

INDIA: LIBERAL DEMOCRACY AND THE EXTREME RIGHT

AIJAZ AHMAD

Indian liberalism makes a formidable claim: that the Republic is grounded in such a structurally elaborate and ideologically hegemonic liberal-democratic institutional framework that political forces of all hues are forced to consent to this framework, stake their claims and test out their fortunes within it, go in and out of the corridors of power through procedures of electoral democracy, and thereby further strengthen the liberal framework itself. It is further claimed that since all political forces, from the communist to the fascist, are compelled to accept the norms of universal franchise and multi-party elections, they are further compelled to move closer to the liberal centre as soon as they begin to participate in the exercise of governmental power. For the political centre of this power is itself circumscribed by equally powerful institutions of the civil bureaucracy, an independent judiciary, a freewheeling fourth estate, as well as a vibrant and highly articulate civil society. And, indeed, more than enough empirical evidence is available for one to construct a plausible narrative of post-Independence India on such premises. Its plausibility is what gives to the claim such persuasive power.

On the other hand, the basic trajectory of Indian political life over roughly the past quarter century, 1990 to 2015 let us say, especially as it comes into sharper relief after the elections of 2014, indicates a steady rightward shift that is both quantitatively and qualitatively so significant that it is not so much the right that moves closer to the liberal centre, occasional tactical concessions notwithstanding, but the liberal centre that keeps moving further and further to the right. The Indian polity of today seems to be undergoing a historically unprecedented process: the irresistible rise of the extreme right to dominance in vast areas of culture, society, ideology and economy, albeit with commitment to observe virtually all the institutional norms of liberal democracy. This will to a 'long march through the institutions' and to capturing total state power not through frontal seizure, as was

once customary for revolutions of the left as well as the right, but through patiently engineered and legally legitimate takeover of those institutions by its personnel from within, while keeping the institutions intact, raises a very different kind of question: is there really an irreconcilable contradiction, an unbridgeable gap, between institutions of liberal democracy and takeover of the state by the extreme right? In other words, can the extreme right rule and pursue its own agenda through liberal institutions?

We shall come to some factual details shortly. Suffice it to say here that a power bloc has undoubtedly become dominant in India in whose ideology a religio-cultural definition of nationhood functions very much the way theories of race used to function in the Nazi ideology; and that the powerful backing – in word and deed – that Narendra Modi, the present prime minister, received during his bid for power by virtually the whole of the corporate apex does remind one of Mussolini's famous definition of fascism as a form of state in which government and corporations become one. The question of fascism in this context will be addressed briefly in a later section of this essay. It is worth remarking, though, that unlike all the interwar ideologies of the European irrationalist, extreme right – whether Nazi or fascist or merely militarist – and unlike their Islamist counterparts, the Hindutva extreme right has fashioned no comparable discourse of rejection of or contempt for liberal democracy as such.¹ The phrase 'extreme right' here does not apply to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the current ruling party. The BJP functions as a political party but is in its essence a right-wing front of the extreme right that is represented primarily by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). Instead they train hundreds of thousands of their cadres to build a well-oiled, invincible electoral machine for contest at the polls. They do propose many significant changes in the Indian constitution. However, there is no rhetoric against constitutional, liberal democratic form as such, in contrast even to the Indian communist left which ritually criticizes 'bourgeois democracy' while participating – indeed, giving most of its energy to participating – in all its rituals and procedures. This unconditional public commitment to liberal democratic norms contrasts sharply, however, with the self-organization of Hindutva's central organ itself, as we shall see below. In practice, this commitment to liberal democratic form is most pronounced in the arena of electoral politics. In the social life of the country, though, organized mob violence is utilized routinely but always presented as a *response* to misconduct by the Muslim and/or Christian minorities. Whether this absence of open opposition to liberal constitutionality is an abiding commitment or a pragmatic decision open to repudiation at a later stage remains unclear.

The intricate, multi-layered networks of this extreme right are spearheaded in today's India by the RSS and, secondarily, by its political front, the BJP, while the RSS also commands, quite literally, thousands of fronts across the country, for every conceivable social category in Indian society, whether defined by caste or profession or language or region or whatever. This organizational form – highly centralized in its fundamentals, multi-faceted and flexibly organized in others – responds strategically to the fact that India is by far the most heterogeneous society in the world and welding it all together into a single hegemonic political project would take an enormous act of imagination and organization that would have to be sustained over an unpredictably long period of time. The objective is not merely to win elections and form governments but to transform Indian society in all domains of culture, religion and civilization. Acquisition of political power is seen as a means toward that end.

The RSS was founded ninety years ago, in 1925, on an uncannily Gramscian principle that enduring political power can arise only on the basis of a prior cultural transformation and consent, and this broad-based cultural consent to the extreme right's doctrines can only be built through a long historical process, from the bottom up. What follows from this ideological articulation of the long-term strategy is that if the RSS succeeds in constituting a certain sort of social subjectivity for the great majority of Hindus in India – who are said to constitute some 80 per cent of the Indian population (we shall come later to this claim) – and if they can all be unified, positively, in pursuit of a civilizational mission, and, negatively, in permanent opposition to a fancied enemy (Muslim and Christian minorities in the countries), as the Nazis sought to unite the German nation against the Jews, then the demographic majority can be turned into a permanent political majority. In that case, what the left might designate as the extreme right could rule comfortably through the institutions of liberal democracy in India that have already adjusted themselves to low-intensity but punctual use of violence against religious minorities.

There is no analogue for this particular structure of thinking in the irrationalist authoritarianisms in the Euro-American zones during the interwar years or after. The only approximate example I can think of is that of certain – not by any means all, but some – strands in the Islamist political right: Rashid Rida and the group from whom the original conception of Salafism is descended; the foundational ideas of the Ikhwan-al-Muslimun (the Muslim Brotherhood) of Al-Banna and others; some contemporary tendencies descended from that original Ikhwan, such as al-Nahda in Tunisia and Hamas in Palestine; highly influential and sophisticated Islamist

intellectuals of the Brotherhood vintage located in the West today, such as Tariq Ramadhan. The idea is, in essentials, the same: secure religio-cultural ideological dominance first, taking advantage of the fact that liberal institutions do not necessarily obstruct the power of the extreme right. And build enduring political power over time by combining religio-cultural conservatism and majoritarian violence with neoliberal capitalism within the belly of imperialism as well as liberal democratic institutions of governance domestically.

