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# PEOPLE'S MARCH

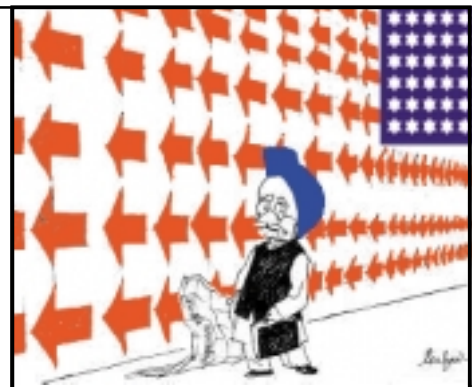
*Voice of the Indian Revolution*



**India's New War: Mining Mafia vs Oppressed Tribals**



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On the occasion of March 8th People's March brought out a Special Supplement of a critique of the various feminist trends internationally and in India. Subscribers may send Rs 20/= along with annual subscription to avail a copy.

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## **India's New War: Mining Mafia vs Oppressed Tribals**

Arvind

The New Year was ushered in by the mowing down of 12 tribals in Orissa. While the elite spent crores celebrating in the fashionable malls the poverty stricken tribals of Orissa were being massacred for demanding their rights over their own land and forests. The contrasts are vivid: TV channels blaring film stars and 5-star culture; the half-hungry tribals struggling for survival against police acting on behalf of the mining companies.

On Jan. 2 the police gunned down 12 tribals and seriously injured another 40 who were opposing the construction of the boundary wall of the proposed steel plant of Tata Steel at Kalinga Nagar of Jajpur district. The demand of the tribal people who would be affected by the proposed project was that the government allows the construction of the boundary wall only after the company paid them adequate compensation and ensured proper rehabilitation. Instead of discussions they were sought to be silenced with brute force by the government.

On that black Monday, nine platoons of policemen came in vehicles and took positions at the construction site to counter any protest by the tribal people. Some policemen, armed with semi-automatic rifles, surrounded the site. With the obvious intention to shoot to kill; the top officers who have the authority to give the order to fire were present from the very start. The Executive magistrate, the District Superintendent of Police and the Collector were all present.

The tribal people had started assembling at a distance to thwart the construction work as they had done on at least two previous occasions. When the bulldozers roared into action the men and women closed in on the site demanding stoppage of the work and negotiations. No attempt was even made at discussions and instead the tribals had to face rubber bullets and tear-gas shells. This infuriated the tribals and they fought back heroically. They hit back with bricks and bows and arrows. In the battle a policeman was captured and hacked to death.

The police, panic stricken, began to fire directly into the crowd. The firing went on for about an hour killing 12, including a 13-year boy and three women. But this did not

deter the tribals, with the bodies of some of the dead they blocked all roads to Kalinga Nagar. The protesters started a dharna on the main Daitri-Paradip expressway with four corpses that they had recovered, demanding that the remaining bodies be handed over to them by the police.

Tension built up further on Jan.4 morning when the tribals discovered that five of the bodies returned had their palms chopped off and their genital mutilated. The tribals were horrified to find that five males penis cut off and one female had her breast cut off. Though the doctors were accused for this, it was clear that they were not killed in firing but had been arrested, brutally tortured and then killed. The government tried desperately to diffuse the crisis but they continued the dharna with the 12 bodies. Finally though the dharna continued the bodies were cremated. At the cremation grounds the tribal leaders vowed not to part with even an inch of their land ancestral land.

On Jan.7<sup>th</sup> there was a statewide bandh which crippled life in Orissa. Roads and even rail traffic was disrupted due to blockades throughout the state. In Bhubaneswar the activists attacked the BJD office and the residence of the finance minister, Prafulla Ghadei, who is the MLA of the region and has been in the forefront of organising the repression. The bandh was also held in Jharkhand.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the dharna Sonia Gandhi led a high-level team and visited the tribals amidst much media attention. She promised the kith of the dead 5 lakhs in compensation (the tribals had earlier rejected the Rs.1 lakh compensation from the state government) but said not one word on relief and rehabilitation. Ironically she was accompanied with not the welfare of mining ministers but with the Home Minister and the Union Home Secretary. Her intentions were obvious, try and make political capital and yet warn against any further actions. This is not surprising as the Prime Minister himself has been personally involved in pushing the mining deals in Orissa. So, though the BJD government at the State level has been in the forefront of these mining deals, it has got strong backing from the Congress government at the Centre.

On the other hand in a PRESS STATEMENT issued by the CENTRAL COMMITTEE of the CPI(MAOIST) stated that it: *severely condemns the brutal massacre of twelve tribals by the Orissa police on Jan 2nd. The tribals were protesting against the construction of steel plants on their lands near Kalinga nagar industrial complex near Jajpur, Orissa. The Kalinga Nagar killing has surpassed the two other incidents-the Maikanch firing on tribals in December 2000 and Raigarh firing by Naveen Patnaik government. The killing of policeman is but natural and we hail people's continued resistance despite facing cruel repression..... The BJD government who is opening Orissa to the rapacious and greedy Goliaths for the exploitation of invaluable mineral resources is caring a hoot to the poor and downtrodden. Naveen Patnaik bent upon crushing the continuing agitation with an iron hand already brought additional 27 platoons of Orissa State Armed Police (OSAP) force. Imposed curfews and prohibitory orders.*

