

Against Maoist Violence

Introduction

Widespread violence by the Maoists in the recent period and their characterization as the “biggest internal security threat” by the Union Government has brought the issue of “Leftwing” extremism to the fore. According to the Union Home Ministry, 3338 persons have died in 7806 incidents involving naxalite violence from 2004 to 2008. This year, 580 persons have died in 1405 incidents spread across 11 states, till August. The Union Government has announced its intention of launching a security offensive against the Maoists along with the concerned state governments in the Maoist infested areas. While extremist violence needs to be dealt with firm administrative steps, a security centric approach towards the Maoist violence would fail to end the problem. The Maoists need to be ideologically confronted and politically exposed and isolated. The socio-economic backwardness, especially in the Maoist infested areas also need to be addressed.

The CPI (M) cadres and supporters in West Bengal are being targeted by the Maoists, particularly in the West Medinipur district, precisely because the CPI (M) is in the forefront of the ideological-political battle against the Maoists. This year, over 130 members and activists of the CPI (M) have lost their lives across West Bengal, of which more than half were victims of Maoist violence.

Lalgarh and the West Bengal Experience

Though Naxalbari in West Bengal has been the cradle of the ultra Left movement in the country, West Bengal also witnessed the fading away of the ultra Left for a long time since the seventies. There were several reasons. The ideological confusion and bankruptcy that it based itself on resulted in the splintering of the movement. The nebulous framework and the anti working class ideas that premised the naxalite movement was also bound to affect its organization. The movement was infiltrated by alien elements of the ruling party and became the major instrument to attack the CPI (M) and the organised Left. The degeneration was so complete that it had no other go but to fade into oblivion. But what proved decisive in the isolation of the naxalites was the successful and widespread land reform that was led by the organised Left. This process got statutory backing when the Left Front government came to power. So the combination of socio-economic development, political and ideological interventions by the CPI (M) and the organised Left led to the situation that prevailed in West Bengal during the last three decades. It is most unfortunate that the present Home Minister of the country is unmindful of this history of sacrifice and struggle by the organised Left in facing upto the challenge of ultra Left.

The present phase of Maoist activities began in Lalgarh and adjoining areas in

the Binpur I block of West Medinipur district which is situated along the Jharkhand border. In the last three years there has been sporadic violence in the area with murderous attacks on activists of the CPI (M) by armed squads who crossed over from Jharkhand. The presence of Maoists was suspected when the Nandigram episode happened. Now the Maoist leaders have themselves confirmed their involvement in Nandigram and have demanded a quid pro quo from the Trinamul Congress vis-à-vis their activities in Lalgarh.

The Lalgarh episode was sparked off following police actions in the area in the wake of a mine blast which was intended to kill the West Bengal Chief Minister on 2nd November 2008, when he was returning from a programme in Salboni to inaugurate a steel plant. Incidentally there was no agitation on land acquisition in the proposed site of the plant neither was any SEZ proposal involved. The state government, in the wake of allegations that the police had committed excesses while apprehending the culprits responsible for the mine blast, had taken action on the basis of those allegations. Police officials were transferred, injured persons were provided medical treatment and compensation and some arrested persons released. But the so-called People's Committee Against Police Atrocities (PCAPA) which had been created was not interested in anything else but disallowing the entry of the state administration and the police personnel into the area. Though several rounds of discussions took place the stalemate continued. It was very clear from their main demand, for a public apology by the District Superintendent of Police of West Midnapore district and other policemen by holding their ears and crawling with their nose to the ground, that the PCAPA was not interested in any resolution of the issue. Subsequently, it became clear that they were acting as the front of the Maoists demanding withdrawal of cases against the Maoist squad leader Shashadhar Mahato who had carried out the assassination attempt on the West Bengal Chief Minister.