The RSS has also sought to address in practice a historic dilemma regarding the possibility of revolution in the liberal age, whether from the left or the right. Gramsci is, of course, the great thinker who addressed this dilemma at great length and with great intellectual splendour. However, he addresses it conceptually, never on the organizational level: how could he, organizationally, from inside a prison? The RSS has addressed the dilemma in its organizational practices, over decades, through trial and error, with remarkable success so far, even though it is unclear whether or not they will be entirely successful eventually. That dilemma has been posed to the Leninist tradition in the following terms: revolutions are made by cadres parties, the ones who are able to create something of a counter-state against a state seen by the people as illegitimate (Czarism; the colonial master), able to counter state violence with revolutionary violence, and, in a moment of ultimate revolutionary crisis, able to seize power through frontal attack, dismantle that state, erect a state of a new type. However, once a liberal democratic system of representative government in all its intricacies has been erected, universalizing a bourgeois political subjectivity which believes in norms of liberal legality and the primacy of representative democracy, the revolutionaries face a situation in which they can either refuse to participate in this 'bourgeois democracy' and get politically marginalized or they can participate in the electoral world of liberal democracy, renouncing the ambition of creating a vanguard revolutionary party and committing themselves to socialist transformation through electoral means. This is a real, inescapable dilemma. In India, Maoism chose the path of revolutionary violence, condemning themselves thus far to political marginalization and internal degeneration. The parliamentary left, as represented by both communist parties, CPI and CPI(M), chose the electoral way, effectively recognizing the legitimacy of the liberal state and the specific form of Indian constitutionality, thus foreclosing the revolutionary option, rhetorical stances notwithstanding. There has been a blockage at both ends.

The RSS addressed that question from the extreme right, not theoretically but organizationally. Their documents are at best turgid and unreadable for

the stupidity of their content. Their organizational practices, by contrast, have often been frighteningly brilliant.

How so? That will be part of the argument below.

II

We can pick up the story with the general elections of 2014 and then trace it backwards. For those elections were in significant respects unique but their true significance can emerge only if we understand their context, not just immediate political context but their place in the larger historical process.² The victorious party, the BJP, is not a normal right-wing party, like the British Tories or even the US Republicans. Its uniqueness in the general configuration of right-wing parties in the world is that it is not an independent party at all but only a mass political front of a seasoned and semi-secret organization, the RSS, which describes itself as ‘cultural’ and ‘non-political’ but whose declared intention is to altogether transform India’s political, social, religious life, from the bottom up, and which has at its disposal, if we take into account all the front organization it has spawned, what is easily the largest political force in the world of liberal democracies. And it has displayed a remarkable degree of what one can only call Olympian patience. It has pursued its objectives single-mindedly for ninety years and is still in no hurry. From that standpoint, victory in one election is just one episode among others. Let us look at this episode and then assemble the necessary fragments of a deeper analysis.

The last time a political party garnered a majority of seats in the Indian parliament was in 1984 when the Indian National Congress Party swept the polls on an immense wave of sympathy after the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by her own bodyguards. Since then, it has come increasingly to be believed that the days of single party rule were over, that India had entered an irreversible era of coalition governments, that coalition governments were far more representative of India’s regional diversities and the strongly federalist structure of its polity, and, more dubiously, that coalition partners would exercise restraining influence if the leading party in the coalition tried to pursue any adventurist or extremist policy. Such wisdom was laid to rest in 2014 when the BJP won 282 seats, up from 116 in the outgoing parliament and ten more than required to form a government all on its own. It had gone into the elections as part of an alliance of diverse political parties, the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), and chose to form a coalition government with insignificant partners that it does not need.

Equally significant, and perhaps more stunning, was the debacle faced by the Congress which was reduced from 206 seats in the previous parliament

to a mere 44 in the new one, by far the lowest number since the founding of the Republic in 1947 – and this, immediately after heading two successive governments over the last decade, 2004–14. Another way of putting it is that it was able to win barely one seat out of every ten it contested. The Congress has dominated Indian politics for over a century, commands the aura of having led India to independence from colonialism, and has been seen by Indian liberalism subsequently as the natural party of rule, while this liberalism has typically looked at the BJP as an interloper. There is something almost mysterious about the size and timing of this debacle, considering that there is hardly any difference between the two parties on a whole range of policy positions, except for a significant difference on what in India is called ‘communalism’.³ This deep recession in its fortunes is historic, and it seems unlikely that the Congress will regain any of its past power in the foreseeable future. It continues to possess an elaborate, well-entrenched electoral machine and may get more seats in future elections, but paths to glory are now closed. The BJP owes some of the size of its electoral victory to the depth of the Congress collapse. There are other very significant factors contributing to the BJP’s success, however, which will be dealt with below.

Equally significant in its own way is a parallel decline in the electoral fortunes of the leading communist force in India, the CPI(M). Ten years ago, in 2004, the party won 43 seats in parliament, with over 22 million votes, 5.66 per cent of all votes counted. Ten years later, it had been reduced to only nine seats, with its vote share declining to just below 18 million in a significantly enlarged electorate, thus being reduced to 3.25 per cent of the total. In 2004, the Left Front, led by the CPI(M) had 59 members, roughly 10 per cent of the strength of the House; in 2014, the Front won only 16 seats. For the first time since Independence, the communist left has no significant presence in the Indian parliament. By contrast, the average asset value of individual members of parliament has risen to \$2.3 million, almost three times as much as was the case in the previous parliament (\$850,000). In a country where the majority lives on less than \$2 dollars a day, this is overwhelmingly a parliament of the rich.

Central to this configuration, as symbol and as chief actor, is the unique figure of the current prime minister, Narendra Modi. At least three aspects of this phenomenon can be isolated at this point. As the main accused in the pogrom-like ethnic cleansing of Muslims in Gujarat during 2002 when he was chief minister there, Modi is the most aggressive symbol of the extremist ethno-religious violence in India. As the elections approached and his victory at the head of the BJP became imminent, embassies of the US and the UK went into a frenzy because he had not been able to enter those countries

thanks to charges related to the pogroms; the US had in fact formally denied him a visa. By contrast, all the polls taken among the urban middle classes over more than five years inside India showed him far ahead of all others as the favourite prospective prime minister of the country. So belligerent were the middle classes on this issue, and so far-reaching the unity of major purpose between the BJP and the Congress, that Dr Manmohan Singh, the liberal prime minister of India in the Congress government, had formally protested against the US denial of a visa to Narendra Modi. That someone so well known for perpetrating ethnic cleansing should emerge so quickly as the darling of the middle classes, and would be defended by the Congress prime minister, speaks volumes about how far the centre of gravity has shifted in India's social imagination, and how much the liberal centre has moved toward the extreme right. All this was already there well before the elections, indeed well before the hugely financed and stunningly executed election campaign got going with such power that it seemed unstoppable from the very start.