*The vast stretches of adivasi areas ranging from the Dandakaranya to Jharkhand are threatened by the monstrous MNCs and Indian Compradors. In Jharkhand the Raman Singh government recently signed 42 agreements in mining, steel and power.... These plunderers are determined to throw out form the homes and hearths of these indigenous people. These 21st century shylocks hand in glove the Central and state governments are trying to go any cost. Apart from the massive deployment of paramilitary and other armed forces the governments are going on with fascist gangs like "salwa judum and sendra". The salwa judum fascist gangs so far killed 100 adivasis people and raped many women, destroyed 40 villages. Around 20000 people had to leave their homes because of this State sponsored terror.*

*..... We appeal to the people of all walks of life to condemn the on going repression on Kalinga Nagar tribals' struggle and appeal to stand in their support. Our Central Committee also appeals to support all the struggles of adivasi of this region where people are*

### ***going losing their livelihood in the name of industrialization and mining.***

List of Martyrs in Kalinga Nagar Massacre:  
1. Rangalal Munduya 2. Janga Jarika 3. Sudam Barla 4. Ram gagrou 5. Ati Jamuda 6. Bana Pradra 7. Deogi Triya 8. Landu Jarika 9. Ram Chandra Jamuda 10. Mukta Bankira 11. Govind Daguri (Student) 12. Bhagaban Soy.

A memorial is also planned on the spot in honour of those killed. Two organisations involved — the Jharkhandi's Organisation of Human Rights and Jharkhand Mines Area Coordination Committee — have also planned to launch a campaign to counter the centenary celebrations of Tisco, beginning later this year. They have called on the Yatas to accept responsibility for the massacre and call off the programme and donate the money to build a memorial. On January 31<sup>st</sup> the tribals held a massive rally close to the spot of the firing. It made its intention clear by taking on the government by launching a "shahid yatra" and sprinkling the ashes of the tribals killed in the police firing throughout the state. They refuse any cooperation whatsoever with the government. Now it over one month into the road blockade of the Paradeep-Daitari expressway which has resulted in a loss of over Rs.1 crore so far. The blockade has badly hit the movement of goods and mineral to and from Paradeep port. But even if the blockade is lifted the tribals are determined not to concede to even an inch of their land to any industrial project in the area in future.

### **Discontent Sweeps the State**

The seed of the discontent were sowed in the region in the 1990s when the government started acquiring land in the early 1990s as part of the globalization policies being pushed by the imperialists. From then itself the privatization of mines was high on the agenda. The Biju Patnaik government acquired 12,000 acres of land in Kalinga Nagar in 1992. But in these years only two companies, NINL and MISL, set up plants. Simplex Industrial concern withdrew after facing stiff opposition from the tribals. Though they were paid a measly compensation of Rs.37,000 per acre the tribals did not leave their lands. But in 2004-05 when the government handed over 1960 acres to the Tatas and began to push the tribals out the resistance began. They

refused to go saying the compensation was worthless. Besides, most tribals though they have been ploughing their land for generations they have not been given pattas for it; but the compensation would only apply to the 'patta' lands.

In the period of 1992-97 alone around 1 lakh crores of foreign direct investment came to exploit the vast quantities of natural resources. The big mining projects will usurp 1,10,000 acres of fertile agricultural land, 10,000 acres of forest and 50,000 acres of grazing land in the region of Raygara-Koraput-Kalahandi.

The government then paid a mere Rs.37,000 per acre and the State government started work on the NILN (Nilachal Ispat Nigam Ltd) steel project in 1998. The Mesco Group followed it up with a 0.5 million tonne steel plant. Until now the industrial complex of Kalinga Nagar spread over 12,000 acres has attracted 13 steel projects including the one by Tata Steel.

The protests have been continuous against all projects that seek to displace the people with out any proper R & R. In 1997 two people were killed in police firing during land acquisition for the now shelved Tata Steel project at Gopalpur. The same company had to back out of a prawn culture project at Chikla following protests by local fishermen in the early 1990s. In December 2000 three persons were killed in police firing at Manikanch, near Kashipur in Raygada district, while protesting against the Rs.4,000 crore alumina project by Utkal Alumina International Ltd. The Vedanta Group (UK) which is setting up a Rs.4,000 crore alumina refinery at Lanjigarh in Kalahandi too had to face tribal protest in 2004.

The experience of the NINL plant has shown that the government is just out to rob the tribals of their land without any real R & R (Relief and Rehabilitation). Here 634 families were displaced. While the displaced families were paid Rs.37,000 per acre NINL paid the IDCO (Industrial Development Corporation of Orissa) Rs.3.5 lakh per acre. They were given a plot of land 12 kms away with each family getting one-tenth of an acre. The government promised jobs but not one person was given any. They were promised free medical facilities, free electricity and various other sops. Nothing materialized. In this Gobarghati Rehabilitation Centre six people, including

two children, have died of water-borne diseases in the last five months. None of the six tube-wells installed were functioning. The nearest primary health centre is 20 kms away to which they have to walk. There is one school and no teacher. Most of the families have disappeared and none settled on the undeveloped plots. At the Trijanga rehabilitation Colony, where families displaced from Siari and Basipur by Mesco and Jindal, it is the same story. Seeing this experience the tribal people have now continued to occupy the lands that were acquired from them. Unsure of an alternative livelihood, they protested whenever any new projects were started. Subsequently the government paid some more to the tribals but this had little effect as there was no rehabilitation plan. On May 9<sup>th</sup> 2005 the tribals were lathi charged while opposing the bhoomi puja of a steel project of Maharashtra Seamless. In the clash the Jajpur ADM (Additional District Magistrate) and two police officers were seriously injured. This was followed up by midnight raids on villages in a bid to terrorise them. They arrested a large number of tribals including 25 women and 14 children. All were harassed and humiliated and detained for 22 days. The villages involved were primarily from those in which the 12 were killed in the present clash. In the present case too while Tata has paid Rs.3.75 per acre to IDCO, the displaced have only been given Rs.62,000 per acre.