The link between the PCAPA and the Trinamul Congress was also clear from the very beginning. The PCAPA spokesperson Chhatradhar Mahato, Sashadhar's brother, had been a former Trinamul Congress local leader. Trinamul Congress Chief Mamata Banerjee and other Trinamul leaders had also attended events organised by the PCAPA in Lalgarh during this phase though these areas were otherwise out of bounds of the administration. Now even the Home Minister has admitted in the Rajya Sabha (on 2nd December) that the PCAPA is "only a front organisation to the CPI (Maoist)".

Despite the best attempts of the administration to engage the PCAPA, the Lalgarh area was blockaded and the administration was made out of bounds of the area since November 2008. This so-called "liberated zone" was used to launch murderous attacks against the CPI (M) activists and other political forces who are opposed to the Maoists. Over 80 persons have been killed by the Maoists in this area since November 2008, which includes over 70 cadres and sympathisers of the CPI (M), activists of the Jharkhand Party (Naren) and

election commission personnel. The victims were mostly poor peasants or agricultural workers from dalit or adivasi families. A CPI (M) supporter and agricultural worker Salku Soren was killed by the Maoists and his corpse was kept in the open for several days in order to terrorize the CPI (M) supporters. A 22 year old college student Abhijit Mahato was assassinated alongwith other family members by a Maoist squad. All these massacres were justified by the Maoists in the name of elimination of "class enemies".

That the people were not with this targeted violence was clear from the thumping majority with which the CPI (M) candidate won from the Jhargram (ST) Lok Sabha constituency, securing 59 per cent of the polled votes and winning by a margin of nearly 3 lakhs, in an election where the Left and the CPI (M) had otherwise suffered electoral reverses. Since the Lok Sabha elections, the operations by the state police and the central paramilitary forces have started and in the last four months large areas have been brought under the control of the civil administration. The state administration has launched a programme of development and reaching out essential services like food rations. The Trinamul Congress, on the other hand, aided and abetted by sections of the media, indulged in stupendous double-speak. They started by attacking the State Government for failing to control Maoist violence and questioned why the Maoists were not being banned in West Bengal. When the Central Government banned the CPI (Maoist) and the State Government started joint operations with central security forces, the Maoist sympathizers initiated shrill rhetoric against state repression. The Trinamul Congress obliged by shifting its stance and opposing the anti-Maoist operations, calling for a withdrawal of Central security forces. In return, the CPI (Maoist) leader Koteswar Rao alias Kishanji hailed Mamata Banerjee as their preferred choice for being the next Chief Minister of West Bengal in an interview to the Bengali daily *Ananda Bazar Patrika* on 4th October 2009.

The mainstream media and commentators have talked about underdevelopment and the discontent of the local tribals as the principal source of the agitation. But evidence shows that the movement never acquired a mass character in most parts of the areas spanning the districts of Bankura, Purulia and West Medinipur which is loosely termed as the Jangalmahal. The reason was clear. While the region no doubt suffers from backwardness relative to the more developed areas of West Bengal, the condition of the tribal people in that region is better compared to the tribal areas of Jharkhand, Chattisgarh or Orissa where the Maoists appear to be more deeply entrenched. Over the last 31 years, the land redistributed in West Medinipur district has benefited 57 per cent of the tribals and other backward communities. Upto November 2008, 176668 tribals have received pattas for 197350.49 acres. Similarly, 7829 tribals have received house sites and 23452 of them have been recorded as bargadars (secured tenants). The critics of the Left have unfortunately ignored this aspect.

The outbreak of Maoist activities cannot be divorced from the political background. Binpur assembly under which Lalgarh falls has not been a Left stronghold; the opposition has won that seat several times. The block level Panchayat Samiti has been mostly led by the opposition comprising of the Congress and various factions of the Jharkhand Party. Most of the 10 gram panchayats have been held by the anti-Left opposition for the last 15 years. It is clear that the opposition had a strong presence in that particular area as opposed to the rest of the tribal areas in West Medinipur, Bankura and Purulia. It is this strength of the opposition which provided the Maoists an initial ground for initiating their activities. The Maoists' thesis that the "CPI (M) is a social fascist force" and therefore any anti-CPI (M) alliance with other bourgeois parties were justified was used to forge direct links with the Trinamul Congress and launch murderous attacks on the CPI (M) cadres and sympathisers.

