meeting.

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## The Maratha Agitation for Reservations: Part II

**Neeraj Jain**

*In the previous article, we had analysed how the demand for reservations being raised by the Maratha community and the government bowing to their demand and granting them 16% reservation is not going to result in the creation of any significant jobs for these youth. In this article, we discuss some of the demands that need to be raised, not just by the Maratha youth but by youth of all communities together, for meaningful job creation in the country.*

### **Some Proposals for Creating Jobs i) Increase Spending on Agriculture**

As discussed above, Indian agriculture is in crisis because of the neoliberal economic reforms. Because of this crisis, which is pushing thousands of farmers to commit suicide every year, employment generation in agriculture has fallen to near zero. To bring the agricultural sector out of this crisis and stimulate job creation in this vitally important sector, the government needs to make farming profitable by:

- reducing input costs by increasing subsidies on fertilisers, electricity, water, etc.;
- providing output price support;
- increasing public investment in agriculture—which is absolutely essential for agricultural growth; and
- waiving all farm debts, including debts to private moneylenders, and ensuring availability of institutional credit to farmers at subsidised rates.

In other words, the government needs to increase public investment in all agriculture related sectors. It needs to be at least doubled or trebled. Where will the money come from for this? We discuss this issue later in this essay.

This will reverse the decline in Indian agriculture and bring back employment generation to at least the pre-globalisation levels. Had employment generation in agriculture during the post-reform years continued at the same rate as during the period 1983 to 1993–94 (when CAGR was 1.51%, see Table 3 in Part I of this article), total employment in agriculture would have gone up to 308 million by 2009–10 instead of 245 million. In other words, instead of the net 2.4 million jobs created during the 16-year period 1994–2010, 65.5 million jobs would have been created in the agricultural sector—an additional 63 million jobs!

### **ii) Provide Incentives for the Small Scale Sector**

As discussed above, the overwhelming proportion of employment in the country is provided by the informal sector, including what the government calls the Micro, Small and Medium enterprises (MSMEs). The Modi government has announced a scheme known as Mudra Yojana. Under this, the government provides a loan of between Rs 50,000 to Rs 10 lakh to people wishing to be entrepreneurs and setting up micro enterprises. According to official statistics, over

the last three years since the scheme was launched in 2015, nearly 13 crore people have been sanctioned a total of Rs 6 lakh crore under this scheme till May 25, 2018 (of which Rs 5.81 lakh crore has been disbursed). A simple calculation shows that the average of sanctioned loans under this Yojana comes to Rs 46,530 while the disbursed amount is Rs 45,034.<sup>1</sup> While the Modi Government has been claiming that this scheme has helped create several crore jobs, this is obviously another of its big lies; the amount of loan being disbursed under this scheme is too inadequate for setting up any kind of small scale business.

The government must substantially boost the financial incentives it provides for entrepreneurs interested in setting up MSMEs, including both the amount of loan and the interest subsidy for this loan, as well as provide other incentives, such as reserving production of several items for this sector and banning imports of these items to protect this sector from unfair competition with subsidised imports by recession hit automated plants of multinational corporations. The money for this is there—we discuss this later in this essay.

**iii) Create More Jobs in the Large Scale Private Sector**

As mentioned above, job creation in the Indian factory sector has slowed down considerably. With the result that only 2.5% of the total workforce in the country in 2009–10 was employed in factories, and this includes both small and large factories! The Niti Aayog, the government’s policy think-tank, has admitted in a report that the few jobs being created in India’s manufacturing sector are

mostly being created in small-scale industries. Consequently, small firms employing less than 20 workers contributed 12% of the manufacturing output in the country, but employed 72% of the country’s manufacturing workforce (in 2010–11). Similarly, in the service sector, a 2006–07 NSSO survey of service firms found that the 650 largest enterprises accounted for 38% of the output of this sector, but employed only 2% of service workers.<sup>2</sup>