This action was directed by the MLA from the region and the State's finance minister who had come there on the occasion. Praful Chandra Ghadie is a powerful trade union leader of the area and a mafia don. Recently, at his instance and financed by the mining mafia, some local youth of his electoral area of Sukinda have formed a private army to defend the industrialists who are putting up plants in Kalinga Nagar.

But the tribals are not cowed down. In October 2005 the tribals again obstructed the bhoomi puja of another private company. A big police force was called in. After this tension increased and the tribals gheraoed the Kalinga Nagar police station. This was only lifted after the government gave an assurance of proper compensation. During this agitation the president of the Front was arrested and has since been languishing in jail.

But NINL is not the only experience. Since 1947 none of the three million people

displaced — 50% tribals — in the tribal and coastal areas have received adequate compensation and rehabilitation. Uprooted, often forcibly and violently, from their lands, most have been reduced to penury. Many have even died of starvation. It is not surprising therefore that the outbreak at Kalinga Nagar has now inspired protests from those ousted from earlier projects like the Hirakud dam in Sambalpur district, the Nalco project in Angul and Koraput, the Rourkela Steel Plant at Sundargarh district and the HAL factory at Sunbeda in Koraput district.

In mid January in two major actions the tribals blocked all entry points to Rourkela demanding that the plant's surplus land, taken from them about 50 years ago, be returned to their original owners. Three trucks, two dumpers and a three wheeler were set on fire at Panposh and Deldih on the outskirts of the city. There were a number of organisations (including the Rourkela Local Displaced Association and the Anchalik Surakhya Committee) involved in the indefinite blockade. Tribals, armed with bows and arrows, took to the streets to enforce the blockade. Boulders were kept on the roads and tyres were burnt at the entry points to the city, while a large crowd squatted on the railway tracks on the Howrah-Mumbai route and the railway line was closed down for three full days. 22 platoons of armed police were called in. Pitched battles took place between the tribals and the police and the blockade continued for a fortnight.

It is reported (Outlook) that revolts have flared up like bush fires all over Orissa and many of the industrial ventures are having second thoughts about their investments. People opposed to Posco said "if the project is not scrapped we will set up barricades, we will stop paying revenue and if necessary blow up bridges to cut off all connection". They are being led by the Pratiordh Sangram Samiti whose president is Abhay Sahu.

### **Orissa's Gold Rush**

So far 43 MoUs have been signed for steel plants and three for aluminum refineries. To set up Greenfield plants, and many of the companies are all set to mine in Schedule V areas, where tribal people enjoy protection against land alienation. To set up these industries 60,000 acres of land has to be that if all the projects are implemented

about 10 lakh people will be displaced. The State's New Industrial Policy has rolled out the red carpet for these companies by exempting them for sales tax, entry tax, electricity charges, and other taxes for 20 years. The land is being leased out to these industries at very low rates. Reservoirs, rivers, and hydroelectricity plants are being handed over to the industrial houses while farmers do not have enough water for irrigation. Fishermen are being pushed out for prawn cultivation and what is left of the forests will be devastated.

These will involve an investment of Rs.1.4 lakh core to produce 58.4 million tones of steel per annum. This is a part of the New Steel Policy unveiled by the Union cabinet recently which seeks to take the per annum steel production up from 30 million tones today to 100 million tones by 2020. Of these 43, 17 have started construction and 10 are nearing completion. Orissa's estimated iron ore reserves are 5.4 billion tones. Of this 3.1 billion is in mines leased out and 766 million tones are with the government. The government is busy seeking to sell of the balance 1.5 billion tones. Rampant mining of iron ore is already going on in Keonjhar and Sundargarh which have some of the best forests. The Niyamgiri hills of Kalahandi, home to a variety of medicinal plants, are also facing the threat of mining. In these places there are no basic health care facilities and pollution is already a serious problem. Here there are also no proper schools and the interior villages have no roads and electricity. The areas that would witness mining of iron ore and the setting up new steel plants and captive power plants are Keonjhar, Sundargarh, Jajpur, Dhenkanal and Angul districts. The Orissa Steel plant plans to make hot rolled steel. At present 600 families are squatting within the plant site. They are the original owners of the land who have refuse to accept the compensation.

With the diversion of large forest areas in Lanjigarh, Kashipur and Keonjhar, people have become refugees in their own lands, their livelihood and their lands snatched away from them overnight. In spite of such a massive plan for mining projects the State government has not even drawn up a plan for R & R. the draft R & R policy is gathering dust and even after the firing at Jajpur there are no plans to sytematise it. Obviously the government wants no such policy and

mere to throw out the tribals at the lowest possible cost, depending on the level of their agitation.

