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The Secretariat of the National Council of the Communist Party of India has issued the following press statement:

**A**N esteemed veteran leader of the nation is no more. Shri Govind Vallabh Pant is dead. He was part of the national leadership that organised and led the struggle for freedom under Mahatma Gandhi's leadership and later became the National Government under the leadership of Pandit Nehru.

He sacrificed a prosperous lawyer's career. He suffered police lathis in the brutish days of British terror and that lathi-charge irreparably damaged his health. His indomitable will and strong physique enabled him to carry on his ever-growing responsibility. In his last days he defied death as long as it was humanly possible.

He had become a tower of strength and the embodiment of cool thought which commanded respect whether one agreed with him or stood opposed. He earned for himself the status of the chief adviser of the Prime Minister who relied upon him in every serious crisis. Congressmen of all levels rushed to him for guidance and support.

He belonged to an old generation but was receptive to new ideas. He had a big and warm heart. This won him friends and admirers beyond the ranks of the Congressmen.

The best tribute that the present generation can pay to the passing generation of our national struggle is to ever renew the dedication to keep up the fight in defence of the nation's independence, people's prosperity and for world peace.

The Communist Party joins the national mourning and offers its condolences to the bereaved family of the respected old guard.

# JABALPUR— THE LESSONS

**T**HE communal riots of Jabalpur, and following it in other places in Madhya Pradesh, have shocked all our thinking citizens and they are being fully exploited by the enemies of the nation. I went there to investigate the situation on the spot. I met people from all walks of life and of various shades of political opinion and the more I heard and the harder I tried to get a coherent picture of this national tragedy the more irresistibly the sad memories of 1946-47 came back but with some inevitable differences which the post-independence years have made to our national life.

This time, too, the main plotter, organiser and incendiary of this riot-wave were the communal elements, specifically the Jan Sangh and they made the Muslims their helpless victims.

Secondly, the police and officials either worked in league with the Jan Sangh elements or acted so brutishly and in such a partisan manner as to earn the praise of the Jan Sangh and thus demonstrate in a flash that our administrative organs are being subverted by reactionary elements and used for their foul game.

Thirdly, the Jan Sangh Hindi Daily and the rumour mongering so much influenced the P.T.I. and the official publicity as to create a completely false picture of these riots, of its causes and the course of its development.

The innocent have been murdered, the poor have lost their homes and source of livelihood, women have been dishonoured, children have been orphaned.

But all this would not have gone in vain if all the patriotic and secular elements in our national life draw the only truthful conclusion that these Madhya Pradesh riots were staged as a political rehearsal by the Jan Sangh for the coming General Elections, as a part of their political tactic, as their way to win popularity as the protector of the Hindu majority and to defame the Muslim minority as a fifth column of Pakistan and so on.

## JAN SANGH DEMAGOGY

The Jan Sangh started it all by playing up the rape story in their Hindi daily Yugadharma which featured it as a major front page campaign story. Jabalpur has three dailies. The other two nationalist dailies Nai Dunya and Nav Bharat did not give it any prominence to the incident but treated it as an ordinary crime.

The sensational publicity to this sordid story was the

means to give the chance to the Jan Sangh Vidharathi Parishad boys to bring out a students' procession and start marching through the town and enable the Jan Sangh gangs, in cooperation with the anti-social elements to start off arson, looting, stabbing, etc. When the riot began and spread the police acted as mute on-lookers. The situation eased only when the military came.

The story of shameful rape was used by the Jan Sangh bands to howl and broadcast the slogan "Badla lo! Hindu

nised crowds of miscreants of a community armed with lathis, daggers, fire-arms, acid-bulbs and brick-bats assembled simultaneously in groups (the localities named are all of Muslim majority mohallas). They attacked houses of the other community and indulged in arson, shooting, looting and criminal assaults on the residents of those houses". The official communique leaves no doubt that the Muslims were the aggressors and the Hindus the defenders. No falsehood could be more false.

by  
**P. C. JOSHI**

"Yuwati ka badla lo" (Avenge! Avenge the rape of the Hindu Girl). There were gangs ready to shout in return obscene and unprintable slogans and translate them into action as well. Muslim women were duly raped in return. Neither the P.T.I. nor the official communiques reported the rape stories against the Muslim women nor did anything to counter this foul slogan-mongering and what immediately followed from the same.