As it is, large firms employ less workers due to high mechanisation levels. Now, taking advantage of the recent steps taken by the Government of India to introduce hire-and-fire policies in industry, they are retrenching permanent workers and replacing them by contract workers. While these contract workers are often forced to work longer hours than permanent workers, they are paid much less and they also have no social security. Therefore, the increase in productivity has not benefited workers. Data from the Annual Survey of Industries shows that while real productivity of workers in the three decades to 2013

has increased at an annual average of 7%, real wages of workers have been virtually stagnant, increasing at an average annual rate of 1% only between 1983 and 2013.<sup>3</sup>

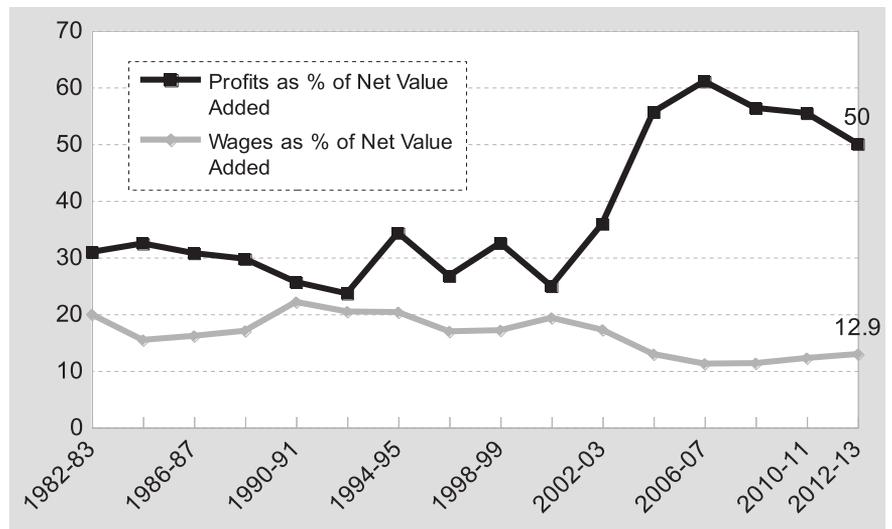
This has resulted in a huge rise in profits for the capitalist owners of these firms; they have almost exclusively cornered the gains resulting from the rise in productivity. This can be clearly seen from Chart 1 which shows that:

- Wages as percentage of net value added in industries have actually fallen from 30.9% in 1982–83 and 25.6% in 1990–91 to 12.9% in 2012–13;
- On the other hand, profits as percentage of net value added have risen sharply during the post-reform period: from 19.9% in 1982–83 and 22.1% in 1990–91 to 50.0% in 2012–13.

These are average figures for all industries. Obviously, the large-scale industries must be earning even higher profits and paying out lower wages than these averages.

Such being the huge profits being made by large-scale industries, let us come together and demand that

**Chart 1: Profits and Wages as % of Net Value Added in Indian Industry, 1982–83 to 2012–13<sup>4</sup>**



large factories increase the number of workers employed by them by reducing working hours by half, that is, to 4 hours per day (without reducing wages). That would result in a doubling of the number of workers employed in large-scale factories. Orthodox economists would call our proposal ridiculous, claiming it would lead to large-scale industries suffering huge losses, forcing them to shut down. But as we can see from Chart 1 above, in 2012–13, while wages as percentage of net value added were only 12.9%, profits as percentage of net value added were 50%. Therefore, if wage costs for large-scale industry doubled, they would not be driven into loss, they would still be making considerable profits—their profits would still be 37% of net value added. Furthermore, since employment would increase, it will lead to an increase in demand, and so large industries which today are working at much below full capacity (capacity utilisation in Indian industry is at around 72% today<sup>5</sup>) will be able to increase production and improve capacity utilisation, leading to further rise in profits.

There are 16 million employed in the organised manufacturing sector. Of this, around 30% or 5 million are employed in large-scale industry, according to Niti Aayog.<sup>6</sup> Doubling employment in large-scale industry would therefore lead to the creation of around 5 million jobs, and more via the multiplier effect.

