

# Feast Of Death And Tyranny In Assam

By Dr. Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya

For Assam, the New Year has begun with a feast of death and tyranny. Eight died, more than two thousand lathi-charged or maimed, several hundred arrested and more than five young student leaders jailed under the National Security Act. In most cases, what was evident was lawless State terrorism, which violates the very spirit of the rule of law. This grim tragedy cannot be reported in words. It can only be felt. A democratic system reared by the founding fathers of the nation seems dead. They respected peaceful movements of the people and were against such brutal use of State violence or bloody solution of disputes. When the operations were on, Dispur cut itself off even from well-meaning citizens. When one of them tried to contact the Chief Secretary over phone, the security man replied curtly: "Not available". An M.P. was similarly told when he tried to contact the Advisers. The Governor, when contacted by him, assured that the CRPF would not be allowed to commit excesses. Nothing happened. What these operations meant can only be best explained by words of Shakespeare. The motto was "Our strong arms be our conscience, swords our law. March on, join bravely, let us to it pell-mell, if not to heaven, then hand in hand to hell". This seems to be the motto of State terrorism. It is also the dying voice of a regime that has given up the democratic norms and turned itself into a bureaucratic-police set-up?

The operations were primarily against the movement, not as the regime claimed against the extremists. The tactics were to find quarrel in a straw. As a result, the week starting from December 31, 1981 onwards saw the innocent mauled by CRPF jawans (some of which were in drunken state), picketers fired by guns and some arrested persons tortured.

Some incidents set the pattern.

Sri Atul Barua, a sculptor working on a statue of a freedom fighter, near Dighlipukhuri, was lathi-charged while he was proceeding to his place of work from his residence

The jawans were lathi-happy. Sri Prafulla Boro, an employee of the DPI Office, was subjected to beating twice similarly on two consecutive days while he was proceeding to office to serve the State. Later on, he succumbed to his injuries.

A hosteler residing in the State Cooperative College Hostel, Kharghuli, was assaulted by the CRPF jawans while he was returning from the bazar along the Kharghuli road.

Sri Pradip Baruah, editor of Prantik, Sri Dhiren Baruah, member of the editorial board, and two others received lathi injuries when they were stopped while travelling in a car in the N-onmati Road by the CRPF jawans and subjected to lathi-charge. No magistrate accompanied the jawans. Baruah's camera was snatched away.

The AAGSP procession was subjected to merciless lathi-charge at Silpukhuri while it was proceeding to Dispur to submit a memorandum to the authorities on police atrocities. No magistrate seems to have accompanied the striking jawans.

These instances show that the CRPF men behaved as lawless crowds, as if they were at war with common men. Reports suggest that even the firings resorted to in Demow, Singia, Tezpur and Biswanath Chariali were avoidable, as no substantial efforts were made to control the crowds by other viable means. Some arrested persons were not given the opportunity of appearing before the magistrate and kept confined contrary to the provisions of law. Demands of high level judicial inquiries of incidents of firing and atrocities have been curtly turned down. The bureaucratic-CRPF regime has forgotten that this is a democratic State. Has it lost conscience or does it believe that "conscience is but a word that cowards use"?

The silence of the Governor, the Prime Minister and the Home Minister is significant. What is the meaning of this State terrorism? What is the policy behind all this? It is one thing to regard the present phase of agitation as offending or unreasonable. It is another thing to resort to lawless actions on a large

scale. Such inconsiderate actions cannot serve any purpose except widening the gap between the ruler and the ruled, and provoking the people. To argue that the Assam movement has gone violent is too ready a generalisation hardly supported by facts. The popular forms of protests can still be explained in terms of peaceful action. They have parallels in the Gandhian and JP movements. The State terrorism may lead to the worsening of the situation. The Government cannot claim that the present actions were taken to protect the minority citizens. For many minority citizens in the heart of the Guwahati city were subjected to indiscriminate lathi-charge. Nor can it be said that the action was directed against those who indulged in individual or isolated terrorism. The origin of the cult of bomb is too still obscure.

The Government knows all this. Then why is it encouraging State terrorism? Clearly this signifies something. There is every likelihood that it has made up its mind to suppress the movement. The main target of repression is the movement. This is the lesson of the current CRPF action. The instructions to the Army and the CRPF contain an analysis of the movement which is neither objective nor scientific. It is narrowly political. One expected that the Government would

sympathetically consider the small nationality problem in the right perspective provided by our national struggle for freedom. The foreigners' problem is an offshoot of this wider problem based on universally recognised principles of democracy. Perhaps the Government has no solution to offer.

However we would like to request the Government to make its position clear to the people. It should issue a White paper giving its analysis of the movement and detailing the measures it has taken to implement those demands which it has accepted. The border is still open. No step has been taken to detect and deport even the post 1971 foreigners. This has affected the credibility of the Government. It should also tell us why it has not been able to meet the other demands of the agitators. It should also tell us if it is bent upon suppressing the movement. In Assam, it is Indian democracy that has suffered a setback.

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Karbi Anglong Bandh

## People Of Nagaland, Manipur Urged Not To Ply Vehicles

From Our Correspondent DIPHU, Jan. 9—The Karbi Anglong District Coordination Committee appealed to the people of Nagaland and Manipur not to ply any vehicle on January 11 next through the roads of Assam so that Assam and Central Governments can not avail of undue privillages to adopt divide and rule policy among the people of the neighbouring States and thereby create untowards incidents among the people of the region.

The committee further appealed to the people of Nagaland and Manipur to extend sympathy and support to the proposed Karbi Anglong Bandh protesting against brutal killing and inhuman police and CRPF torture on the peaceful agitators. The committee appealed to the Bazar Committee of Diphu and weekly and daily bazars of Karbi Anglong district to close their shops for 12 hours on January 11 in support of the Bandh.

Meanwhile, Karbi Anglong District Karmachari Parishad, Student Coordination Committee, Diphu, Sakha of Industrial Training Institute, Howraghat, Bokajan Anchalik Chattrasanthra extended their support to the Bandh.