## WRONG STORY

Rape is an anti-social crime. It has nothing to do with being Hindu or Muslim. The Jan Sangh campaign used the rape story to provoke the riot and stir the base passions of the communally-roused Hindu mass and silence the secular elements. The rape and similar emotion-stirring and made-up stories have always been used by communal elements to fan the communal fire. They did so in Jabalpur again and with devastating effectiveness.

A bigger than the first February 4 and far more serious riot took place three days later on February 7. The press-note of the Commissioner stated that "Orga-

On the eve of the second riot, the Jan Sangh elements were openly bragging in their mohallas that something big will happen on the very night it did happen.

## OFFICIAL COMPLICITY

On the dreadful night, the press men begged for an official communique up to 3 a.m. but none was issued. Next day on 8th morning, the Yugadharma for the first time published in cold print that organised attacks by Muslim mobs took place at six points and publicised many hair-raising 100 per cent lie stories.

The nationalist daily Nai Dunya was silent about the organised character of the attacks. On the second day afternoon, the official communique was issued (with the P.T.I. message following suit) repeating the Yugadharma thesis and main story. Next day, the police officials, and the P.R.O. began openly preaching the story that the Muslim began it and the atrocities.

Now began wild rumours, with Yugadharma as the mouthpiece. The official communiques did not contradict a single false story published through the Yugadharma.

The official communique had stated that on 8th six persons were killed in police firing but ten days later it was reduced to only three.

On 10th, the official information was 20 killed in Jabalpur. Next day the official spokesman in the Madhya Pradesh Vidhan Sabha reduced the number to 17. Similarly about the houses, on 13th the official information was 164 houses burnt but later the Commissioner had to admit that 293 houses have been burnt. The internal contradictions of official statements can be multiplied indefinitely.

Anybody who can use his eyes can see for himself that the Muslim minority was not the aggressor but the victim of the riots and the evidence for this honest conclusion is living reality which cannot be hidden and in no way refuted.

1. On all accounts, the Hindu mobs far outnumbered the Muslims. In the city population, about three lakhs are Hindus and 40,000 Muslims. The riot began with the beating of gongs and the blowing of conchshells and these are Hindu symbols and not Muslim.

2. The areas mentioned as the starting points of these riots are all Muslim majority and of their town poor which only shows that they were on the defensive and not offensive.

I have myself seen a long bamboo pole over the big Hindu temple, on the other side of the road where the Hindu areas begin, with an electric bulb atop which was switched on and off to guide the rioting bands.

## MUSLIMS LOOTED

3. In the Muslim majority areas, the Hindu houses were not burnt. I saw rows and rows of Muslim houses instead

devastated and burnt. Of the total 293 houses burnt only 6 are of Hindus and they too have not been completely gutted, they caught the fire because these few Hindu houses got sandwiched between rows of burning Muslim houses.

4. It is not the Hindu but the Muslim houses that were looted on that large scale and which stand desolate with their inmates having fled away. Dozens of Muslim grandmothers told me their individual stories but they all formed a pattern.

The police pickets came into the mohallas and stood around. Then came bands of Jan Sanghis with burning torches or cloth-balls soaked in kerosene and petrol and set fire to the houses. The police shared the lion's share. As the trapped inmates came out the men were quite often belaboured, arrested and the terror-struck women were asked to hand over all jewellery and whatever valuable was in the houses and then allowed to flee in panic if not also humiliated and molested.

## HOUSES BURNT

I have seen Hindu houses unburnt and unlooted, with locks on and safe, right inside the Muslim mohallas. Their inmates had themselves left for the Hindu majority mohallas and their Muslim neighbours had kept guard over their houses and property.

Over some houses I read the chalked words "Ye Hindu ka makan hai?" (This is a Hindu's house). Obviously, to tell the Hindu rioters not to burn or loot it.

5. Again, among the 41 killed only two are Hindus and this very much smaller num-

















# JABALPUR MUST NOT HAPPEN AGAIN!

\* FROM PAGE 4

defending the reputation of the Congress-Raj.

Again, another argument is that if the Muslims get beaten up they will at least learn that the P.S.P. cannot save them. Naturally, enough with the ideas like the above, the Congress could play no fruitful anti-riot role.