The second major aspect of Modi's irresistible rise to power has been the fact that never in the country's history has the fraternity of leading corporate CEOs united so strongly and volubly to promote a single politician to prime ministership as they did for Modi. Gujarat is the most industrialized state in India (and Gujarat's poor among its most wretched), and the magnates of Gujarati capital are deeply connected with their counterparts in Bombay, India's financial hub and home to some its leading industrialists, as well as with capitalists of Indian origin living in the UK, US and elsewhere. As chief minister of Gujarat for a decade and a half, Modi did as much as he could to turn the state into a fief for crony capitalists, from inside Gujarat and elsewhere, eventually receiving enormous financial and other kinds of support from them. This helped greatly in transforming his image in the corporate media, electronic and print alike, from that of a bloodthirsty extremist to that of an economic genius who had single-handedly led the state of Gujarat from rags to riches, a veritable Development Man (*Vikaas Purush* in Hindi) whose firm and visionary leadership India needed in this decisive moment of opportunity on the global stage.⁴

This corporate support also helped him spend on his electoral campaign roughly the same amount as Obama had spent on his, while not a fraction of it was available to his opponents. With such resources Modi's campaign went presidential on the model of the US electoral system; it all became an affair of electing one unique man, in what was until then a very different campaign style, more in keeping with the parliamentary system. This money did wonders for Modi. It made him relatively independent of his own party;

the money that builds the personality cult can also sideline and even buy off one's opponents within the party. The money made him marginally independent even of the RSS that had nurtured him since he was a young kid; the phalanxes of the RSS cadres who streamed into his election campaign could now be paid off with corporate cash, so that they became more dependent on the electoral machine he had assembled than on the parent organization.

The third truly notable aspect of Modi's rise to power is that this is the first time that a man who had spent most of his adult life as a fulltime organizer/preacher (*pracharak*) in the shadowy wings of the RSS, a semi-secret organization to start with, has become the country's chief executive. A. B. Vajpayee, who headed a previous government of the BJP, was also a member of the RSS, as are virtually all the key leaders of the BJP. However, Vajpayee and others of his kind were mere members while they led other public or professional lives and went into politics early in their youth to become part of the rough and tumble of parliamentary life. Not so Modi. We know that he joined the RSS as an adolescent but we know little else about the first thirty years or so of his life; and what we know comes only from him. By the time he came fully into public view, as an RSS organizer in and out of BJP offices, he was close to forty. When he was parachuted into Gujarat as chief minister, on RSS direction, he had had no career in electoral politics. He has become prime minister without any prior experience in parliament. His closest crony in the national capital, Amit Shah, is his closest crony from Gujarat, a sinister fellow generally credited with many a murder.

Who does Modi represent? The simple answer is: the RSS and the corporate elite. But he is also filled to the brim with immense, megalomaniac self-love. Who will serve whom is yet to be seen.

III

What, then, about the 'Long March' of the RSS? We will first address issues related to its original formation and ideological articulations, followed by comment on its organizational innovations in the next section.⁵

At the broadest level, the RSS arose in 1925 as part of a wider proliferation of such organizations across many countries during the interwar years, such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, that were part of a global offensive of the right in response to the Bolshevik Revolution as well as a wider upsurge in workers' movements and communist parties. The anti-Enlightenment European right lost faith in liberal democracy itself as having the capacity or the will to fight off such dangers, not just because its leaders were seen as weak-willed, but also because liberalism itself came to be seen as a variant of that same legacy of the French Revolution that had elsewhere led to

Bolshevism. Regarding the rise of such parties in Asia or the Middle East primarily as effects of European fascisms would be erroneous; in all cases, domestic roots and exigencies were much too strong for that characterization. However, a certain inspiration was also undeniable, even though different organizations imbibed it differently.

We don't have space here to trace the fascinating parallels between the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and the Indian RSS. Both subscribed to variants of religious majoritarianism and religio-cultural revivalism. Both found the Nazi ideology deeply attractive for its definition of nationalism in terms of race and religion, in opposition to the definition of nationhood descended from the French Revolution and based on the idea of equal citizenship for all regardless of race, religion, etc. Some of the leaders of Hindu nationalism said openly that the German 'solution' for the Jews could be fruitfully applied to Indian Muslims. From Mussolini, they learned the political uses of the golden classical past; and from Nazis and fascists alike, they learned the strategic uses of force, violence, militias and spectacular public rituals in the creation of a new, hysterical kind of political will. And they imbibed the cult of the leader, a politics of mass obedience as well as contempt for the democratic form in their own organization.

The career of the RSS is remarkable in this regard: it reserves the classically Nazi organizational form of extreme centralized authoritarianism for itself, uses a variety of other fronts for exercise of violence and defiance of constitutionality whenever it so desires, even as it allows and organizes obedience to constitutional norms for its political front, the BJP, the currently ruling party of India. There are moments when the BJP itself deviates from legality but, once the fruits of deviation have been reaped, it is brought back to the norm. In playing this game of a central cadre-based formation answerable to none, a political front that functions very much like a normal party in the Indian liberal-democratic milieu, and a plethora of other fronts that function at various levels of legality and illegality, the RSS has honed the 'good cop, bad cop' technique to sinister perfection. We shall return to this point.

The RSS arose not as a unique expression of what came to be known as 'Hindu nationalism' (as contrasted to the canonical 'secular nationalism' of Gandhi, Nehru, etc.), but as one of many. Founded in 1913, some twelve years before the RSS, the Hindu Mahasabha remained by far the larger organization of that kind well into the 1950s when it began to decay and many of its members got assimilated into the RSS and its affiliates. Ironically, the Mahasabha continued to function from inside the professedly 'secular' Indian National Congress until 1938; and after Independence, Shyama

Prashad Mukherjee, one of its illustrious leaders, resurfaced as a minister in the cabinet of none other than Nehru himself. Certain strands of Hindu extremism and conservatism were thus not entirely alien to what I have called India's canonical nationalism and which never tires of asserting its purportedly pristine secularism.