Orissa is one of the richest States in the country in mineral resources, yet it is one of the poorest. Orissa has 33% of the country's iron ore, 60% of the bauxite, 98.4% of the chromite, 25% of the coal and 68% of the manganese. As the rush for iron ore hots up in the Northern Orissa districts, the queue for bauxite is getting longer in the Southern belt.

Four alumina refineries have been planned to be set up by the Anil Agarwal owned Vedanta Alumina, the Indo-Canadian joint venture Utkal Alumina, the Adity Alumina and a joint venture of L & T and the Dubai Aluminum Limited in the Kalahandi, Rayagada and Koraput districts. Construction of two of them has started — in Lanjigarh in Kalahandi and Kashipur in Rayagada — despite massive opposition by the tribals. Some of these have already come up in spite of massive opposition from the local tribals. The Utkal Alumina project which will displace 22,000 people loss of pasture land will doom about 40,000 cattle to famine, will only create 400 "non-technical" jobs. The project is expect to last for only about 25 years. In the proposed projects at Kashipur, Laxmipur, and Dasmantpur about 80,000 people face loss of livelihood, but only 3,000 will get employment. Companies like Vedanta in Lanjhigarhar operating illegally are operating illegally without environment clearance, mining permit and consent of the gram sabha; hundreds acres of forest are being cut down in Sambalpur district by Bhushan Steel and other sponge iron factories.

Tribals constitute over 22% of the total population of the State (the all-India percentage is 7%) Of these 73% live below the poverty line. The main reason for this is deprivation of land. Only 13% of the total land under Schedule V is owned by them. The State owns approximately 74% of the land in these regions where the majority of the tribals are either landless or marginal farmers.

But Orissa is not the only place where the government is handing over the land to the mining mafia. Massive project of iron ore and steel, coal, bauxite, uranium and many other metals are coming up in many other states, particularly Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh.

## **The Rape of Jharkhand**

The Jharkhand government has also already signed 43 MoUs with 43 domestic and overseas investors against the commitment that the State government would be providing the land and other infrastructure to the mining mafia at excessively cheap rates. The Arjun Munda government has blindly signed on the dotted line. The major problem it faces in taking over the land and handing it over to the industrialists. The Jharkhand had initiated work on the formation of a land bank to provide land to industries. The investments involved in all these projects here amounts to a massive Rs.2 lakh crores by various Indian and foreign companies, needing 52,000 acres of land.

So deeply involved is the Jharkhand BJP government in gigantic mining contracts that the governor, immediately after the Jan.2 firing went rushing to Delhi. He met the President and the Union Home Minister. He told the latter that “rehabilitation will be an important issue in the execution of about 40 million tonne steel plants and 5,000 mega-watts captive thermal power plants.

Just four major steel plants plan to invest \$ 30 billion (Rs.1.5 lakh crores) in Jharkhand. Mittals has signed a MoU for a 12 million tonne steel plant. Tata Steel has signed an MoU for a 10 million steel plant, besides expanding the Tatanagar plant to 7 million tonnes. Jindal and Essar too have signed MoUs for a 10 mt and a 5 mt plant respectively. SAIL (IISCO — PSU) has plans to invest Rs.4,000 crores to develop the Chira mines.

Jharkhand has 1.5 times more reserves of iron ore than the present estimates. In fact all the big houses are primarily eyeing the Chira mines. Chira is considered one of the richest iron ore mines in the world with over 1.5 billion tones of deposits. Earlier the mining tribunal ruled that the State government should restore the mining of two major blocks of the Chira mines to SAIL as the Jharkhand government had revoked to leases in order to privatize them. Besides Jharkhand is home to the biggest uranium mining project in the country at Jaduguda in East Singhbhum district.. With eight new nuclear reactors under construction there is going to be a huge spurt in the demand for uranium. At present the project produces 220 tonnes of the

yellow cake per year as against a yearly consumption of 300 tonnes. The UCIL (Uranium Corporation of India Ltd) has plans for the massive extension of these East Singhbhum mines (at Jaduguda, Narwapahar, Bhatin, and Turamdih) given the large deposits in the area. The Narwapahar mine which was started in 1995 produces as much as 1,500 tonnes of ore per day. The Turamdih mine was opened in 2002 and another mine is planned here. Also mines are planned to be started in Banduhurang and Bagjata.

Also a number of power projects have been sanctioned like that of the Eastern NGA Mines Ltd. The company has signed a MoU with the State government in Feb 2004 regarding the setting up of a 1000 MW-power plant at Patratu. The state government failed to provide the land and coal (agreed to 100 acres of land and coal blocks) to the company as agreed in the MoU and so this has not progressed.

The villagers in Gamharia Block of Jharkhand district have been up in arms against plans to mine uranium at Mohuldih. In August an attempt by the UCIL to hold a public hearing on environmental questions associated with the project was thwarted by villagers of the area. The villagers said that they neither needed uranium nor a hearing. Residents of the area have declared that they will not let go of their land under any circumstances. Among those opposing the proposed project are the Jharkhand Organisation Against Radiation (JOAR) and a newly formed association of Ranchi-based lecturers and academics. The protesters allege that the UCIL and the local administration have been using coercive methods to push the project through.