#### **iv) Create More Government Jobs**

Lakhs of youth are mobilising across the country demanding reservations for their castes—when there are no government jobs! They are all fighting for a slice of the

public employment ‘cake’, when there is no cake on the table.

Instead, we all need to unite, across castes and communities, and demand more government jobs. To make an estimate of how many government jobs can possibly be created in India, let us compare the number of government jobs in India with that in the USA and other developed countries, per lakh of population.

Unlike the propaganda being daily fed to us by our politicians and bureaucrats, public sector employment in India is not high; on the contrary, it is very low when compared to the developed countries, all of whom are unabashedly free market economies (see Table 7). An important reason why public sector employment in the developed countries is high is because of their high social sector expenditures. Most developed countries spend substantial sums on providing social security for their citizens, including universal health coverage, free school education and free or cheap university education, old age pension, maternity benefits, disability benefits, family allowance such as child care allowance, and much more. This obviously requires that they employ a large number of people in the social sectors to provide these services to their population.

The USA has one of the lowest levels of public sector employment (per lakh of population) among the developed countries. Even if we take this as the level that India should reach, that is, if India is to have the same number of public sector employees per lakh of population as the USA, then India’s public sector employment would have to increase to at least 88.9 million.<sup>7</sup> Presently, there are only 17.6 million public

sector employees in India. This means an additional 71.3 million or 7.13 crore jobs would be created—that too, decent, formal jobs!

**Table 7: Public Sector Employment per Lakh of Population<sup>8</sup>**

Sweden	15,070
France	8,760
USA	7,220
India	1,430

Therefore, instead of fighting amongst ourselves on the basis of caste, religion, region and so on, let us unite and demand that the government should increase its social sector spending, and create more public sector jobs. That would create at least a few crore jobs! Creation of such a large number of public sector jobs will lead to the creation of at least as many private sector jobs if not more, as the creation of so many well-paid jobs in the public sector will give a big boost to demand and will therefore lead to a huge increase in private sector production—as Keynes had pointed out several decades ago.

For instance, if in Maharashtra State alone, the government decides to take urgent and decisive steps to send all children compulsorily to school, and provide them free and good quality education (of Kendriya Vidyalaya standards) up to Class XII, this would require the opening of thousands of schools and recruitment of a very large number of teachers. How many? We have estimated that for this, the government would need to recruit an additional 19 lakh teachers in the minimum!<sup>9</sup>

And if so many school teachers are recruited, that would call for a big increase in the number of associate

staff, from clerks to laboratory assistants to peons and so on. So many schools would need to be constructed, furniture made, school textbooks printed, and so on. This would lead to a big increase in jobs in all these industries. The recruitment of so many school teachers and associate staff in schools would lead to a big increase in the demand for consumer goods and so there would be much job creation in these industries too. So much job creation, in just a single state in the country, only by investing in providing compulsory, good quality education to all children!

And it is not just education, but all welfare services, that are in a terrible state in our country. Therefore, we are not at all exaggerating when we estimate that if the government indeed decided to provide good quality essential services to all people in the country, it would lead to the creation of several crore jobs.

### But Where Will the Money Come From?

Our readers will say—that is all ok, but where will the money come from for all this? India is a poor country, the government does not have enough money to implement this.

That the Indian Government has no money is a myth, propagated by the government and its propagandists. The reality is, the Indian Government has been doling out subsidies to the rich to the tune of several lakh crore rupees every year. To give two stunning examples:

- Successive governments at the Centre have been giving tax concessions to the country's corporate houses and super-rich every year, for the last several years, ever since the economic

reforms began. Over the 13-year period 2005–06 to 2017–18, these tax write-offs total a mind-boggling Rs 58.6 lakh crore!<sup>10</sup>

- Over the 15-year period 2004–18, Indian public sector banks have written off a whopping Rs 4.6 lakh crore worth of loans given to big corporate houses. Of this amount, Rs 3.1 lakh crore has been waived by the Modi Government during its four years in power.<sup>11</sup> Apart from this, during this period, banks have also restructured loans—which is a more roundabout way of writing off loans—given to these high and mighty, probably to the tune of Rs 10 lakh crore or so.<sup>12</sup>

