

Indian Stalinists aid BJP's bellicose anti-Pakistan campaign

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India's principal Stalinist party, the Communist Party of India (Marxist), or CPM, is playing a foul role in the reckless, bellicose offensive India's ruling elite is mounting against its nuclear-armed arch-rival, Pakistan.

The CPM joined with the rest of the political establishment in supporting the "surgical strikes" the military, acting on the orders of India's virulently right-wing, Hindu communalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government, carried out inside Pakistan on the night of September 28.

It is also backing the strengthening and heightening of India's military readiness along the Line of Control (LoC) in disputed Kashmir. And, while claiming to favour the "defusing of tensions," the Stalinists have signaled their support for the provocative political, diplomatic and economic measures New Delhi has taken against Pakistan, since it declared Islamabad responsible for the September 18 attack on the Uri military base in Indian-administered Kashmir.

The September 28-29 Indian Special Forces' raids across the LoC were the first military action India has publicly admitted to carrying out inside Pakistan in more than four decades. No sooner were they announced than the BJP government and corporate media went into overdrive to celebrate them as proof of India's military prowess and the end of the so-called policy of "strategic restraint" *vis a vis* Pakistan.

In reality, the strikes were both illegal and a dangerous escalation of the Indian and Pakistani bourgeoisies' reactionary military-strategic rivalry. This rivalry has blighted the subcontinent since the 1947 communal partition of South Asia into an expressly Muslim Pakistan and a predominantly Hindu India. Today it threatens the people of the region with nuclear war.

Yet within hours of the strikes being made public, CPM General Secretary Sitaram Yechury attended an all-party meeting convened by the BJP government to brief party leaders on the Indian military's action and to demonstrate that "India"—that is all shades of the bourgeois political establishment from the Stalinists to the BJP's fascistic ally, the Shiv Sena—stands united against Pakistan.

At the meeting's conclusion, its chair, Home Minister Rajnath Singh, boasted that all participants had commended the military action and had "assured the government of their support in any action in future."

Yechury and the CPM have not contradicted any part of Singh's account.

Under conditions where the "strikes" and the all-party support for them were being used to provide fodder for an anti-Pakistan campaign that threatens to ignite all-out war, the CPM Polit Bureau issued a terse statement on the evening of September 29 under the anodyne title, "On Government's brief to some Opposition leaders."

Indicating the Stalinists' support for the Special Forces' illegal attack on Pakistan, the 111-word statement referred to "certain operations conducted by the Indian army," then, echoing the military's own claims that it had no plans for further intrusions inside Pakistan, added, "The CPI

(M) expects that there is no further escalation of hostilities."

The statement went on to express "hope" that "incidents like at Pathankot [the Indian Air Force base that was attacked January 2 allegedly by the Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammed] and at Uri will not recur. The CPM has all along maintained that the safety and security of our people from cross border terrorism must be ensured."

Further underscoring the CPM's support for the BJP-ordered military action and the claim that the "nation" stands united behind it, the CPM Politburo statement issued not a word of criticism of the Modi government, which came to power pledging to pursue confrontation with Pakistan. Nor did it see fit to in anyway distance itself from the jingoistic anti-Pakistan campaign the corporate media had mounted, in concert with the BJP and the Hindu right, in the run-up to the "surgical strikes."

Subsequently, CPM General-Secretary Yechury made explicit the CPM's support for strengthening India's military-security apparatus and its mobilization along the Pakistani border. "It is our and the central government's responsibility," declared Yechury, "to ensure that our people are protected."

The CPM had previously joined with the rest of the ostensible political opposition in rallying behind the BJP government after it had placed responsibility for the Uri attack on Pakistan without so much as a cursory investigation.

In a Central Committee (CC) statement issued within hours of the Uri attack, the CPM declared, "Pakistan must stop aiding and abetting the extremist forces. Such activities are a big impediment to the peace process in [the] region."

The Pakistani military and political elite have used armed Islamist groups to advance their reactionary geo-strategic interests and, especially in the Kashmir Valley, to manipulate and communalize the opposition to Indian rule.

But the Stalinists make reference to this only so as to justify their backing for no less reactionary forces—the Indian bourgeoisie, its military-security apparatus and the rabid Hindu communalist forces it has spawned.

Nowhere in its statement did the CPM mention the BJP government's brutal repression of the current wave of mass anti-Indian government protests in Jammu and Kashmir; let alone the abuse and crimes to which the Kashmiri people have been subjected under successive Indian governments and by the half-million strong security force that has occupied Indian-administered Kashmir for the past quarter-century.

Similarly, the CPM CC statement made no mention of the provocative steps that the BJP government had taken against Pakistan in the weeks preceding the Uri attack. These steps included: intensifying India's opposition to the China Pakistan Economic Corridor; initiating an international campaign to have Pakistan labeled a state-sponsor of terrorism; and leveraging the Baluchi ethno-nationalist separatist insurgency against Islamabad, by exposing Pakistan human rights violations in Balochistan and by signaling it could press for Pakistan's

dismemberment.

In escalating tensions with Pakistan, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his BJP government were pursuing the Indian bourgeoisie's long-term goals of weakening Pakistan and China, as well as seeking to turn attention away from their repression of the mass anti-Indian government protests in Indian-held Kashmir.

CPM advocates “diplomatic offensive” against Pakistan

The Stalinists continued to legitimize the BJP government's campaign against Pakistan in an editorial published in the September 25 edition of their English-language weekly, *People's Democracy*.

Titled “After Uri attack, what?”, the editorial explicitly called on the BJP government to mount “a diplomatic offensive against Pakistan” and to strengthen India's military forces along the Pakistan border.