In fact, the local Congress not only left the local officials to do what they liked but it has been depending on their patronage to get the privilege for monopolising relief work and through it penetrate among the Muslims.

As we have stated above, the P.S.P. had considerable influence among the Muslim poor and yet it sat quiet. Its dilemma was that if it came out in active and bold defence of the Muslim minority it incurred the risk of losing the Hindu votes. Its social base among the non-Muslims is the Jain business community which had gone through the experience of a Hindu-Jain riot earlier and Jain businessmen feared that if the P.S.P. leaders came out in frontal opposition to Jan Sangh and the defence of the Muslim minority the Jan Sangh might once again be able to incite Hindu mob fury against them.

## P.S.P.'s Position

The P.S.P., however, controlled the Municipal Corporation and had its own mayor who was somewhat non-communal. He took initiative to form a Peace Committee with the help of the officials and stuffed it with his supporters and the Jan Sanghis as well besides a few non-descripts. Naturally, enough such a Peace Committee disappeared from the scene when the second round began.

After the second and big burst-up on 7th, the P.S.P. became utterly demoralised and its leaders advanced the argument that they could not do anything because the officials did not let them do anything. Their leading MLA's Tamaskar and Beghel came to Jabalpur in delegation and issued a heroic press statement that the Katju Government should resign! It was taken as nothing else but empty demagoguery of the politically impotent.

Their Rajya Sabha member Farid Ansari also came. He, however, made no statement but promised to meet Chief Minister Katju and move the Central Government.

The P.S.P. had four Muslim corporators. Among its Hindu corporators a few were pro-Jan Sangh. The Congress corporators, themselves communal-minded, got in league with the Jan Sangh-minded corporators to seize the corporation from P.S.P. hands. They concentrated their fire against the P.S.P. mayor and accused him of aiding the Muslims and the rest of it. Noisy Hindu mobs were mobilised to heckle and shout down the corporators and the P.S.P. mayor ultimately succumbed to escape a no-confidence motion.

Our Party is weak in Jabalpur but every Party comrade was active during the riots. Our local leadership systematically exposed

the Jan Sangh and the role of the local officials. In an organised manner they could only operate through the Trade Unions and individually every Communist did all he could to save the maximum number of Muslim families. In the Defence Colony where 20,000 workers, who work in various strategic production projects, stay with their families, is three miles long and one and half mile broad, not one Muslim was attacked there. In the Railway Colony 4,000 workers with their families including the Muslims live. They were equally safe here.

## Communist Work

The Central Telegraph Work shop is right in the heart of the city where the riots raged. About 700 workers' families live in the Colony nearby. Here too Muslims lived and worked safely.

In the Cantonment Area, Defence and Railway employees who failed to get official quarters live in the private-rented houses. Here also nothing untoward happened.

In all these areas the Hindu workers organised patrols, day and night. They did not permit any Muslim worker to leave, even in the worst days of panic. The Jan Sangh made many efforts to provoke the Hindu workers.

And when they did not succeed, they called the workers 'cowards' but the workers kept cool. Unsigned chits were sent in large numbers to prominent Hindu workers that Hindu women's chastity was gone, Hindus have been killed, avenge! The workers chased away the kids who came to deliver these chits.

Another very healthy feature was that the linguistic minorities residing in Jabalpur like the Sindhis, Sikhs, Bengalis, South Indians, Maharashtrians and Gujaratis did

not participate in the riots and did what they could to prevent them. Past experience seems to have made them wiser.

For example, the Sikhs defended the bungalow of Suleman Ghanibhai whose big hardware shop was gutted in the main market. In Mohalla Badi Madar Tekri where the Muslim area ends and the Hindu area begins a group of Hindu Sindhi refugees live. The rioters came burning a whole row of Muslim houses. As they wanted to spread their arson campaign, the Sindhis stepped in and stopped them.

I have also heard of numerous instances of individual Hindus saving the Muslims and met some of them.

Near Chirag Ali Masjid, 35 Muslims took shelter. Fifty armed Hindus came and surrounded the mosque. Advocate Bansil Dhar Tiwari and journalist Balkrishan Pande came out of their houses nearby and appealed to the rioters mob to desist. They were called traitors.