In its original formation, leaders of the RSS had hardly any ideology of their own and borrowed most of their beliefs from V. D. Savarkar, a fascinating and rather enigmatic character, certainly fascistoid in his thinking but also a one-time anti-colonial nationalist who had fallen out with Gandhi on the question of the legitimacy of violence and was inspired, rather, by methods of the 'revolutionary terrorists' of Bengal. Even though he published *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?*, pretty much the Bible of the Hindu right, in 1923, just two years before the RSS was founded, and then lived on until 1966, Savarkar never in fact joined the RSS and preferred to take over the presidency of the Mahasabha before gradually withdrawing from politics altogether. Overlaps and alignments were, however, so close that while the RSS was banned in response to Gandhi's assassination, Savarkar was tried in court for involvement in that conspiracy; it so happens that Savarkar was acquitted and the ban on RSS was lifted quite soon. Founders and early leaders of the RSS, Hedgewar and Golwalker in particular, borrowed and reframed his idea for their own organization, and it is only after the RSS emerged as the united church of Hindu nationalism, from the 1960s onward, that Savarkar came to be seen increasingly as its own chief ideologue. Parenthetically, we should note that even today the RSS is by far the most important organization of the Hindu right but by no means has any exclusive monopoly of it. There are many outside its own umbrella (or family – *parivar* – as its fronts like to be called). The most notable is the Shiv Sena, but countless small groups of the most violent sort keep cropping up all the time, and it is not always possible to know which of them are covertly RSS outfits and which are not.

Nor were the Mahasabha and the RSS the first originators of this outlook or the first political expression of it. Certain upper caste clusters in late nineteenth century Bengal had provided a rather impressive nursery for the incubation of revivalist longing and nostalgia for a Hindu Golden Age in the classical past; some of these ideas had played a powerful role in the Swadeshi movement in early years of the twentieth century. At the other end of the country, highly influential political, social and educational movements were emerging already in late nineteenth century Maharashtra to combat the Brahminical caste order, for advancement of the untouchable castes and so on. This challenge to Brahminism served to unite much of the Brahmin elite

to defend their caste privileges but, predictably, as defenders of 'Hindus' as such. It was recalled that Peshwai kingdom of the Maharashtrians was the last to have been defeated by the British in India; as such, the Maharshtran elite had not just the duty but the right to devise and lead a new kind of nationalism, a 'Hindu nationalism' that excluded the Muslim usurpers and that would resurrect the ancient glory of the Hindus, purifying the culture of the land. The majority of the founders and early leaders of the RSS turned out to be Maharashtran Brahmins.

There were countless such developments, large and small, not only among Hindus but among sections of Muslims as well. There is no space to retrace those histories. Even so, it would be useful to understand at least conceptually some fundamental aspects of the colonial dispensation that served to greatly strengthen the political valence of religious and caste identities. The basic fact is that a colonial subject is not a citizen and no colonial society can be based on rights of common citizenship. Conditions were thus exceptionally unfavourable for secular, democratic institutions and practices to take root and grow despite the sort of administrative modernity that the colonial authorities had assembled. Lack of the structures of popular representation, such as universal suffrage, meant that representatives were either appointed from above or claimed to represent 'the people' by virtue of their class privilege, when no one had chosen them to do so. Development of the classes of modern society itself remained weak, thanks to the colonial blockage of industrial development, which was then reflected in the weakness of class organizations and the proliferation of non-class pressure groups, organized from above; the proletariat remained small and rather few among the numerically very small modern bourgeoisie, who were particularly bourgeois in their social and cultural outlooks.

In such circumstances, organizations of the modern type arose more in the social arena than in the political, and most such organizations arose along the already available fault lines, such as denominational community, religious sect and caste association. Under colonial conditions, such entities lost much of their earlier amorphous character and gave to themselves, with no little encouragement by the colonial government, far greater solidity in social life and representational claim in the newly emergent political arena; prohibitions on the politics of equality, even in the simple juridical domain, served to enhance savageries in the politics of difference. Even the types of social organization that worked for reform, such as educational societies or philanthropic trusts, arose mainly to serve caste and communal ends. If much 'modern' education was dispensed through caste societies and denominational schools and colleges, most of politics was similarly conducted in the form of

deputations and conferences representing castes and denominations. In other words, the emergence of modern forms of power, in the shape of the state of colonial capital, *required* the emergence of corresponding political forms through which the colonized could represent themselves. However, in blocking collective representation in the form of equal citizenship rights and universal suffrage, the colonial state fragmented the emergent nation into its social units and greatly accentuated the existing cleavages, even though the fact of being governed by the same colonial state gave to each of these units a certain investment in nationalist rhetoric and some rudimentary form of nationalist consciousness.

Such remained the structure of the colonial polity until after the First World War. When the era of mass politics began, Indian colonial society was already organized, socially as well as politically, around the axes of caste, religion and region. The contribution of colonialism to the growth of communal and caste politics was thus not merely tactical ('divide and rule') but structural. So overwhelming was the weight of religion in all this, and so reluctant were the Indian liberal modernists to confront that power frontally, that even the canonical, multi-denominational, professedly secular nationalists simply redefined secularism as not a separation of religion and politics but as 'equal respect for all religions', in the telling and broadly accepted phrase of Dr. Radhakrishnan, a conservative Brahminical scholar who served as the second president of independent India. That was quite consistent with Gandhi's famous dictum that he regarded as sinful any politics that took its distance from religion. The specific ideological positions of Hindu nationalism need to be seen against the backdrop of this much wider landscape of heightened religiosity.

In its formative phase, Hindu nationalist ideology had three distinctive components. First, there was the nationalism of 'blood and soil' descended from right-wing Romanticisms of the European nineteenth century which got re-inscribed in terms of race and religion in many nationalisms of the twentieth century, including the cultural nationalism of the Hindu right. Second, right-wing nationalism also inherited a colonialist reading of India's history, already canonized by James Mill in his iconic six-volume *The History of British India* that started appearing in 1817, as comprising three historical periods: that of the Hindu Golden Age; that of the defeat and fall of Hindu civilization at the hands of Muslim tyranny; and the then-dawning phase for which the British were represented as liberators of Hindus from that tyranny. The latter element accounts for the great ambivalence of Hindu nationalism toward colonialism and imperialism. When Hindutva ideologues speak of the Hindus having suffered under 'foreign rule', they

routinely refer to the period of the Muslim dynasties, not to the British. And although they would like to claim some anti-colonial lineage, there is scant evidence of their actually having participated much in those struggles. Thanks to these powerful ideological legacies, their nationalism of today is remarkably devoid of any anti-imperialist positions and, thanks to the neoliberal consensus, devoid even of the sort of ideologies of self-reliance that Gandhian/Nehruvian variant of nationalism had envisioned for the development of Indian capitalism.