Apart from this, other concessions being given to the rich include handing over control of the country's mineral wealth and resources to private corporations in return for negligible royalty payments, transferring ownership of our profitable public sector corporations to foreign and Indian private business houses at throwaway prices, direct subsidies to private corporations in the name of 'public-private-partnership' for infrastructural projects, and so on. These transfers of public wealth to private coffers also total several lakh crore rupees.<sup>13</sup>

If the government reduces these concessions / transfers of public money to the country's uber rich, it can substantially increase its expenditure on agriculture and the social sectors.<sup>14</sup> That would lead to a big increase in agricultural jobs, as well as create several crore government jobs.

### To Conclude

Friends, the reason why there are no jobs, the reason why there is

such acute joblessness in the country, is not because of the 'other'—unemployment is not because reservation for Dalits and STs and OBCs has snatched away jobs. The reason is that there are simply no decent, formal sector jobs. And that is because of globalisation, because of the neoliberal economic policies being implemented in the country. Once we well and truly realise this, only then, instead of mobilising against the 'other', 'we' will unite with the 'other' and unitedly raise demands that challenge the economic policy orientation in the country and will truly lead to job creation and enough decent jobs for all.

Email: [neeraj61@gmail.com](mailto:neeraj61@gmail.com)

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## Climate Activists Take Civil Disobedience World-Wide

Chloé Farand

More than 100 people were arrested during a week of action across the UK as protesters demanded the government treat the threats posed by climate change as a crisis and take drastic steps to cut emissions to net zero by 2025.

Thousands of people joined a mass protest that blocked roads and bridges in central London, with some gluing themselves to government buildings to draw attention to what they see as climate breakdown.

This was the birth of Extinction Rebellion, a movement that calls for mass economic disruption using non-violent direct action and civil disobedience to halt the destruction of the planet and its wildlife and prevent catastrophic climate change.

Around the world, environmental campaign groups and activists watched the action unfold. In London, there is a growing hope that this could be the start to a new form of international mobilisation for climate action.

### ‘A game changer’

From the US to Ghana and New Zealand to Western Europe, campaigners have shown enthusiastic support for Extinction Rebellion’s declaration of climate emergency.

Jamie Henn, co-founder of the campaign group 350, said watching the launch of Extinction Rebellion in London from the US had been “incredibly exciting” and embodied “a growing sense of anger and desire for radical solutions”.

Henn said he was confident Extinction Rebellion would inspire similar non-violent direct climate actions in the US over the coming months, but whether the movement was one that could endure the test of time was yet to be seen.

Margaret Klein Salamon, founder of the US grassroots group Climate Mobilisation, said she believed Extinction Rebellion is “a game changer” for the climate movement.

She is part of a team of dedicated

activists working on Extinction Rebellion's international expansion, ensuring it has a robust enough infrastructure and resources to give the movement the capacity and stamina to organise in the long-term.

Salamon said Extinction Rebellion was born as the climate movement was shifting away from advocating gradual change to demanding immediate action in line with the scale of the climate crisis.

She said that for the first time, Extinction Rebellion set out the full implications of climate change on humanity and the planet's ecosystems without shielding people from the consequences of the crisis for fear of being too alarming.

She added that Extinction Rebellion was advocating solutions that may have long been seen as impossible, but which the group believe could gather mainstream momentum.

Above all, Salamon said the use of peaceful civil disobedience as a means to engage people in "power struggles" against governments and demand meaningful change is what made Extinction Rebellion unique.

"There is so much momentum around Extinction Rebellion and what is needed is to be able to escalate the disruption," she said, adding: "This is still a very young movement but there is tremendous enthusiasm for it."

Extinction Rebellion's first public action was to occupy the Greenpeace headquarters in London — a move which took the climate movement in the UK by surprise and aimed to warn environmental NGOs against becoming complacent about governments' inaction on climate change.