The day before Indian Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj denounced Pakistan as a terrorist state from the floor of the UN General Assembly, *People's Democracy* declared, “There must be multilateral diplomacy and sustained political initiatives to bring the issue of Pakistan sponsorship of the terrorist organizations on to the international stage.”

Similarly, the editorial provided support and cover for the government's mobilization of the military, calling for “strengthening the security arrangements” on the LoC and “more comprehensive measures ... to tackle the threat posed by the infiltration of jihadi suicide squads.”

Significantly, while the editorial championed a diplomatic “offensive” against Pakistan, it said nothing about several key, highly provocative elements in the government's diplomatic campaign against Islamabad—its leveraging of the Balochistan secessionist movement and its threat to cripple Pakistan economically by abrogating the Indus Water Treaty.

These elements demonstrate that the difference between a “diplomatic offensive” and military action is only tactical; under capitalist governments both are forms of aggression. Moreover, almost without exception military action is preceded and prepared through “diplomatic offensives.” To support the former is to assist the ruling class in rallying popular support and otherwise laying the groundwork for military aggression and war.

In its “After Uri attack, what?” editorial, the CPM counseled Modi and his government to ignore the Hindu right “RSS and its cohorts” and stick to the policy of “strategic restraint,” since “all the military options have serious limitations or risk the danger of an escalating conflict between the two nuclear armed powers.”

But, in an action that exemplifies the role of the CPM as an adviser, attorney and servant of the Indian bourgeoisie and ruthless defender of the Indian capitalist state, the Stalinists' policy of supporting the Indian bourgeoisie's diplomatic aggression against Pakistan, while posing as opponents of military action was jettisoned no sooner than did the BJP government declare that it had thrown off the shackles of “strategic restraint.”

Four days after the CPM editorial was published, Yechury joined the rest of the Indian establishment in endorsing the military strikes at the government convened all-party conference.

The CPM: A state party

For decades, the Stalinists have supported the Indian bourgeoisie in forcibly maintaining its rule over Kashmir, in its strategic rivalry with

Pakistan and in its great power ambitions. They have justified this support with the claim that the Indian state incarnates the anti-imperialist struggle that convulsed South Asia in the first half of the 20th century.

In truth, India and Pakistan and South Asia's toxic communal nation-state system are the product of the suppression of the democratic revolution at the hands of the national bourgeoisie. Terrified of the emergence of the working class as an independent power, the Indian National Congress, under the leadership of M.K. Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, betrayed their own program for a united, democratic, secular India and made a deal with British imperialism and the Muslim League to partition the subcontinent and make the colonial state apparatus the basis of “independent” bourgeois rule.

Partition defied economic logic, has served as a pivotal basis for continued imperialist domination of the region, and has given rise to a bitter and communally charged geo-strategic rivalry that has resulted in the waste of untold resources and lives and that is manipulated by both reactionary ruling elites to defuse social discontent and fan communal reaction.

A decisive factor in the heightening of tensions between India and Pakistan over the past decade is Washington's aggressive moves to transform India into a frontline state into its drive to strategically isolate, encircle and prepare for war with China. While showering strategic favours on India, Washington has downgraded its relations with Pakistan, resulting in an ever widening military-strategic gap between New Delhi and Islamabad. In response, Pakistan has sought to strengthen its longtime strategic partnership with China, further aggravating relations with both Washington and New Delhi.

Meanwhile, buoyed by US support, New Delhi, under Modi, has calculated it has the strength and leeway to more aggressively assert the interests of the Indian bourgeoisie in South Asia and the Indian Ocean region, particularly against Pakistan.

The CPM has postured as an opponent of the BJP government's recent decision to open Indian military bases to routine use by US warplanes and battleships.

However, it has supported and facilitated the Indian bourgeoisie's pursuit of a “strategic global partnership” with US imperialism, supporting a succession of Indian governments that sought closer relations with Washington. For four years, the CPM and its Left Front propped up Manmohan Singh's Congress led-government as it initiated the “strategic partnership” with Washington and negotiated the civilian nuclear deal meant to underpin it.

Today the Stalinists continue to champion alliances with all manner of right-wing regional and caste-based parties that openly support India's integration into the US's war drive against China, including the basing agreement.

Moreover, the Stalinists' opposition to an Indo-US military alliance is from the standpoint of how best to uphold the “national interests” and freedom of maneuver of the Indian bourgeoisie, not the struggle against imperialism. In keeping with this position, the CPM has supported the large-scale expansion and modernization of India's armed forces that has been pursued by all Indian governments since the beginning of the century.

By lining up with the BJP and the ruling elite's jingoistic campaign, the Stalinists are assisting the Indian bourgeoisie in advancing its predatory strategic interests, including potentially corraling the population into a ruinous war, and serving to obscure the grave dangers faced by the working class and toilers in the region and globally.

Already, the BJP government's belligerent moves against Pakistan have brought India and Pakistan perilously close to the outbreak of what would be the first-ever war between nuclear-armed states.

Moreover, such a war could rapidly bring in other great powers. As a result of the US's harnessing of India to its anti-China drive, the Indo-

Pakistani conflict and the US-China confrontation have become intertwined, adding to each a volatile and massive new explosive charge.

As in the Middle East, the South China Sea, Eastern Europe and other global hotspots, the seeds of a Third World War are germinating in these conflicts.

Such a catastrophe can only be prevented through the revolutionary intervention of the working class and such an intervention can be organized and prepared only through the building of a working class led anti-war movement based on the principles of international socialism. An important element in this struggle is the forging of the international unity of workers in South Asia, including India and Pakistan, against all the governments and parties of the bourgeoisie. Only the International Committee of the Fourth International, the world Trotskyist movement, fights for this perspective. We urge workers, youth and socialist-minded intellectuals to join the fight against war by joining the ICFI and fighting to build new revolutionary working class parties as its sections in India and Pakistan.



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