The 'blood-and-soil' nationalism and mythologies of Muslim tyranny were combined with something else as well: anxieties among large sections of the upper caste elites as they were pressed by the upsurge of the lower castes from one side and the rise of a multi-religious, multi-caste nationalism that was fast becoming a veritable mass movement with Gandhi's shepherding of the Congress, especially after 1919. Ideas of the Hindu Golden Age and Muslim tyranny were elements often imbibed from colonial education, hence widespread among the educated Hindu elites. In that respect, Hindu nationalism could appeal to them quite credibly. The intensities of Brahminical caste anxieties were a different matter, however, and those remained a major source for the isolation of the RSS in the heyday of the anti-colonial movement, 1919-47, and during the early decades of the Republic.

The Indian national movements mobilized more peasant households for mass agitation than any other political movement in history, a mobilization that was, in this respect, rather comparable to the Chinese Revolution. Gandhi could not have achieved this level of agrarian unrest under bourgeois hegemony without anchoring his organizational structure for the countryside in the middle and rich peasantries who tended to be drawn from the middling castes, or without waging highly publicized campaigns on the question of untouchability, to appeal to the oppressed menial castes. That necessarily earned him the ire of the more orthodox among the upper castes even though Gandhi never rejected the basic four-fold division (the *varnaashram*) of the Brahminical caste system. And one forgets now that Muslims counted for a quarter of the Indian population before the Partition, before two-thirds of them got regrouped in what we now know as Bangladesh and Pakistan. No leader or organization that sought to represent the whole of British colonial India could afford to ignore this demographic fact or to define India as a purely Hindu nation. So leaders of the Congress declared themselves 'secular' with varying degrees of commitment or conviction. By the same token, the hostility of Hindu nationalism to this 'secular' nationalism was boundless. Savarkar, the chief ideologue in the whole spectrum of Hindu

nationalism, drew a sharp and enduring distinction: Gandhi's was a 'territorial nationalism' which debased the idea of the nation by associating it with mere territory, whereas his own was a 'cultural nationalism' of the 'Hindu Race' for which culture was synonymous with the whole way of Hindu life, including politics, society, civilizational heritage, family structures, form of government, etc. – a primordial, all-encompassing *Being* of the 'Race', as it were.

Some aspects of this cultural conservatism resonated with sections of Hindu society but, beyond a closed circuit of its adherents, this extreme definition of the Hindu nation had few takers as the anti-colonial movement kept gaining more and more demographic weight and diversity across the land, and it had few takers even after Independence as the Republic was sought to be organized on the basis of universal suffrage and what Nehru quaintly called a 'socialistic pattern'. The RSS remained a relatively marginal force until after the dust of Gandhi's assassination had settled in the 1950s, even though sensibilities amenable to ideas of Hindu nationalism were far more widespread than the ideologues of Indian liberalism concede.

IV

For the first quarter century of its existence the RSS displayed no tendency toward innovation and concentrated on self-preservation and expansion, with the distinct novelty that it concentrated on recruiting as many young boys into its local branches (*shakhas*) as possible, in keeping with the view that cultural transformation can be deep-rooted only if a corps of cadres are indoctrinated into its protocols from an early age. Strikingly, it stipulates that any boy who comes to its *shakha* must do so with the prior consent and daily knowledge of elders in his family, assuming that there are countless families in the country who would welcome such an opportunity for their son and who will then get directly involved in the social life of the organization. During this first phase the RSS seems to have wanted to shelter itself under state patronage while it carried out its more or less clandestine work under the banner of 'culture'. It repeatedly proposed mutual cooperation with the British colonial authorities in opposition to the Congress and the communists. Soon after Independence, and even after it was briefly banned following Gandhi's assassination, it proposed cooperation with the Congress against the communists who had emerged fleetingly as the main opposition in parliament.

It floated its first front organization under duress – for women, in 1936 – to protect its own all-male character and to ward off pressure from some particularly enthusiastic and vocal women who wanted membership to be

offered to women as well.⁶ No membership in the masculinist fraternity, the RSS declared, but you can have an organization (a *Samiti*) for yourself under our guidance.⁷ Then a lukewarm attempt was made in 1948-49 to float a students' front during the period when the RSS itself had been banned, but that attempt went nowhere and the students' front got going seriously only a decade later. Today, that front plausibly claims to be the largest students' organization in the country.

The real turning point came in 1951, on the eve of the first general elections, when a political front was floated in the shape of a brand new political party to participate in the polls, the Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS), which was then dissolved in 1977 to be immediately reincarnated as the BJP. The BJS won three seats in 1951 but as many as 35 seats in 1967, with 9.41 per cent of the vote, having united much of the Hindu right under its umbrella by then. But the majority of the Indian bourgeoisie continued to support the Congress, at times grumbling and sullen, and the minority of investors and traders who did not support it worked through other parties such as the short-lived Swatantra Party. The RSS itself did not grow much between Gandhi's assassination in 1948 and Nehru's death in 1962; the aura of the Congress as the unrivalled leading light of the anti-colonial movement still held. After that the RSS grew steadily and at times rapidly, even though some of that aura lasted for the Congress through the Indira Gandhi years and collapsed only after she had abrogated civil rights and declared a State of Emergency in the country in 1975.

Other fronts followed thereafter. The Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS) for the working class, floated in 1955, has by now become the single largest central trade union organization in India, claiming a membership of over ten million workers and affiliation of over four thousand trade unions.⁸ The Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) came in 1964, with the purported aim of propagating Hindu culture abroad, and remained in the shadows for two decades when, in 1984, this particular front was selected to spearhead the vast machinery of violence and rabid ideological hysteria that rolled across the country over the next decade and which brought the BJP to power in Delhi, for 13 days in 1996 and then, at the head of a broad-based coalition of political parties, for six consecutive years from 1998 to 2004. BJP leaders have asserted time and again that its ability to rise from an isolated minority fringe in 1984 to secure governmental power by 1998 was owed very significantly to the mass mobilizations and the periodic pogroms that reached a particular intensity between 1989 and 1992, culminating in the spectacular destruction of the Babri Masjid, that the Supreme Court had sought to protect through agencies of the Indian government. However, Indian liberalism itself has

never acknowledged that the reaping of such rich electoral dividends from years of violence by the RSS and its affiliates – and the fact that so many large and influential political parties have joined the coalition led by the BJP – means that something very fundamental has changed in the very fabric of the Republic.