Learning from past grassroots movements such as Gandhi's

independence marches, the Suffragettes, the Civil Rights movement and Occupy, Extinction Rebellion claims to aim to rally support worldwide around a common sense of urgency to tackle climate breakdown.

### **International rebellion**

Robin Boardman, a coordinator with Extinction Rebellion in the UK, said the week of action that took place across the country was "a prototype for what a global resistance could look like".

Pointing out that the UK is responsible for only one percent of current global emissions, Boardman added: "What happened in London is a drop in a pond compared to what could happen worldwide in months to come".

Extinction Rebellion is working to establish campaign groups beyond the UK, with coordinators already working in the US, Canada, Australia, Switzerland, France, Germany, Netherlands, Belgium, Sweden, Italy and Spain.

But much of the movement's international expansion is focused on the US.

"Like in the Arab spring, Tunisia started the uprising but it was not until it spread to Egypt that the whole movement gripped the Middle East," Boardman said.

Inspired by US Senator Bernie Sanders' 2016 presidential campaign, Extinction Rebellion wants to export its non-violent rebellion model and ambition of a widespread system change but allow for autonomous campaign groups to organise independently across the world.

"It is up for local groups as to whether people should be taking up action and what direction they

move in. It's about doing something different and shifting what is acceptable in the context of the climate crisis. When society is ready to lose its sense of fear in the face of state authority, then everything crumbles and change can happen," Boardman said.

Extinction Rebellion has attracted much support from religious groups, including Christian Climate Action, which had several of its members arrested in the UK last week.

Caroline Harmon, from the Christian Climate Action, said that her group has received messages of support from Christian communities across the world, who have been inspired by last week's actions.

The first Extinction Rebellion action on the African continent was held earlier this month in front of a church in Accra, Ghana, where dozens of climate activists carrying Extinction Rebellion placards told churchgoers about the global climate resistance being born in the UK.

Mawuse Yao Agorkor, a grassroots social activist from Ghana and the general secretary of the West African Vazoba network, said the launch of Extinction Rebellion in London was "an exciting moment" and that he was hoping larger protests would "hit the streets of Ghana soon".

The Vazoba network has long campaigned against deforestation, the use of toxic chemical and mining in the region and now hopes to use its organising tools and contacts across West Africa to spread Extinction Rebellion's message.

Agorkor said he was not afraid of using civil disobedience as a means to ramp up pressure on his government. "I have been working on the ground for six years, and getting arrested for protesting in the

interest of our planet is something that my group is not afraid of,” he said.

Agorkor is well aware that if the movement is to spread through Africa, it will have to adapt in places where police brutality is common fortune and protesters could be met with open fire. But for now, Agorkor believes the organising capacity of both Vazoba and Extinction Rebellion constitute “a good starting point”.

### **Diverse Movement**

The emergence of Extinction Rebellion also comes at a time of great change in the US climate movement.

For Henn, of 350, Sanders’ presidential campaign, which inspired Extinction Rebellion’s mobilisation strategy, gave place to a new generation of young leaders including more women and people of colour — a trend reflected in the US’ Congressional midterm elections.

Newly elected liberals, led by the 29-year-old Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, are demanding the Democrats back a “Green New Deal” to rapidly transform the economy to 100 percent renewable energy in a decade — a target largely in line with Extinction Rebellion’s own demand to reach net zero by 2025.

Henn said that the only way in which the Extinction Rebellion movement would take off in the US would be by “moving away from a climate movement that is predominantly made up of older, middle-class white people”.

Instead, Henn said Extinction Rebellion had “to build a multi-racial and multi-generational movement which will include young people

of colour in its leadership and tackle issues such as equity and environmental justice”.

For Henn, the movement will also have to ensure it uses a universal language that inspires urgency but respects and reflects the experiences of those living on the frontlines.

Referring to a banner that was dropped from Westminster bridge in

central London last week and read “Climate Change, We Are F\*\*d”, he added:

“It is one thing to say such things from the safety of London, but it’s another if you are living on the frontline of climate impacts.

“Some people don’t have the privilege to give up”.

