India – Betraying BRICS and its Poor

India can hardly be part of BRICS, if BRICS is to remain one of the main symbols of the fight against Western imperialism and savage global market fundamentalism.

“India is dreaming about becoming next United States. And people, brainwashed by the Western and Indian corporate media, are hoping that Prime Minister Modi will take them there,” explained Mr. Binu Matthew, the editor of an influential progressive Indian web-based magazine Countercurrents, which operates from the southern state of Kerala. “Poor people and the lower middle-class are fully obliterated; they have disappeared from television screens, from newspapers and from Bollywood films... Unless it is some ‘feel good’ unrealistic stuff, like ‘Slum Dog Millionaire’. They simply do not exist in the new India.”

For one entire year I kept returning to India, traversing it from the Deep South of Kerala to Kashmir, and to the oppressed North East. I worked in the villages of the feudal Haryana State, in the cynical religious center of Varanasi, and in the deep countryside of Tamil Nadu.

People laughed in my face when I pronounced the word ‘democracy’, especially in the villages, where the majority of Indian people still lives, and where ‘elections’ are synonymous with vote-buying through petty cash and alcohol, and with broken promises, even with direct intimidation.

I asked about BRICS, and the reply came in the form of blank faces, absolute bewilderment. Only in some of the posh cafes of New Delhi and Mumbai, was there at least some knowledge about the progressive group to which India claims to belong.

Half a year ago I wrote a long report titled: “India is where? On two chairs!” I argued that the Indian government and elites have been playing a complex game: they wanted to appear to be close to both the West and the BRICS.

But now everything is changing and developing, very rapidly. India is closer and closer to the United States and the West, and further and further away from the struggle against imperialism.

The January 2015 visit of President Obama to New Delhi, strengthened the military alliance between the US and India. It also reinforced India’s ideological, propaganda, security and economic dependency on the Empire.

“India has betrayed BRICS”, concluded Binu Matthew. “Militarily, politically and economically.”

“We are witnessing very negative developments in this country,” I was told by Shrimoyee Nandini Ghosh, a New Delhi-based lawyer. “Our Prime Minister Narendra Modi is actually the pinnacle of those negative developments. He is a megalomaniac, a genocidal person. And under him, India is moving closer and closer towards savage capitalism; towards the United States, Israel and other imperialist countries.”

Genocidal?

Western mass media does not want us to know, but there is a genocide that is taking place in Kashmir, with at least 80,000 people that have already lost their lives, with countless cases of torture, rape and disappearances.

Mr. Parvez Imroz, the President of “Jammu & Kashmir Coalition of Civil Society”, clarified during our encounter in Srinagar, Kashmir:

“The army, since 1989, has resorted to war crimes as they have been given legal impunity and seldom have any armed personnel been punished for crimes against humanity. The militarization in Jammu and Kashmir has affected
all aspects of life and unfortunately the Indian media and civil society, with some exceptions, have been also extending the moral and political impunity to the army who they believe are fighting trans-border terrorism. The systematic disappearance, mass graves, torture has been completely ignored by the Indian and international media.”

Spite for the poor people in India is legendary, and it is on the increase.

While the governments of Brazil, Russia, China and South Africa are determined to improve the standard of living of all of their citizens, India is leaving more than half of its population ‘behind’, in awful conditions, and totally unprotected.

While the once dreadful slums of South Africa, such as Alexandra and Soweto, are now dotted with high quality housing projects, public playgrounds, public transportation and free medical facilities and schools, Indian slums have not changed at all. While every poor neighborhood in South Africa has decent public spaces and shopping centers, in India, malls for the newly rich are secured by armed guards, who have strict orders to use force against ‘unwelcomed visitors’, that is – the poor.

New India is exclusively growing for the rich and for the middle class, therefore for the minority of the country.

It is increasingly right-wing, extremely pro-market, and shockingly intolerant towards its minorities.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi himself has a terrible record, from the days when he served as The Chief Minister of the state of Gujarat. There, one of the most atrocious incidents of sectarian violence in post-independence India took place in 2002.

Several lawsuits have already been launched against Mr. Modi, some in foreign courts. As reported by The Milli Gazette on Nov 13 2014, one major criminal case was filed as far away as in Australia:

“The lawsuit is being brought under the aegis of AJC, by Mr. Asif Vahora, a survivor of the 2002 massacres, in which over 2,000 people were killed and over 150,000 displaced. The complaint refers to the destruction of “20,000 Muslim homes and businesses and 360 places of worship.”

But Mr. Modi has an ace hidden up his sleeve: he is exhibiting strong anti-socialist and anti-Chinese sentiments, and the West feels that it has discovered new staunch allies in him and in his cohorts – the Indian oligarchs.

A prominent Indian publisher Sudhanva Deshpande (“Left Word Books”) explained that the trend actually began even before Mr. Modi’s inauguration:

“Indian foreign policy had turned more and more towards the US. A few years ago, India conducted the Indo-US nuclear deal. That led to a lot of opposition back home, here in India, but the government went ahead with the deal. The Hindu right became more and more oriented towards the US. The government also argued for much closer ties with the Israel. As you know, India is the biggest buyer of Israeli arms in the world today.”

Before departing India, I met my friends, Arundhati Roy (the renowned Indian writer and activist) and Sanjay Kak (a great Independent documentary film-maker). We discussed the situation in Kashmir and the increasing market fundamentalist and pro-Western trends in India.

Arundhati Roy asked me what I made of all these developments?

I expressed great disappointment, even disgust. But then, being an incurable optimist, I committed a terrible faux pas, mumbling something about those ‘great Indian intellectuals’, who would fight for a much better, independent, socialist India.

Arundhati Roy gave me a sad smile. “And where are they, those great Indian intellectuals?”

I had to admit: most of them were sitting at our table.

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