It was during those two years that Modi, the current prime minister, saw what was there for all to see: that communal killings, images of Hindus killing members of Christian and Muslim minorities, are good for winning elections. Since staging his own ethnic cleansing in 2002 he has not looked back. He increased his majority in the state assembly by a solid 10 per cent in the aftermath of those killings, won two more state assembly elections and then led his party to spectacular victory in the recent national elections. The RSS plays its fronts like pawns on the chessboard of Indian politics, mixing legality and illegality, electoral politics and machineries of violence, in full view of agencies of law and organs of civil society. This is rather a sinister variant on the famous formula: 'hegemony = consent + coercion'. And coercion has had – and will continue to have – a specific form: small doses, steadily dispensed; no gas ovens, just a handful of storm troopers, here and there, appearing and disappearing; and a permanent fear that corrodes the souls of the wretched of the land, while the liberal democratic machinery rolls on – no formal suspension of civil liberties!

That, then, is the first innovation; a large inventory of very different kinds of fronts, to perform very different kinds of functions, at different times and in different spheres of society, to see if violence that is required for a revolution (from the extreme right) can be practiced alongside the pursuit of legitimacy through parliamentary elections as bourgeois legality and subjectivity require. Second is the issue of the relationship between political parties and affiliated organizations (fronts, in common parlance). It is normal in India for large political parties to have fronts for different sections of society: women, students, workers, peasants and so on. The Congress has them, as do the parliamentary communists. By contrast, the innovation here is that the RSS, which floats and controls the fronts, is not a political party but intervenes comprehensively in all aspects of political and social life without taking any responsibility for what it does through its fronts; that the political party, the BJP, is not, strictly speaking, a political party but only a front in which virtually all the key leaders and organizers are drawn from the RSS. Moreover, all the other fronts are also fronts of the RSS, an extra-parliamentary entity; the BJP, being a front itself, has no control over those fronts. Fourth innovation: none of it is secret, as all is public and comprehensively documented, time and again – just a normal part of liberal

democratic freedom. Fifth, intricacies of law and constitution are carefully sifted through to determine exactly to what extent the RSS itself can function in the public domain as a legally constituted entity without having to reveal much of what it is and what it does. As a self-styled 'cultural' organization it is exempt from the kind of accountability that is required of political parties. Liberal protections are thus utilized for secretive authoritarian purpose. In all this there are two distinct claims which the RSS throws around as if they were identical. It emphatically claims to be a purely 'cultural' organization, uninvolved in politics and, therefore, exempt from requirements imposed on political parties, such as revealing its membership or keeping accounts for public scrutiny. Simultaneously, it claims that it has a right to guide in all aspects of politics because, far from being an autonomous sphere, politics in Hindu society is one area of 'culture' just as 'culture' itself is an all-encompassing expression of the religion of the Race. The two claims are of course incompatible. Not for nothing did Mussolini declare that 'we fascists are super-relativists'.

And the final, most far-reaching innovation: the sheer number of fronts, running surely into the hundreds, possibly thousands – no one knows. The Anthropological Survey of India holds that the Indian population is comprised of thousands of distinct communities, sociologically so defined by custom, speech, location, cuisine, spiritual belief, caste, sub-caste, occupation, what have you. The RSS is the only organization in India which has the ambition to have fronts for as many of these diversities as possible and does indeed go on creating more and more of them. In this sense, it is a spectacular missionary organization, and the mission is religious, cultural, social, economic, educational – and of course political. The heart of this problem for the RSS is that even though the word 'Hindu' is used by all as if the word referred to some homogeneous religious community or a unified social category, the reality is that all these diversities – even immense differences of custom and religious belief – exist among precisely the 80 per cent of the Indians who are considered 'Hindu'. Contrary to this reality, the RSS has fairly precise ideas of what it means to be a Hindu, based on its own doctrine that being a Hindu is not merely a religious category, divorced from other kinds of subjectivity or conduct, but an entire way of life, from cradle to grave.⁹ It wants to make sure that the ideal type it has invented becomes the normative standard among that 80 per cent. Its commitment to creating a cultural homogeneity out of this ocean of diversities, and to translate that cultural homogeneity into a unified political will, means that it wishes to become both church and state simultaneously. That ambition is at the heart of its fight against secular civility and the specific content of

its authoritarianism.¹⁰ That so comprehensive a civilizational project would wholly succeed appears implausible. The undertaking is audacious, however, and the success so far, although partial, is also undeniably impressive.

V

India's post-Independence history can be broadly conceptualized in terms of three phases. The first lasted from 1947 to 1975. It was premised on four values of the Nehruvian paradigm: secularism, democracy, socialism, non-alignment. The practice did not always correspond to precepts, and the paradigm kept fraying, especially after the India-China War of 1962, and Nehru's death soon thereafter. Even so, a certain degree of liberal-left hegemony did survive and got eroded only gradually. Eventually, the accumulating crises came to a head with the outbreak of massive, right-wing, populist agitation in the mid-1970s and, in response, Indira Gandhi's suspension of civil liberties and Declaration of Emergency.¹¹

The end of the first phase and the beginning of the second coincide in the massive ambiguities of that movement famously led by Jayaprakash Narayan (JP), an aging Congressman and once a friend of Nehru, who now forged a far-reaching alliance with the RSS and gathered a whole range of rightist forces as well as youth groups under the slogan of 'Total Revolution', calling upon state apparatuses, including the security agencies, to mutiny. The RSS, with its thousands of cadres, provided the backbone of the anti-Emergency movement and then of the Janata Party government that arose out of the end of the Emergency, when Bharatiya Jana Sangh's share of parliamentary seats rose from 35 in 1967 to 94 in 1977, with Vajpayee and Advani, veterans of the RSS, rising to occupy key cabinet posts. That outcome – the anti-Emergency agitation leading to the first non-Congress government in the country – is still celebrated in the (non-Congress) liberal circles as a moment when the sturdiness of Indian democracy prevailed over Indira Gandhi's dictatorial tendencies.¹² Yet that was precisely the process that served to legitimize the RSS as a respectable force in Indian politics and to confer on its political front a significant place in government for the first time in Indian history. I might add that the RSS made exponential strides between 1977 and 1982, for five years after the Emergency was lifted, owing to its newfound reputation as a defender of democracy against dictatorship.

