

India: New evidence of BJP role, Congress complicity in razing of Babri Masjid

By Deepal Jayasekera
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Cobrapost, an Indian investigative news website and television production house, has provided new evidence that demonstrates the 1992 razing of the historic Babri Masjid was a carefully planned act of vandalism organized by Hindu communalist organizations with the knowledge and approval of top leaders of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Cobrapost's recent extensive report also reveals that India's then Congress Party Prime Minister, P. V. Narasimha Rao, was aware of the conspiracy to demolish the Babri Masjid—a sixteenth century mosque located in Ayodhya in the northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh—but choose to let it happen.

Posing as an author researching a book, *Cobrapost* Associate Editor K. Ashish interviewed 23 mid-level and local leaders of the Ram Janmabhoomi (birthplace of Ram) movement—the Hindu communalist campaign to replace the Babri Masjid with a Hindu temple to the mythical Hindu god Ram—and clandestinely recorded their comments about the Masjid's Dec. 6, 1992 demolition. Many of those Ashish interviewed are either under court indictment for their role in the demolition or were named in police reports as among its organizers.

Those Ashish interviewed explained that the razing of the Babri Masjid had involved meticulous pre-planning and revealed that the leaderships of India's principal Hindu supremacist communalist organizations were party to the conspiracy. Those implicated include: the paramilitary Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the ideological mentor of the BJP; the VHP (World Hindu Council): its youth wing, the Bajrang Dal; the Shiv Sena, a Maharashtra-based fascistic organization; and the BJP, the Official Opposition in the outgoing national parliament. Many of the persons named continue to play major roles in Indian bourgeois politics, including BJP leaders L.K. Advani, Uma Bharti, and Kalyan Singh.

The full *Cobrapost* report can be found [here](#).

The report reveals that retired Indian military officers trained Hindu-communalist activists to carry out the demolition operation, giving thousands of them

military-style training. Had the pickaxes, spades, chisels and heavy-duty hammers used to demolish the Masjid proven inadequate to “do the job”, the retired military officers had come up with a “Plan B” which involved the use of dynamite and other explosives.

The demolition of the Babri Masjid was without doubt one of the greatest crimes perpetrated in South Asia since the 1947 communal division of the subcontinent into a mainly Hindu and ostensibly “secular” India and a “Muslim” Pakistan. Its razing triggered the worst communal bloodletting in India since Partition, with riots convulsing large parts of northern and western India for months. Well over three thousand people, most of them Muslims perished, in the communal violence.

It has always been evident that the Hindu communalists' claim that the razing of the Babri Masjid was an act of “spontaneous” violence was a lie. The thousands who tore it down were well-equipped and organized. Moreover, although the demolition took place in broad daylight, was televised and unfolded under the watchful eye of thousands of security personnel, neither the BJP Uttar Pradesh state government, nor the Congress-led central government instructed them to intervene.

The official government inquiry into the Babri Masjid's demolition, the Liberhan Commission, belatedly concluded in its 2009 final report that the evidence “categorically leads to the conclusion and finding that the demolition was carried out with great painstaking preparation and pre-planning.”

Nevertheless, the *Cobrapost* exposé is highly significant. Never before have so many key participants in the demolition been caught confessing to the pre-planning, including providing details about the role of ex-military officers. And never before have they gone on record detailing the roles played by different Hindu communal organizations and politicians, whether as direct organizers of the attack on the Babri Masjid or instigators and facilitators.

In keeping with the attitude India's police, judiciary and government have taken to the razing of the Babri Masjid for the past two decades, the authorities have brushed off the

Cobrapost report as inconsequential. The Congress UPA coalition government, which took no action even after the Liberhan Commission report was issued, greeted the latest revelations with a deathly silence, while India's premier government investigation agency, the CBI (Central Bureau of Investigation), quickly dismissed it as having "no evidentiary value."

Needless to say this is a godsend to the BJP, which played a pivotal role in the communalist and obscurantist Ram Janmabhoomi movement, using it to gain office in Uttar Pradesh, India's most populous state, for the first time in June 1991. The previous year, the national head of the BJP, L.K. Advani, had led a weeks' long *rath yatra* (chariot) campaign across India to mobilize support for the Ram Janmabhoomi movement, claiming it was pivotal to assert India's Hindu character.

According to *Cobrapost*, demolition teams were trained separately by the VHP and Shiv Sena in secrecy many months prior to the mosque's destruction. But they were only told the details about the operation shortly before it was implemented under the cover of a mass rally in Ayodhya addressed by Advani and other top BJP leaders.

While Advani, Mruli Maonhar Joshi, and other BJP leasers did not participate directly in training the *karsevaks* (volunteers) who carried out the demolition, they were present when many of these *karsevaks* were administered a religious pledge to participate in the construction of a temple at the site of the Babri Masjid.

At various high-level secret meetings—one involving RSS, VHP and Bajrang Dal leaders, including VHP head Ashok Singhal and another RSS and senior BJP leaders including Advani, Uma Bharti and Vinay Katiyar—the decision was taken to raze the Babri Masjid.

The Shiv Sena held its own secret meeting at North Avenue in Delhi in November 1992 attended by senior leaders, including Jai Bhagwan Goel and Moreswar Save. Although the Shiv Sena's supremo, the late Bal Thackeray, didn't attend the meeting, he closely followed the planning and implementation of the demolition.

The *Cobrapost* interviews also provide corroboration of the fact that both the BJP Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Kalyan Singh and Congress Prime Minister Rao had foreknowledge of the attack on the Babri Masjid and allowed it to proceed. In express violation of a Supreme Court order that the UP state government protect the Babdri Masjid, Singh ordered state security forces to stand down. The Congress-led central government also had ample means to intervene, but chose to let the Hindu supremacists enact their demolition scheme.

While the Congress claims to be the champion and bulwark of secular India, it in fact has a long record of

participating to and outright encouraging Hindu communalism, stretching back to its role in collaborating with the British colonialists in the bloody communal dismembering of the subcontinent in 1947.

In the 1980s the Congress Party systematically made concessions to the Hindu right who until then were a marginal force. This included Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's 1985 order that the locks on the Babri Masjid be removed so as to allow Hindu fundamentalists to enter and worship the statue of the Hindu-god Ram that Hindu supremacists had smuggled into the mosque way back in 1949.

Cobrapost's revelations have roiled the BJP particularly because they have appeared in the midst of the national parliamentary election campaign.

Senior BJP leader Ravi Shankar Prasad said, "It is not *Cobrapost*, it is Congress post" and charged its electoral rival of having "sponsored" the sting operation for electoral gains.

In its election manifesto the BJP has again resurrected the party's communal campaign to build a Ram Temple by promising to "explore all possibilities within the framework of the Constitution to facilitate the construction of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya."

The BJP's election campaign is being spearheaded by the party's prime ministerial candidate, the Gujarat Chief Minister and self-styled "Hindu strongman," Narendra Modi. That a rabid Hindu communalist like Modi, the chief instigator of Gujarat's 2002 anti-Muslim pogrom, has risen to the pinnacles of Indian politics speaks volumes about the real state of democracy and democratic rights in what the Indian and western elite tout as the "world's largest democracy."

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