In its 9th Congress held in Madurai in 1972, in the backdrop of the pincer attack faced by the Party in West Bengal from the Congress on the one side and the naxalites on the other, the CPI (M) had made the following assessment regarding the naxalite movement: "...petty-bourgeois adventurism must degenerate into an anti-working class, anti-revolutionary line and its inevitable destiny was to serve the interests of the ruling classes". The Maoists today epitomize this degeneration, which has turned them into henchmen of the Trinamul Congress.

Bankruptcy of Left Sectarianism

In the run up to the Lok Sabha elections in a signed statement, the spokesmen of the Central Committee of CPI (Maoist) titled "*Parliamentary democracy is an illusion for the Marxists! Revolution is their reality!*" appealed to the people to boycott the elections. The message was loud and clear - that a 'revolution' was round the corner; as if an immediate choice was available to the people of this country – the poor, the hungry and the vulnerable – either a 'revolution' or a sham parliamentary democracy.

On the Communists' possible approach to elections, the observations of Frederick Engels (introduction to Marx's *Class Struggles in France*) lays down the correct orientation: "Thanks to the intelligent use which the German workers made of the universal suffrage introduced in 1866, the astonishing growth of the party is made plain to all the world". He further added that the votes secured by the Communists "accurately informed us concerning our own strength and that of all hostile parties, and thereby provided us with a measure of proportion for our actions second to none, safeguarding us from untimely timidity as much as from untimely foolhardiness - if this had been the only advantage we gained from the suffrage, it would still have been much more than enough. But it did more than this by far. In election agitation it provided us with a means, second to none, of getting in touch with the mass

of the people where they still stand aloof from us; of forcing all parties to defend their views and actions against our attacks before all the people; and, further, it provided our representatives in the Reichstag with a platform from which they could speak to their opponents in parliament, and to the masses without, with quite other authority and freedom than in the press or at meetings."

Lenin's classic against "Leftwing" deviation (Leftwing Communism An Infantile Disorder) also state: "Certainly, without a revolutionary mood among the masses, and without conditions facilitating the growth of this mood, revolutionary tactics will never develop into action. In Russia, however, lengthy, painful and sanguinary experience has taught us the truth that revolutionary tactics cannot be built on a revolutionary mood alone. Tactics must be based on a sober and strictly objective appraisal of *all* the class forces in a particular state (and of the states that surround it, and of all states the world over) as well as of the experience of revolutionary movements. It is very easy to show one's "revolutionary" temper merely by hurling abuse at parliamentary opportunism, or merely by repudiating participation in parliaments; its very ease, however, cannot turn this into a solution of a difficult, a very difficult, problem."

But the Indian Maoists would have none of these. Because, they think that revolutionaries are meant to engage in nothing but an armed struggle; therefore, something as mundane as organizing the workers through patient day-to-day trade union work or mobilizing the peasantry especially the landless, the poor and the agricultural workers on issues concerning their every day livelihood, which would raise their consciousness about the class realities in our rural areas, is of no importance to these 'revolutionaries'!

A major aspect of the Maoist activities is predominated by 'annihilation' of individuals who are opposed to their activities. While claiming the legacy of the Naxalbari movement of the late 60s and early 70s, the Maoists remember the contribution of Charu Mazumdar with utmost reverence – as the pioneer of Maoism in India. However, the present day Maoists could have done better had they taken note of Mazumdar's views when the imminent collapse of the naxalite movement became apparent to him. Before his arrest he was preparing a document for circulation among his Party members in which he was reported to have commented that "the system of annihilation has been overworked, and many mistakes have been committed. There has been widespread criticism in the party of these. Revisions will be made". Mazumdar wrote about these mistakes in a personal letter to his wife from jail. However, rather than correcting their grave sectarian mistakes, the CPI (ML) splintered into various directions. Even today, the Maoists refuse to draw proper lessons from the mistakes which Mazumdar eventually admitted.