On the whole, though, that force also got splintered owing to its own contradictions and the phase of relative political crisis of the bourgeois state in India continued, in which the older power bloc, led by the Congress, was no longer capable of stable rule but none other had emerged to replace it either. That crisis lasted for over two decades, ending fully only with the advent of the second BJP-led government in 1998 (the first had fallen

after thirteen days in 1996). The neoliberal policies that the Congress had inaugurated almost ten years earlier had by then taken root, inaugurating a new phase in which a drastically reorganized power bloc, consisting of all the non-left parties and ranging from the Congress to the BJP, gave a new stability to bourgeois rule in India regardless of which coalition of those parties wins the elections at one point or another. The decisive turning points had, of course, come earlier, nationally and internationally, during those momentous three years from 1989 to 1992.

Internationally, those years witnessed the historic collapse of communism in the Soviet Union and in southeastern Europe more generally, with the US becoming an unrivalled global hegemon. The whole of the Indian ruling class and its state structures could now openly unite behind this 'lone superpower' with no internal friction at all. Inside the country, those same years witnessed the onset of the neoliberal regime with the so-called Rao-Manmohan reforms, and that decisive turn in the institutionalization of communalism in structures of the Indian state, which began with the tacit agreement between the Congress and the VHP at the time of Shila Nyas in 1989 and even more dramatically during the destruction of the Babri Masjid in 1982.¹³ Conditions remained highly unstable for a few years, however.

By 1998 neoliberalism had become a consensual position among the propertied classes and their representatives in various spheres of the national life. At the same time, the far right had made rapid gains and began concentrating on consolidation of its newfound power. Extreme violence of the early 1990s was no longer required. It was much more important now to give the BJP a mildly liberal face so that it could be accepted as a party of bourgeois rule and an alternative to the Congress. The coalition government it formed in 1998 lasted for six years, leading then to ten years of a Congress-led government that only ended with the return of the BJP in 2014 with a firm majority in parliament. Remarkably, these changes in government have witnessed no appreciable changes in policy. In this sense India has become a *mature* liberal democracy in the neoliberal age, like the US and UK, where the two main competing parties – or coalitions of parties – function as mere factions in a managing committee of the bourgeoisie as a whole. At the heart of this new consensus in the Indian ruling class is close alliance with imperialism externally and the imposition of neoliberal order domestically.

In hindsight one could even propose that the promulgation of neoliberalism was the necessary moment for the various factions of the ruling class, hence the various parties that represent capitalist interest at the federal and regional levels, to obtain a firm base of unity and a new type of alliance with US capital in the altered national and international conditions.

All these parties compete with each other now for the spoils of office, not on matters of policy or even ideology. This neoliberal order is what I call extreme capitalism and it has so far had broadly analogous consequences in the India of high growth rates and in the EU of low growth rates. The Congress serves as the formally secular face of this class consensus while the BJP serves as its communal face, even though the Congress is quite capable of its own pragmatic uses of communalism as much as the BJP is often quite willing to have the more provocative aspects of its programme suspended so that it may remain at the apex of power in a broad coalition. Accordingly, Modi based his prime ministerial bid not on the Hindutva plank of blood-curdling rhetoric, which had propelled him into halls of power in the first place, but on exactly that rhetoric of 'growth' and 'development' that the BJP shares with the Congress. Indeed, the Congress has always said, with much justice, that its own policies are what the BJP then implements. Modi is not uniquely a candidate of all corporate capital; it is just the case that he has united many more of the top CEOs behind him, much more openly, than his counterparts in the Congress ever could even when they tried.

Not that the punctual uses of violence as a strategic imperative have declined. Killing of some members of the religious minorities is a common affair, a couple of Christians here, five or ten Muslim there; nothing spectacular, just low-intensity and routinized, nothing to disturb the image of a liberal, secular, deeply democratic India. There is no longer a significant political party in the country, with the exception of the communist left, that has not colluded with the BJP at one point or another since 1996 and especially so since 1998. At the time of the ethnic cleansing of Gujarat in 2002 numerous political parties united to prevent even a discussion of it on the floor of the House. Even the Congress colludes when necessary but rather quietly, not overtly because it is, after all, the main electoral adversary. Increasing communalization of popular consciousness can now proceed from two sides. There is of course the mass work by the RSS and its affiliates which have gained more and more adherents over some eighty years, in what Gramsci called the quotidian, molecular movements in the quality of mass perceptions at the very base of society – the creation of a 'new common sense'. A majority of the liberals no longer know how much they themselves have moved toward the communal, neoliberal right. And now, for many years, these same shifts can also come from the side of the state, its political parties, educational enterprises, repressive apparatuses, often even the judicial branch. As India increasingly becomes a national security state, the bases for an aggressive, masculinist right-wing nationalism are bound to go deeper into society at large.

VI

Where, then, does the question of fascism fit into all this? I must confess that, in the wake of the spectacular events of 1992, this author was the first to raise this question comprehensively, first in a lengthy lecture delivered in Calcutta and then in another equally lengthy lecture delivered in Hyderabad.¹⁴ Several other prominent scholars, Sumit Sarkar and Prabhat Patnaik in particular, had expressed similar misgivings. There emerged on the left a broadly shared thinking that the RSS, its affiliates and allies had been distinctly influenced by the Nazi/fascist combine at the very moment of their origin, that they had carried many of those sympathies and principles into their own organizations and modes of conduct, and that many of their more recent strategies and practices were distinctly fascist. The CPI(M), a political party caught up in debates ranging all around it, even adopted the term ‘communal fascism’ to stress a certain degree of fascist content as well as to specify the uniquely Indian twist to that content. I had further argued that the type of politics that we broadly (and sometimes imprecisely) call ‘fascism’ is a feature of the whole of the imperialist epoch. Not for nothing did French ‘Integral Nationalism’, sometimes credited as being the original form of fascism, arise in precisely those closing decades of the nineteenth century, which were, in Lenin’s typology, the original moment for the rise of what he called ‘imperialism’.

In short, so long as one was not suggesting that the replication of the German and Italian experiences was at hand, it was perfectly legitimate to place the RSS into a certain typology of political forces that are fairly widespread even inside contemporary Europe itself, from Greece to France and from Austria to Ukraine. I had also argued, tongue in cheek, that ‘every country gets the fascism it deserves’ in accordance with the ‘physiognomy’ (a favourite metaphor of Gramsci) of its history, society and politics; and, I would now add, the historical phase that the country is going through. In other words, what we have to grasp about every successful movement of the fascist type is not its replication of something else in the past, but its originality in response to the conditions in which it arises. There is no getting away from the materiality of the ‘here and now’. All revivalism is a contemporary rewriting of the past, a radically modern neo-traditionalism. All the contemporary parties of the fascist type respond to their own national milieux and to the broader fact that, with few and only relative exceptions, the working classes are supine globally, beaten back by neoliberal successes in the reorganization of capital, and that political liberalism has itself made its peace with this extreme capitalism.