## **The Protests in Argentina and France: Where is the Co-relation?**

**Peter Koenig**

What do Argentinian protesters have in common with French protesters? They both strongly dislike their governments, and their leaders.

The protests in Argentina against the upcoming G20 meeting and around the IMF are just a pretext for an overall malaise—which is an understatement—vis-à-vis President Mauricio Macri and his debt-driven austerity program, that has left hundreds of thousands jobless. People who had decent jobs under the Kirchner governments have now joined the ranks of the unemployed and are begging for survival. Macri has driven the poverty rate from about 14%, where it was in November 2015, a months before the Presidential elections, to more than 35% in September 2018—and all the while increasing tariffs for transportation and basic services such as electricity, gas, water, health care, education—in fact, privatising such vital public services to the point where only higher middle class and elite can afford them.

That of course, will leave a vast majority of the people uneducated and without basic health care—

precisely what neoliberalism wants. Decimating the number of poor people to a minimum needed for useful slavehood and leaving those who vegetate along, struggling for one meal at the time without education, without a job, so they don’t have the time, energy and political savvy to protest against the ruling class.

Greece is another outstanding example. Within less than ten years the once cheerful, happy and economically relatively well-off country was destroyed into misery by foreign imposed debt and austerity programs. By now, almost all public assets have been sold or privatised to pay for the horrendous debt service. Public health services are on a drip, there is a lack of special medication, like for cancer, schools are closed or privatised, pensions cut to unlivable levels, unemployment rampant—all leading to extreme poverty and skyrocketing suicide rates, about which nobody dares speaking.

Is Argentina going to become under Macri the Latin American Greece? Could well be. By now the country is encircled by neoliberal

and fascist neighbors—Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay. Bolivia is a laudable exception. All the others will do what Washington mandates; whatever it takes to support Macri and his IMF-imposed economic killer policies, that—in the end—will sell out the resource-rich country to foreign oligarchs and corporations, to the US and NATO. Yes NATO, unbelievable, but true. NATO is officially in south America, as Colombia by her own choice has become a NATO country.

From Colombia to Argentina and actually to all of Latin America is like a walk in the park, with all the borders of the partly newly installed neoliberal / neofascist governments wide open—for NATO forces, that is. Macri has already invited the US to establish several US military bases. In July 2018 Sputnik reported that President Macri has given green light to establish “at least three US bases in the provinces of Neuquén, Misiones and Tierra del Fuego. Their creation would be financed by the US Southern Command.”

And now, in the midst of this man-made—Macri-made—socioeconomic calamity, he invites the G-20 (30 November to 1 December 2018) to feast on Argentina’s goodies, to see for themselves what can be made of an otherwise prosperous country—so that prosperity is ‘shared’ and outsourced to foreign oligarchs, banks and corporations. Wonderful. For that G-20 event, Macri mobilised some 22,000 military forces to guarantee the security of the chiefs of state.

Surely, after the G20 summit, new austerities will be imposed, because everybody sees there is more to be milked from Argentina. They see what they were able to do

to Greece. When common sense would dictate—stop, that’s it, that’s all we can take—there is an opening for even more to be squeezed out of the country. In Argentina there is still a lot of milking to be done. It has just started. If nothing else, the newly Washingtonshoed-in president of Brazil, Jair Bolsonaro, will teach Macri how to do even better for the western money sharks.

In France, the Yellow Vests protests against higher fuel prices and labor reform laws is just a pretext for something much bigger—a growing awakening of the French people, a steadily increasing recognition of how the slippery soft-speaker Emmanuel Macron is stripping France’s populace of most of their civil and social rights, of their labor rights—and ultimately, still to come, of their jobs. A number of ‘false flags’ from Charlie Hebdo to Bataclan to the Nice’s 14th July terror attacks, have helped Macron to put a permanent State of Emergency—basically Martial Law—into the French Constitution. By doing so, he has created a kind of French “Patriot Act”, slice by slice reducing long acquired social rights, transforming them into increased profits for foreign and French corporations and banking giants. Big wonder, Macron is a Rothschild child. He has been put into his position to uphold and expand the Rothschild clan’s banking empire, expanding it way beyond the French borders.