Here lies the Maoists' bankruptcy in grasping the essence of Marxism-Leninism

which is the ideology on which any Communist party bases its programme and activities and keep on blindly imitating the form adopted in struggles adopted elsewhere in the world and too, in the remote past. Lenin had pointed out that the Marxist ideology can sustain itself because it is revolutionary and scientific at the same time. Without a scientific comprehension about society and social processes, the revolutionaries cannot take the process of social revolution forward. But at the same time, unless the scientific comprehension is wedded to a revolutionary spirit, this process would remain simply an academic exercise. Therefore, for Communists all over, it is important to grasp the concrete study of a concrete situation. And, it is here that the Maoists completely fail the test of being revolutionaries. The entire literature that the Indian Maoists have produced on the concrete analysis of the Indian society, the processes that have shaped it, the changes in the world, the stage of development, the precise nature of the Indian ruling classes are substituted by a copy and paste exercise of the Chinese revolution.

'Maoism': Thoroughly Misplaced Concept

'Maoism' in India is a crude distortion of the theory and practice of Mao Ze Dong. Maoists hardly realise that by blindly imitating the particular path of Chinese revolution that the Chinese people traversed under the leadership of Comrade Mao – they are in fact undermining the very contribution of the great Chinese revolution and the success of the widespread national liberation struggles in the wake of the great victory over fascism led by the Soviet Union. These two momentous developments had changed the alignment of political forces in the aftermath of the Second World War. Ignoring this, the Indian Maoists continue to believe in what the Naxalbari movement propounded that Indian independence is fake and that India continues to be a semi-colonial state in the new millennium. Revolutionaries, whose essential hallmark is to usher in change, cannot remain oblivious of big changes at the global and national level and fail to assimilate their implications.

The present secretary of the CPI (Maoist) Ganapati, in an interview to their own mouthpiece *People's March* admitted that in the CPI(ML) People's War Group which is a component of the present Maoist party had a debate over the use of the word 'Maoism' in their literature and understanding. He had, of course, branded those who opposed this new nomenclature as an 'opportunist clique'. But the fact remains that the very notion of 'Maoism' is misplaced. This was made clear by the Communist Party of China itself that "Mao Zedong Thought is the integration of the universal principles of Marxism-Leninism with the *concrete practice* of the Chinese revolution". To try and replicate the path of the Chinese revolution in India, lock, stock and barrel, is nothing but a denial of the Indian realities. The CPI (ML) which emerged during the Naxalbari movement articulated unrealistic slogans like "China's Chairman is our Chairman" and "Chinese path is our path". Contrast this to the opposition of Mao himself against the general line of Communist International in so far as

China was concerned. It was Mao who asserted, and correctly so, that the Chinese revolution could not follow the same trajectory as in Russia. Similarly, the Communists in India have to chart their own road to the revolution on the basis of a concrete analysis of Indian conditions. Wholesale borrowing of the path followed by the Chinese Communist Party before the revolution in China in the name of 'Maoism' is against the very grain of Mao Zedong Thought.

The Indian Maoists would do well to learn and assimilate the experience of the Nepalese Maoists. In spite of the fact that Maoists in Nepal commanded a major support through its armed peasant warfare in large parts of the country, they realized that their movement would be unable to go further forward unless they participated in the task of developing a constitutional multi-party democracy replacing the archaic monarchy. In this background the Maoists had entered into a historic agreement with the seven party alliance with other Left and anti-monarchy bourgeois parties. This ensured that they were recognised by the Nepali people as a major force in Nepali politics. Rather than learning from the Nepalese Maoists, the Indian Maoists virulently opposed and criticized them. The content of the open letter that the CPI (Maoist) wrote to the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) is the most outrageous document that a party calling themselves communists could have issued given the principle of proletarian internationalism associated with communism.