In this situation the proper stance is not: watch out, Nazis are coming.

The real question is the one that Kalecki posed at the time of Goldwater's bid for the US presidency in the 1960s: what would fascism look like if it came to a democratic industrial country that had no powerful working-class movement to oppose it?¹⁵ That is the *general question*,¹⁶ and I think it applies with particular force to the India of today: the far right need not abolish the outer shell of the liberal democratic institutions because these institutions can be taken over by its own personnel altogether peacefully and because most others are quite willing to go along with it so long as acts of large-scale violence remain only sporadic and the more frequent low-intensity violence can be kept out of general view, by media monopoly combined with mutual agreement between liberalism and the far right. Meanwhile, the communists are now too small a force to be considered even for a ban. Of course, the question of fascism of the classical type may well resurface if a powerful socialist movement were to be re-founded, on whatever new premises and strategic perspectives that may now be necessary for that act of re-founding and reconstruction.

NOTES

- 1 The term 'Hindutva' was coined by V. D. Savarkar, the founding ideologue of the politically extreme Hindu right, to distinguish his own doctrine from the religious structure of Hinduism. He translated 'Hindutave' into English alternately as 'Hinduness' or 'Hindu nationalism'. Thus, the terms 'Hindutva' or 'Hindu nationalism' shall be used in this text specifically to the political ideology descended from Savarkar, his successors and followers.
- 2 Also see the account by Achin Vaniak, 'India's Landmark Election', in Leo Panitch and Greg Albo, eds., *Socialist Register 2015: Transforming Classes*, London: Merlin Press, 2014.
- 3 The historian Bipan Chandra once defined communalism as an ideology which proposes that members of a religious community also thereby constitute a distinct national community, which logically leads to the assertion that this communal nation must also have a state of its own – one in which others may live, but only as guests, foreigners or second-class citizens. This is an apt description of the ideology of the RSS and its affiliates.
- 4 The indispensable essay on the rise of Modi and his acquisition of such massive corporate backing is Vinod K. Jose, 'The Emperor Uncrowned: The Rise of Narendra Modi', *Caravan Magazine*, 1 March 2012.
- 5 I have dealt with these matters at greater length, theoretically and descriptively, in several other publications, such as 'On the Ruins of Ayodhya: Communalist Offensive and Recovery of the Secular', *Social Scientist*, 21(7/8), 1993; 'In the Eye of the Storm: The Left Chooses', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 31(22), 1 June 1996; and "'Tryst with Destiny": Free and Divided', *The Hindu*, August 1997 – all three collected with some modifications in my *Lineages of the Present: Ideology and Politics in Contemporary South Asia*, London: Verso, 2004. Related publications include 'Fascism and National Culture: Reading Gramsci in the Days of Hindutva', *Social Scientist*, 21(3/4), 1993; 'Indian Politics at the Crossroads: Toward Elections 2004', in Mushir ul Hasan, ed.,

Will Secular India Survive, Delhi: Manohar, 2004; and 'Communalism: Changing Forms and Fortunes', *The Marxist*, 29(2), 2013.

- 6 There is a delicious irony in the fact that the RSS, which zealously asserts that only men may be accepted as members, is called *Mata* (Mother) by all its fronts which coexist as siblings, born of this Mother, in what is called the *Sangh parivar* (the Sangh family).
- 7 This pattern of masculinist organizational privilege was repeated much later by one of its major fronts, the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP), which the RSS utilizes from time to time for unleashing communal violence. The VHP established a separate women's organization under its own tutelage in 1991, Durga Vahini, which often recruits young girls from impoverished households, indoctrinates them and trains them in fighting techniques. Such women are known to have participated actively in violence against the minorities in pogrom-like events that go on in India under the relatively neutral heading of 'riots'.
- 8 It needs to be stressed here that the RSS front has achieved this not by suppressing communist trade unions but by coexisting with them inside the liberal democratic framework, and that trade unions of the communists and the RSS typically cooperate in workers' protests organized at the national level. No fascist model here.
- 9 Not just from the cradle, actually, but from the womb. As M. S. Golwalkar, the second *Sarsanghchalak* (Supreme Guide) of the RSS, puts it in his *Bunch of Thoughts* (Bangalore: Sahitya Sindhu Prakashana, 1996): 'Some wise men of today tell us that no man is born a Hindu or Muslim or Christian but as a simple human being. In fact, we are Hindus even before we emerge from the womb of our mother. We are therefore born as Hindus. About the others, they are born to this world as simple unnamed human beings and later on, circumcised or baptized, they become Muslims or Christians.'
- 10 The great impediment in the realization of this homogeneity even among those who are formally called 'Hindu' is of course the matter of caste. A uniform Hinduism that applied equally to all would have to be necessarily caste-less, but that is a structural impossibility. As Suvira Jaiswal, the eminent historian of early India, argues: Hinduism is doctrinally so flexible and decentred precisely because its rigidity exists not in the rigidity of belief system, an orthodoxy, but in the centrality of caste in Hindu society, i.e. an orthopraxy. The RSS can be iconoclastic on the issue but cannot commit itself to abolish caste as such.
- 11 Liberal-left dominance in the early years of the Republic can be witnessed in the fact that not only was Nehru's own government dominated by the Congress left, but that the CPI was for many years the most prominent opposition force in parliament.
- 12 The confrontation between the JP-RSS-led right-wing populism and Indira Gandhi's egregiously authoritarian rule during the short-lived Emergency was also reflected in contrasting positions of the two main communist parties, with the CPI supporting the Emergency and the CPI(M) joining the anti-Emergency agitation of the populist right (for its own reasons of course).
- 13 For detailed analysis of those events see my 'On the Ruins of Ayodhya'.
- 14 Published later as, respectively, 'Fascism and National Culture' and 'On the Ruins of Ayodhya'.
- 15 Michal Kalecki raised this point in his 1964 essay, 'The Fascism of Our Time', reprinted in his *The Last Phase in the Transformation of Capitalism*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972.
- 16 In specific cases, notably that of Greece today, a fascist movement of the original type is on the move precisely because a leftist possibility is at hand.