The local villagers have been vociferously opposing these mining projects.

### **Other Mining Plans**

It was soon after the globalization initiative that the mining sector was sought to be opened out to the loot and rape of our people. It was as early as 1993 that the National Mineral Policy (for non-fuel and non-atomic minerals)

Besides Jharkhand large deposits of uranium have been found in Nalgonda district (Lambapur and Pedagattu) of Andhra Pradesh and in Meghalaya. There are massive plans to develop these mines

due to the increasing demand for uranium. At present the government has eight new reactors coming up in different parts of the country.

Tata Steel has planned to increase its production from the present 5 million tones to 30 mt by 2015. its major expansion plans are in Jharkhand where it plans to expand its Tatanagar capacity to 10mt and add a new plant of 12 mt. In Orissa it plans a 6 mt plant and in the Bastar district of Chhathisgarh it plans a 5 mt plant. The total investment plans in these projects are a huge Rs.1 lakh crores. To clear the path against the resistance of the tribals massive repression has been unleashed in Bastar under the name of “Salwa Judum”. So far about 40 villages have been burnt down, 100 killed and forty women activists gang-raped. Huge para-military forces continue in the area on the rampage with local goons led by politicians.

In addition the centre is in the process of setting up four Special Purpose Vehicle (SPVs) to pilot four mega power plants with initial capacities of 800 mega watts each — at Champa, Chhathisgarh, Singroli at MP, Karwar Karnataka, and Surat in Gujarat.

Chhathisgarh too has huge plans for mining projects with massive iron ore deposits still to be extracted. Essars has already completed a 267 kms pipeline to take the iron ore to the port in the form of slurry at a fraction of the cost that the railways would entail — from Rs.550 per tonne to a mere Rs.80 per tonne. The pipeline passes through the three states of Chhathisgarh, Orissa and Andhra Pradesh.

In Andhra Pradesh the planned Polavaram dam will displace over 2 lakh people from the vast backward regions of Telanagana (chiefly Khammam district) while sending the water to the rich fields of Krishna and Godavari districts. The bulk of these are our poor tribals of this vast belt. Lakhs of people have already come out in agitation against this dam.

In Madhya Pradesh the government planned the ‘relocation’ (in other words eviction) of 75 villages in the forest areas Piparia in Hoshagabad district to set up three National Parks and Wild Life Sanctuaries. Thousands of tribals have been protesting against these projects under the banners of Samajwadi Jan Parishad, Kisan Adivasi Sangathan and the Shramik Adivasi Sangathan. The protesting

## International Arms Industry & Orissa's Bauxite Production

Who would think that there is a link between the US's war designs and the government's promotion of bauxite mining in the country? But there is!!! One of the major uses of aluminum is for the war industry. Aluminum is a weapon of mass destruction used for the war machine. A US government official said "Aluminum has become the most important single bulk material of modern warfare — no war can be carried to a successful conclusion today without using and destroying large quantities of aluminum..... We must plan the aluminum capacity available to the whole free world of nations strictly in terms of this awful prospect". A recent report showed that the Pentagon's aluminum requirement has increased by 17% and this can only be met by the backward countries.

Alcoa (Aluminum Company of America) , set up in 1880, was the path-breaker in aluminum production. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century it set up the Alcan (Canadian North Aluminum Company) in Canada to avoid the strict US regulations. Today Alcan is extracting bauxite into aluminum in 40 countries of the world, including India which is shipped off to the war industries of Europe and the USA. The major mining company, the UAIL, is a joint venture between Alcan and Hindalco, with mines at Kashipur.

The aluminum sector which till 1990s was strictly under State control in India, for the first time went to the private sector with foreign investment, mainly from Alcan, Alcoa, Pechiney and BHP Billiton. Orissa, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh have become the hunting grounds for this MNC influx. Vedanta of the Sterlite Company has tied up with Alcoa for the Niyamgiri mines which will get exhausted in 25 years.

In this period of globalization to the traditional mining areas like Guyana, Ghana, Jamaica, Surinam, etc have now been added India, Philippines and Indonesia.

Not only UAIL has set up in Orissa. L & T with the Arab Aluminum Company will invest Rs.10,000 crores in Kashipur. They will mine bauxite from the Srungar area and will have an alumina plant at Sikarpai area in Kashipur block. In Laaximpur block (near Kucheipada, the epicenter of the tribal struggle) the Hindalco-Birla company will mine bauxite from Kodingamali and establish an alumina plant at Kansariguda, while collecting water from the Barigaon area. The same Birla company will mine bauxite from the Deomali area of Similiguda in Koraput district.

tribals, in defiance of restrictions imposed by the MP Forest Dept., publicly sold minor forest produce. The Forest Department has banned extraction of minor forest produce from these areas. The government has been forcibly evicting villagers. The tribals are also protesting the decision of the authorities to ban fishing in the Tawa reservoir.

Dempos is also planning more iron ore extraction in parts of Goa and Southern Maharashtra and has been taking over land in the area.

The list can go on and on but suffice it to say that the mining projects planned in the country are gigantic, which will lead not only to the displacement of lakhs but also even further destruction of the environment. Most of the gains will only go to the imperialist mining companies and their collaborators here — giving them huge profits.