Who are the Yellow Vests—or ‘gilets jaunes’ in French? The name refers to the yellow phosphorescent vests that each and every French driver needs to carry in his vehicle for visibility and protection in case of an incident on the highway. The movement started on 10 October, propagated through facebook against

the Macron imposed increase of fuel taxes. It then expanded rapidly into a movement of discontent with the continuous loss of purchasing power of the common people through budget cuts and soft but steadily increasing austerity imposed on the French citizenry. That, plus the decay of public services, especially in urban peripheries, has transformed the Yellow Vests movement into a vivid protest against Macron, an outright call for Macron’s resignation.

Hundreds of thousands—cumulatively several millions—of Yellow Vests have demonstrated and blocked at times most of Paris during the past two weeks, to reverse the fuel tax increase and to basically regain their social rights and financial purchasing power, increase salaries to at least keep pace with inflation. Diesel prices have already increased in 2018 alone by 23% and gasoline prices by 15%. These prices should increase further by 2019 according to a Macron imposed law.

Can protests in the street remove a President? A President, who came to power with less than 27% of the French eligible voters, a President, who built his power on a movement, called “En Marche” (something like ‘moving on’) which hardly even existed a year before Macron’s ‘election’ in May 2017, an election based on false propaganda, selling heaven to desperate people, who after socialist President François Hollande deceived his country bitterly, leaving his presidency with a popularity rate of less than 10%—these people were ready to accept any ‘populist’ lie in the hope that life would become better.

Well, as usual, the ruling class—almost always the financial elite—took advantage of the desperate situation—and bingo. Macron is

legally in office for 5 years, until 2022. Removing him the ‘democratic way’, through a Parliamentary vote of confidence, is a slim chance, as he has an absolute majority in Parliament, also called the French National Assembly.

So far Macron has been able to impose his ‘austerity’ without the open help of the IMF. But, be sure, with Christine Lagarde at the helm of the IMF, a former French Finance Minister, with close ties to Macron, he most certainly got IMF ‘advice’ on how to continue softly squeezing the juices out of the French people, of their, since the end of WWII, accumulated and hard fought-for social benefits. May be also Greek style?

Curiously, the European Commission and the ECB are much more generous with France than with Italy, when it comes to adhering to the arbitrary 3% deficit limit. Italy was scolded, called to order and asked to submit a revised budget, when deputy PM, Matteo Salvini, presented Italy’s 2019 budget with a 2.9% deficit. France, on the other hand, has been running a deficit above 3% for years, but is gently reminded to please look into its finances a bit more carefully. In other words, the EU is treating brothers and sisters with different yardsticks, thus, helping Macron to do whatever he sees fit to push austerity down the French citizens’ throats. And if they protest, well, we see what’s happening now. There is the State of Emergency that allows the most brutal police crack-down, if needed. And Macron may well need it, if he wants his presidency to survive.

The French people, are, however, special. They prompted the French Revolution in 1789, the legacy of which still reverberates in legal systems around the world. French

students started 40 years ago the 1968 student and workers revolt. It began on the premises of “equal rights and liberty” between men and women. It led to strengthening workers unions and eventually to many workers rights and benefits, precisely those that former President Sarkozy attempted to dismantle and for which Macron was installed to finish the job.

There is a direct relation between what happened in 1968 and what is

### **Press Release**

## **Open Letter to Senator Bernie Sanders**

[On Wednesday, November 28, 2018, over 100 US scholars, intellectuals and activists published the open letter to Senator Bernie Sanders below and invited others to add their names to it.]

*Sanders was working to force a new Senate vote on ending, or at least reducing, US participation in the war on Yemen. Signers of the letter below wished to encourage such steps and, in fact, to urge Sanders toward far greater opposition to militarism and support for peace.*

*On Tuesday, Senator Sanders had published a new book, *Where We Go from Here: Two Years in the Resistance*. The book contains 38 sections, of which one addresses foreign policy but lays out no concrete proposals. On Tuesday evening Sanders spoke for an hour at George Washington University, aired live on C-Span 2. He discussed a variety of topics, but never mentioned foreign policy—until a questioner asked him for a progressive foreign policy, and Senator Sanders gave a 2-minute response focused on Yemen, for which he received possibly the loudest applause of the evening.*

occurring now. Will the people prevail? Will France set an example for the rest of Europe?