Capitalist Development and Maoist Dogma

The basic problem with the conceptual framework of Maoism as has been elucidated by the Indian Maoists lies in their inability to come to grips with the need for evolving with the changing situation and grasping the concrete situation in the society where they are working. Thus the basic analysis of the Indian State of the 40 year old CPI (ML) programme in the wake of the Naxalbari movement is retained by the Maoists, failing to draw any lesson from the complete splintering of the ultra Left movement into myriad factions and groups.

In carrying out an analysis of the Indian state the Maoists have not moved an inch from the earlier programme authored by the CPI (ML) in 1970 in the wake of the Naxalbari movement. Almost 40 years back, an understanding that Indian independence is fake and formal with Indian rulers subservient to an imperialist order which is in a state of imminent collapse persuaded them to believe that an armed struggle involving the rural areas to 'encircle' the cities will deliver the 'revolution' in quick time. Slogans like 'decade of the seventies –a decade of liberation' appeared in Naxalite wall writings in the streets of Kolkata. That the objective experience did not substantiate such an assessment- ought to have triggered some degree of introspection. But, obviously it didn't.

The naxalite understanding was that the Indian ruling class was a "comprador

bureaucratic bourgeoisie". A comprador bourgeoisie defined by the Communist International (6th Congress of the Comintern) is one which subserves imperialism by exporting raw materials and importing finished products. It is a bourgeoisie that does not seek an independent development of capitalism in its country. It is a mere puppet of imperialism. Such a bourgeoisie, therefore, is one which does not command a social base of its own. Overall, this would then be as fragile as a house of cards-requiring a gentle push to bring down the edifice like a domino.

The CPI (M) understands that the Indian ruling classes consist of an alliance between the bourgeoisie and the landlords which is led by the big bourgeoisie. The big bourgeoisie, in turn, increasingly collaborates with international finance capital. At the same time, the CPI (M) recognizes that the Indian bourgeoisie, as a whole, has a dual character. On the one hand, being part of the world capitalist system and seeking to develop capitalism in India, it collaborates with imperialism and international finance capital. On the other hand, in order to preserve and expand its economic domain from being encroached upon by global capital, it also has conflicts with imperialism. Such conflicts, however, get resolved not by confrontation but through compromise, pressure and bargain. This dual character finds its most visible expression in the economic and foreign policies of the Government.

Without understanding the complexity of the process of capitalist development in India and mechanically presuming an exact resemblance with China has led the ultra Left in India to remain clueless in explaining what has happened in all these years. Heavy industry, infrastructure like railways, power, science and technology in advanced areas like space, nuclear, knowledge based industries like bio-technology and information technology and of course - manufacturing - these have developed in India as part of the overall development of capitalism. The indigenous capacities built over the years are unthinkable had it been spearheaded by a "comprador bureaucratic bourgeoisie".

Mindless Militarism: Unconnected to People's Issues

The practice of the Maoists has little to do with issues of livelihood and socio-economic justice. For example, there are a large number of daily issues which are connected with the rights and access to forest wealth of those very people who inhabit those areas where the Maoists are active. But far from raising the question of the mining laws of the country which displace the tribal and other forest dwellers, the Maoists are only talking of a violent armed revolution. This is as if just by talking of a long drawn armed struggle the people can be attracted and changes will take place only after the 'revolutionary' government is established. Similarly, despite their shrill anti-imperialist rhetoric, when it comes to taking up issues and mobilizing people against imperialist dictated policies – there is a deafening silence. The Maoists have never spoken on the disastrous impact of financial liberalisation and speculative activities in the

economy. Neither have they raised their voice against the complete withdrawal of public investment in agriculture which has been one of the main reasons for the severe agrarian crisis in the country which has led to thousands of farmers committing suicide.