### Development or Destruction ?

The mining and other such projects is put as examples of development and those opposing it as being anti-development. But the question before us is "development for whom"? For the inhabitants of the region or big-business who stand to make gigantic

profits from these projects? These rich mineral deposits are mostly in the most backward regions of the country. Having depleted the mineral resources in many other parts of the world the imperialists are now pushing a 'liberalised' mining agenda in order to rob the country of its natural resources. The rate at which the MoUs have been signed the mines will finish our entire iron ore, bauxite, etc within a couple of decades. But, worse than that is the human tragedy that such rampant mining will cause to the local inhabitants, particularly the tribals. On has only to see the displaced of the projects like the Hirakud dam to witness the extent of their suffering and trauma.

Development is no doubt a must for the growth of the welfare of the people. But this development must be such that gives the local people jobs, helps develop their land and forest, and bring industrial development that serves their needs primarily. Such real development can only be achieved by developing the purchasing power of the people locally in order that this can act as the motor for growth and development of the market. For this also the land and forest must fully belong to the people who till and inhabit it. It is then that the fruits of their labour will come to them and not be robbed by contractors,

bureaucrats, politicians, traders, industrialists, moneylenders and landed elements.

In these backward areas it is the Naxalites who have a strong presence. Also many other organisations are mobilising the tribals against this rapacious loot. The Naxalites are the only force that can withstand the government's terror and giving a fitting reply to the mining mafia. The entire administration, police, courts and even the para-military act as the private army of the mining companies — many of which are foreign or that of the big comprador bourgeoisie. Yet, there is need for all these forces to come together to fight a common battle.

The stakes are enormous. The amount of money planned to be invested would be around Rs.5 lakh crores (roughly \$100 billion). The profits they hope to may are gigantic. They will not easily give up such loot. The ferociousness of their attacks at Bastar, where Tata plans to set up a steel plant, is an indication of the extent to which they will go to secure their huge investments.

But the people are fighting back. They have seen from past experience the nature of this

**contd. on page 15**



## ***Gory details of Salwa Judum & the Mass Retaliation***

Sharda

As the Dandakarnya revolutionary movement triumphantly completed its 25<sup>th</sup> year and as the Adivasi peasant masses started to steadily build their own organs of political power — though in a rudimentary form — the ruling classes, in their desperate bid to wipe out this movement root and branch, further intensified their campaign of brutal repression, drowning the masses in rivers of blood. As a last resort, the State is resorting to all the notorious stratagems of the fascist rule book — kill all, burn all, loot all; shatter the people's lives by hitting at their economic lifelines; use violence against women; and finally forcibly evacuate people from their villages and shut them up in concentration camps.

This is precisely what is going on in the Dandakaranya area of Chhathisgarh State for the past eight months in the name of 'Salwa Judum'.

### **The Start of the Escalation — Different Phases of Salwa Judum**

This murderous Salwa Judum campaign was launched in June last in Kutru area of Dantewada District, under the name of Jan Jagran Abhiyan. Later it was extended to Bairamgarh, Nellanar, Gangaloor, Mirtoor, Bursoor, Indravati, Nagnar and Daula areas.

This campaign was initiated by the arch agent of the reactionary ruling classes, Mahendra Karma, the leader of the Congress(I) legislature Party of Chhathisgarh, with the full backing of the BJP government. At first he gathered the erstwhile local tyrants, landlords, sarpanches, Janpad presidents, the Panchayat Secretaries, the local leaders of the Congress and BJP and all other such elements whose interests were seriously hurt by the revolutionary movement, whose feudal sway over the people was put to an end by the movement. They were egged on to get the villages under their jurisdiction to surrender — that is, to completely disband all revolutionary mass organisations and organs of political power, to cut off all their links with the Maoists.

These erstwhile tyrants and looters were only too eager to take this up and

they formed the backbone and leaders of this campaign.

At first they concentrated their efforts on some villagers which are situated in between the Indravati river and the NH 16 highway and where the revolutionary organisations do not exist. By offering material incentives and in some cases, by issuing death threats, they were able to mobilise a motley gathering, with which they started conducting Jan Jagran meetings.

Then they gathered lumpen elements in their service, armed them with axes, swords and in some cases firearms, provided by the police, and launched attacks, under the protection of the central paramilitary forces, on villages under Maoist influence.

But soon these Salwa goons found out to their horror that the revolutionary masses are in no mood to get enslaved once again and are ready to give a fight for defending their organisations and new power. The revolutionary masses of Talimendri and Kotrapal villages, ably assisted by their village militia, not only repulsed an attack of these goons but also inflicted heavy casualties on them, even killing the more ruthless.

The State took these killings — which were purely in self-defence — as an opportunity and went on a vicious propaganda campaign distorting the facts by depicting those who attacked as innocents and those who retaliated in self-defence as naxalite murderers. Soon, rumours were spread all throughout Dantewada District that the Naxalites are attacking villages killing people indiscriminately. The big media went along with this, while the local small media was gagged.

Moreover, the Jan Jagran campaign's name was changed to 'Salwa Judum' — the gondi meaning of which is campaign for peace — that will supposedly bring peace to the area by combating the so-called murder spree.

Apart from this, the State started closing down village weekly markets while falsely propagating that it was the Naxals who were closing down the markets. Again using the two incidents of resistance the

State began to establish the so-called relief camps with the proclaimed intention of providing relief and safety to the Naxalite victims.