So, what do the people of Argentina and the people of France have in common? They both want to get rid of a despotic president, implanted by the western financial elite to steal the socio-economic coffers of their heritage, and which, if not stopped, may continue throughout the Americas and Europe.

*The names of the signatories can be read at: <https://worldbeyondwar.org/bernie>*

### **Text of the Letter:**

We write to you as US residents with great respect for your domestic policies.

We support the position of more than 25,000 people who signed a petition during your presidential campaign urging you to take on militarism.

We believe that Dr. King was correct to assert that racism, extreme materialism, and militarism needed to be challenged together rather than separately, and that this remains true.

We believe this is not only practical advice, but a moral imperative, and—not coincidentally—good electoral politics.

During your presidential campaign, you were asked repeatedly how you would pay for human and environmental needs that could be paid for with small fractions of military spending. Your answer was consistently complicated and involved raising taxes. We believe it would be more effective to more often mention the existence

of the military and its price tag. "I would cut 4% of spending on the never-audited Pentagon" is a superior answer in every way to any explanation of any tax plan.

Much of the case that we believe ought to be made is made in a video posted on your Facebook page in early 2018. But it is generally absent from your public comments and policy proposals. Your recent 10-point plan omits any mention of foreign policy whatsoever.

We believe this omission is not just a shortcoming. We believe it renders what does get included incoherent. Military spending is well over 60% of discretionary spending. A public policy that avoids mentioning its existence is not a public policy at all. Should military spending go up or down or remain unchanged? This is the very first question. We are dealing here with an amount of money at least comparable to what could be obtained by taxing the wealthy and corporations (something we are certainly in favor of as well).

A tiny fraction of US military spending could end starvation, the lack of clean water, and various diseases worldwide. No humanitarian policy can avoid the existence of the military. No discussion of free college or clean energy or public transit should omit mention of the place where a trillion dollars a year is going.

War and preparations for war are among the top destroyers, if not the top destroyer, of our natural environment. No environmental policy can ignore them.

Militarism is the top source of the erosion of liberties, and top justification for government secrecy, top creator of refugees, top saboteur of the rule of law, top facilitator of xenophobia and bigotry, and top

reason we are at risk of nuclear apocalypse. There is no area of our social life that is untouched by what Eisenhower called the military industrial complex.

The US public favors cutting military spending.

Even candidate Trump declared the wars since 2001 to have been counterproductive, a statement that appears not to have hurt him on election day.

A December 2014 Gallup poll of 65 nations found the United States to be far and away the country considered the largest threat to peace in the world, and a Pew poll in 2017 found majorities in most countries polled viewing the United States as a threat. A United States responsible for providing clean drinking water, schools, medicine, and solar panels to others would be more secure and face far less hostility around the world; that result would cost a fraction of what is invested in making the United States resented and disliked.

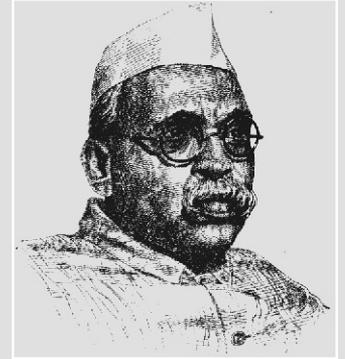
Economists at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst have documented that military spending is an economic drain rather than a jobs program.

We compliment you on your domestic policies. We recognise that the presidential primaries were rigged against you, and we do not wish to advance the baseless idea that you were fairly defeated. We offer our advice in a spirit of friendship. Some of us worked in support of your presidential campaign. Others of us would have worked, and worked hard, for your nomination had you been a candidate for peace.

Sd / -

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