## Saving Muslims

The mob retreated but came back later with still a bigger mob only to find that the Muslims were no more in side the mosque. Tiwariji told me how he removed the Muslims to a place of safety and also live stories of gangsterism that got going.

On Rani Tal Road lived Chandu Kher's family and it readily sheltered Muslim families. The local goondas learnt of it and demanded the Muslims but the Khers stood firm. The Muslim family wanted to quit the house, not to risk their host, but the Khers sheltered them for full 15 days and refused to let their guests risk their lives.

On the very first day of the riot Shanker Singh, an ordinary shop assistant, sheltered a Muslim family in his house. The Jan Sangh got to know it and threatened him but he refused to

yield. Later our comrades removed the family to a safer place, to comrade Arthur's house, himself a carpenter and an ex-Defence worker.

## All-India Plan

In Ghora Phatak an aged Muslim and his old wife had no one left to look after them. The Hindus of the mohalla fed them and saw that they were not touched.

Instances like the above, of good neighbourliness, healthy secularism, Hindu-Muslim brotherhood, can be multiplied. They help to keep alive faith in Indian humanity despite the bestiality and falsehoods I saw having run amuck, for the time being, in Jabalpur.

What happened in Jabalpur can happen anywhere else in India. The Jan Sangh itself considers it as only the first shot in its communal-hate-preaching and riot-inciting campaign. The only way to escape a similar tragedy engulfing the other towns and villages of our country is to broadcast the true facts about Jabalpur and stir the vigilance of our peace-loving and patriotic common people, and make them realise how the communal elements and especially the Jan Sangh has become the initiator and organiser of anti-Muslim communal riot, why and how it has adopted riot-mongering as its political tactic.

The anti-Muslim demagoguery and the riot tactic is only a part of its political challenge to India's independent foreign policy, secular democratic set-up, and progressive Plan policies. The Jan Sangh is the living embodiment of the blackest Indian Reaction.

Jabalpur experience also reveals that the Jan Sangh cannot be easily prevented from starting and stirring anti-Muslim riots if the secular and democratic forces remain divided. If the Congress itself becomes corroded with Hindu

communalism, if the P.S.P. is afraid of defending the Muslim minority for fear of losing the Hindu votes, the popular forces remain paralysed, and get confused and become easy victims of Jan Sangh communal demagoguery and falsehoods, communal riots get started unchallenged and Jan Sangh has a field day.

Nehru's bold and moving statements have led to some heart-searching among the honest Congressmen. We look forward to some P.S.P. leaders also following a similar example. I have written hard words about Congressmen and PSPers in Jabalpur but that is only because we Communists have more in common with the Congress and the PSP in terms of secularism and democracy and what we all hold dear against the communal Jan Sangh.

## Isolate Communalists

Despite all other differences, it is our common and urgent duty to isolate and eliminate the Jan Sangh and similar communal organisations from our country's national life.

The delegations of the Congress and other leaders who have gone to Madhya Pradesh have helped to tone up the situation there and led to a better realisation of the implications of the Jabalpur riots in wider national circles. People there want more and more such delegations and they are needed to broadcast the truth and strengthen vigilance in the rest of the country.

The political set-up within Madhya Pradesh is very backward and it has become very confused, communally surcharged after the riots. The atmosphere can be easily cleared if Congressmen, Socialists, Communists and non-party leaders who are really ashamed of what has happened and seek to prevent it happening again there or elsewhere pool their efforts to help the real truth come out from the Enquiry Committee that has been appointed by the Madhya Pradesh Government.

The Enquiry Committee cannot fruitfully fulfil its responsibility if the leading District officials who failed to prevent riots and have now to explain their failure to fulfil their duty to maintain law and order are not summarily transferred from Jabalpur and other places where the riots took place. Without such official transfer no free and fair inquiry is possible.

A real big and serious drive to restore Hindu-Muslim amity and give relief to those who have lost their homes, sources of living and near and dear ones is urgently called for and this necessitates the formation of a really representative high-powered Peace Committee and the appointment of local and efficient officials.

New and hard thinking, earnest practical efforts despite earlier passions and prejudices are called for from all who love India and stand by the ideals of secularism, democracy and progress. To think Jabalpur was a tragic incident and with time will become a thing of the past is to live in a fool's paradise.



A typical scene of devastated homes of the Muslim poor in Jabalpur.