The cult of the gun – the firepower of the so-called people's guerrillas and the discourse on military tactics has completely overwhelmed the Maoists. They seem to be paying no heed to the exhortations of Mao against mindless militarism in many of his writings on the strategy, tactics and experience of the Chinese revolution. The biggest danger of such mindless militarism lies in the fact that they provoke repression from the state which not only eliminates the so-called 'revolutionaries' but also exposes innocent rural poor to repression, demoralizes them and impacts adversely on their potential to organize and fight for their rights. The rural poor thus continue to remain victims of exploitation and depredation. A glaring instance of this phenomenon can be seen in Chhattisgarh, where the tribals today are caught in a vicious cycle of violence and counter-violence by the Maoists and the state-sponsored militia, Salva Judum. In the process, the Maoists manage to disrupt the emergence of a strong democratic movement which raises the level of revolutionary consciousness of the poor and the exploited. We have seen that happen earlier in West Bengal and subsequently in Andhra Pradesh.

What can happen as a result of such mindless militarism is evident from the large material which has now been brought out in the public domain by those who had been in the past participants and fellow travelers in the activities of the People's War Group of Andhra Pradesh and who constitute the main component of the present Maoist party. Dr. Balagopal, who recently passed away, had brought out in graphic detail the degeneration of the Maoists in his essays in the *Dark Angles*. He has described several heinous and ghastly acts of the Peoples War Group bringing out the sadistic character which should otherwise be alien to a revolutionary movement. In order to make immediate tactical and military gains, the PWG had not even flinched from having unholy alliances with landlords and other ruling class elements.

Strange as it may seem, in their document "Post Election Situation Our Tasks", the Maoists have admitted that "in the last government, where it had a smaller number of seats, the Congress was totally dependent on its various allies in order to continue in power and the Left too exerted some amount of pressure on Manmohan Singh government for almost four years." And they conclude "the result has given scope for the UPA government to enact more draconian legislation". But yet, because of their failure to oppose the very policies of that very government they end up in attacking the Left and embracing the second largest component of the same government – the Trinamul Congress in West Bengal. They have ended up being the armed mercenaries of the Trinamul in the forest areas of West Bengal which borders Jharkhand. This is a classic demonstration of the effect of indulging in 'armed struggle' intended to usher

in 'revolution' without any connection with the peoples issues.

Uncomfortable With Democracy

Communists the world over are vigorously engaged with the question of democracy. The urgency of this has intensified after collapse of Soviet Union. We in the CPI (M) have done this not only in our struggles for defense of democratic rights in the wake of emergency or in the face of depredations of communal fascist forces; but also in understanding the deficiencies that existed in Soviet Union and which contributed in no small measure to its eventual collapse. We had noted in our document entitled "On Certain Ideological Issues" - "as the socialist system and the state consolidated and correlation of class forces changed in its favour, opportunities for widening democracy and opened up. Unfortunately incorrect assessments of the reality led to the earlier methods of running the state machinery being carried over into the subsequent period. This led not only to distortions such as growing bureaucratism, violation of socialist legality and suppression of individual freedom and liberty. The movement to higher phases of the form of the dictatorship of the proletariat implies the progressive enrichment of socialist democracy."

The Maoists in Nepal have also realized that the struggle for socialism in the 21st century cannot be successful merely through an emulation of the 20th century struggles. They have thoroughly debated and discussed the question of democracy in the 21st century. At the Rolpa Plenum, held in May-June 2003, the CPN (M) adopted a document "*The Development of Democracy in the 21st Century*". Baburam Bhattarai writes: "After making a critical review of the experiences of revolution and counter-revolution in the 20th century, the document advocated the need to ensure the supervision, intervention and control of the masses over the Party, army and the state in order to march along the path of continuous revolution after making the revolution, and for this advanced the concept of practicing a multi-party competitive system within the stipulated constitutional framework. This was a new milestone in the development of revolutionary ideas". (Baburam Bhattarai *Epochal Ten Years of Application and Development of Revolutionary Ideas*, *The Worker*, #10, May 2006) On the tenth anniversary of the launching of the peoples' war in Nepal, Prachanda commented in the special interview quoted at the beginning: "One has to be clear about one thing, that our Party is talking about the development of people's democracy in the 21st century after having learnt from the experiences of the revolutions and counter-revolutions of the 20th century, and accordingly has accepted multi-Party competition within an anti-feudal and anti-imperialist constitutional frame."