As people's resistance continued, the State started deploying more and more paramilitary forces. As a part of this a Naga armed police battalion was brought in. Known for their brutality, with its deployment the repression campaign almost took on the shape of a war of occupation.

Now, the Salwa goons, accompanied by contingents of the Naga police started launching direct attacks on villages which are known to be Maoist strongholds; the people of which stood defiantly without surrendering. These goons and the Naga police started killing people indiscriminately and burnt whole villages.

We give here an incident which stands as an example of their blood-thirstiness. On Sept. 1<sup>st</sup> the Naga police and the Salwa goons attacked a village called Hariyal, in Mirtoor area, and simply lined up ten peasants and shot them all dead at point blank range.

Along with this the State began to put into place an informer and vigilante network, as a Kashmir, by establishing Gram Suraksha Samitis (Village Defence Squads) and turning some of the lumpen elements and surrendered degenerated Naxalites as special police officers. It imported military training to them and armed them with modern assault weapons. This was what happened during the first phase — June, July 2005.

The second phase of this murderous campaign began in August 2005. Since the Salwa campaign was not able to extend beyond a score of village even after two months, Mahendra Karma and his henchmen launched a scheme called the 'Jan Jagran Padyatra' to launch attacks and force surrenders of villages standing defiantly.

Like in a war of occupation, the entire area has been divided into sectors and sub-sectors and new police outposts and camps, manned by the CRPF and the Naga police were set up in many villages for providing 'carpet security' to the marauding Salwa goons. Then, more



ferocious mopping up operations were launched under such names as 'Operation Greenhunt' Operation Rakshak, etc.

The latest phase started with the doling out of material benefits like money, horses, bullocks, etc. to some of those who surrendered with much fan fare and propaganda, with the aim of luring the people of defiant villages to surrender.

### **The Economic Blockade**

Another weapon the State is using against the revolutionary masses of Dandakaranya is hitting hard at their economic life lines. In an attempt to starve the revolutionary masses to surrender the State at first closed down all local weekly markets and then stopped supplying essential commodities, like rice, to the ration shops. As it is well known, the weekly markets are the sole economic life line for the Adivasi peasants, as it is in these markets that they sell their produce and purchase all their daily needs. Closing them down amounts to nothing but to cut off their life line and starve their families to death. So the State's intention is very clear — either surrender or starve to death.

### **The Loot & Destruction**

Apart from this, the Salwa goons, Naga police and central paramilitary forces, have, during the past eight months attacked more than 70 villages, which did not surrender to them, and burnt more than 1,300 houses. These goons — both the uniformed and non-uniformed — either looted or destroyed thousands of quintals of food grains, pulses and hundreds of pigs, goats, chicken, etc. They destroyed even household utensils and backyard vegetable plots of the peasants. They axed to the ground banana, papaya plants and trees like tamarind, mango, jackfruit, etc. The total cost of this loot and destruction comes to around Rs.4 crores. And this does not include the long-term loss the peasants will have to incur due to the axing down of such trees as Tamarind, mango, etc. The enormity of the loss incurred by the adivasi peasants can be gauged from the fact that they are living in one of the most backward areas in the country, where more than 95% of the families live well below the poverty line. The total damage would be to the tune of Rs.15 – Rs.20 crores. This was up to the end of last year; till today the rampage continues.

What is even worse, the police forces and Salwa goons are not even allowing the people to reap their harvest. They are continually raiding the fields firing indiscriminately on farmers who are reaping harvests, and are beating and torturing them, so as to drive them away and let the crop wither away.

### **Violence & Atrocities against Women**

The Indian reactionary State has for long been consistently using violence and atrocities against women as one of the important weapons against defiant mass movements. Various such incidents of violence against women by the State security forces in J & K, Manipur, Andhra, Tamilnadu, etc, which came to light in the recent past, illustrate the fact that the State has given a free hand to its security forces to commit any atrocity of their choice against women. The same weapon is being used in Dandakaranya with much more savagery during the ongoing 'Salwa Judum' suppression campaign.

Right from the inception of the revolutionary movement in Dandakaranya, Adivasi women were actively participating in all the anti-feudal, anti-imperialist struggles in large numbers. As soon as the revolutionary movement started taking roots in that area, about two decades back, these fighting women started organising themselves into a militant women's organisation, the Adivasi Krantikari Mahila Sanghatan (KAMS). Apart from participating in the anti-feudal, anti-imperialist struggle, these brave women started taking up struggles against patriarchy and male domination. They fought and won the battle for equal wages for equal work. They started opposing their traditional marriage system, and began insisting on marrying some one of their own free choice. One of the most degrading customs that the traditional feudal gond tribal society imposed on its women was that she should not wear any blouse or upper garment and keep her chest bare once she is married. So, one of the first movements the KAMS took up was this issue and after a hard struggle the married Adivasi women started wearing blouses.

Struggles like these naturally aroused the ire of the tribal and clan chiefs. That is why women, and particularly the activists

of the KAMS, are becoming the special targets of the Salwa goons. That is why in many of the cases of violence against women, they are taking out their wrath on the breasts of the women victims.