Indians Maoists have, however, remained blissfully oblivious about such an overriding demand to respond on the question of democracy. Well-meaning liberal intellectuals have been rightly stressing the need for respecting human

rights in dealing with the Maoists. But even they seem to be overlooking the fact that the mindless killings that the Maoists indulge in have to be dealt with firm administrative action. If the Maoists commit a crime they have to be prosecuted and tried independently with full freedom for defending their actions. The liberal opinion also legitimately emphasizes that the State should not indulge in fake encounters and campaigns like Salva Judum in Chhattisgarh. Because, these actions of the State completely undermine the basic principle of natural justice and assumptions of innocence until proven guilty - this is the underlying premise of our jurisprudence.

However, the major problem of the Maoists lies with the methods that they employ in dealing with whom they perceive as their 'class enemies'. Designating individuals as the class enemies and terming them lackeys of feudal exploiters or police agents is a purely subjective exercise. Often they degenerate into holding of kangaroo courts under the shadow of the gun where a death penalty is pronounced against ordinary policemen, school teachers or agricultural workers. Here the Maoist squad leader functions – as a complainant, a prosecutor, a judge and finally the executioner all rolled into one. Often, the trouble of going through such cumbersome procedures is also discarded conveniently. Putting up a poster declaring the dead man a class enemy next to the dead body would suffice! It is almost as if, if you are not with the Maoists, you are a class enemy – a perverted version of the Bush doctrine. Therefore, this obvious discomfiture on the question of democracy becomes evident. And this is a question which will also have to be answered by all the well-meaning liberals who rightly question the government's record on human rights.

The CPI (M) believes that the battle against Maoists cannot be carried out successfully merely on the strength of security forces. Banning them is not a solution to tackle violence and the spree of killings that Maoists armed squads indulge in. The CPI (M) will also continue to oppose the draconian provisions of the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA). The CPI (M) also points out the urgency in addressing the questions of socio-economic backwardness which dog those very areas where the Maoists operate. But the Maoists response is clearly marked by visible discomfiture on eschewing violence, not to speak of giving up arms. Why this discomfort? The Maoists themselves have to realise that the observance of human rights cannot be a one-way traffic.

What the Central Government ought to do

The Prime Minister had recognized the Maoist violence as the "single biggest threat to the internal security of the country." But his cabinet colleague, Mamata Banerjee, does not share the perception. Otherwise how could the media savvy Maoist leader Kishanji express his hope of seeing the Trinamul supremo as the next Chief Minister of West Bengal! The government has not

been able to forge a consensual approach among its own constituents, let alone the entire spectrum. And it is difficult to happen unless the government addresses, with some sense of urgency, the issues of social and economic backwardness of the tribal areas.

The regime of terror and extortion presided over by the Maoist squads are sustained by the helplessness and disempowerment of the poor and the dispossessed. The government has to address the issues of dispossession and displacement which has affected the tribals. The mining laws and mineral policies which have led to opening up of tribal areas for exploitation by big corporates need to be urgently reviewed. The implementation of land reforms, the Forest Rights Act and the NREGA also assumes paramount importance. In spite of the attempt to convert this battle into a mere battle of the gun, the government has to show concern towards the people and isolate the campaigners of violence from them. This is how the government ought to proceed.

Maoists will be defeated

It is necessary for all of us who are fighting for a world free from exploitation, impoverishment and hunger to confront the Maoists, ideologically and politically, in order to defend the organised Left movement. The sacrifice of the martyred CPI (M) activists will not go in vain. The democratic and progressive opinion of the country will finally prevail.

Back Cover

Give Me a Voice of Thunder
That I may hurl Imprecation on this cannibal
Whose Gruesome Hunger Spares Neither Mother Nor Child

Rabindranath Tagore

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