We report below some of the most heinous instances of violence and atrocities committed against women by the Salwa goons and the Naga police forces. These incidents will make any civilized person hang their head in shame with revulsion. The Salwa goons and paramilitary forces, particularly the Naga police, brutally murdered 12 adivasi women after gang-raping them and gang-raped 40 more women.

On August 15<sup>th</sup> — ironically on the very same day the ruling classes claim the country became independent — the Salwa goons, marching under the protective arm of the Naga police and other paramilitary forces, attacked a village called Karremarka situated on the NH 16 highway. They, at first, butchered the president of the local peasant organisation, DAKMS, comrade Tama Ramu, with axes. Later they caught the president of the local KAMS, comrade Madri Sarita, and gang-raped her. She started bleeding professedly and lost consciousness. Those inhuman goons then dragged her all the way to Bairamgarh police station. Not relenting even then, those goons kept raping that helpless, bleeding and semi-conscious woman for more than a week. Then when she was on the verge of death, they shifted her to a jail foisting false cases on her. The Salwa goons also gang-raped another member of the KAMS of the same village and left her in the forest after she lost consciousness.

On Sept.1<sup>st</sup> these Salwa goons caught hold of three women of Kondam village, Badri, Somli and Muni, gang-raped them and then removed all their clothes by force and marched these three bleeding and naked women to the Mirtoor police station and sent them to jail on false charges.

In another ghastly incident, the Naga police and Salwa goons surrounded the house of a peasant named Kotlal in Dorum village. At that time his wife, Somri, was feeding her children. The Salwa goons axed both the husband and wife in front of their panic stricken children. Later, in another gruesome incident, those goons surrounded a house in which a committee member of KAMS, comrade Korsanta,

was taking shelter. They caught hold of her, axed her breasts, stabbed swords into her vagina and then through her dead body.

In a nearby village called Neelam, the police and Salwa goons caught hold of a pregnant woman who was draining water from a spring well outside her village, gang-raped her and mercilessly left the poor bleeding unconscious woman in the forest.

The Salwa goons and police forces captured three activists of the KAMS of Jarangla village, during their combing operations. They gang-raped them and then shifted them to a so-called relief camp and went on raping them for a long time.

On Oct 5<sup>th</sup> a batch of 120 Salwa goons and Naga police attacked Morkahelli village of Bairamgarh block and surrounded a house in which a pregnant woman was cooking food. Without any provocation they shot her dead. When her three panic stricken children started crying, these inhuman goons also shot dead the elder girl child.

On Oct 7<sup>th</sup> the Salwa goons and Naga police raided Pedakarma village in Bijapur block. The local militia gave them stiff resistance for more than an hour. But, finally the goons were able to capture two committee members of the KAMS, comrades Modium Sukki and Kurram Lakki, who were on sentry duty for the militia. The Salwa goons tortured them inhumanly, gang-raped them and finally murdered them in a most savage way by cutting off their breasts and axing their chests. They then threw their bodies in the deep forests. But the villagers found their bodies after two days of search and cremated their bodies with full revolutionary honours.

As mentioned earlier, Kotrapal village was one of the first villages not only to repulse the attacks of the Salwa goons but also to inflict heavy casualties on them. Irked by this, the Salwa goons attacked that village time and again. Finally they were able to capture six women. They gang-raped them and brutally tortured them after shifting them to a police station.

The accounts of brutality could go on and on; suffice it to say that rape and humiliation of women has been one of the important weapons of the State to terrorise the local populace into submission during the ongoing campaign.

### **Relief Camps or Concentration Camps**

One of the policies used by every reactionary ruler in history is to “*drain the pond to catch the fish*”. That is to forcefully evacuate the masses from their villages and resettle them in camps near their strongholds so that the masses are completely cut off from their revolutionary leadership. The Indian State is following the same stratagem during its present Salwa Judum offensive in Dandakarnaya.

The State began spreading a distorted version of the retaliatory attacks at Kotrapal and Tudimendri villages to create an atmosphere of fear that the Naxalites are attacking villages indiscriminately. Then it evacuated people from villages situated on NH 16 and shifted them to schools, ashrams, and government buildings in Bijapur, Kutro, Nimed, Bairamgarh, etc. These camps are under 24 hours surveillance. Those inside these camps are being utilised for forced labour for laying roads from Kutru to Vedire and from Bairamgarh to Patrir. They are being used for the widening of roads and cutting the forests on both sides and also in the construction of government buildings and repairs to police stations. In addition they have to cut and fetch fire wood for the police. For all this labour all they get is a mere measure of rice. Moreover, the Salwa goons are picking up and raping women at these camps. They are not allowing anyone to leave the camp, by issuing threats that they will kill anyone who dares to leave.

This is the horrifying plight of the so-called relief camps. About 14,000 people are already in such camps. The State has a plan to re-locate 400 villages (1200 to 1500 hamlets) in the Bastar region. There are already 8,000 forces in Bastar and they plan to add another 2000. They also have a plan to recruit 4,000 local lumpens and give them the post of Special Police Officer (SPO) and give them weapons. They also plan to form so-called Gram Suraksha Samitis in every village.

### **People Stand Firmly**

The revolutionary masses of Dandakarnya are standing bravely, courageously facing one of the worst campaigns of murder and mayhem. They have the firm determination to safeguard all that which they achieved through the revolutionary struggle.

During the first three months of the Salwa Judum campaign the people stayed put in the villages, while their village militia maintained a day and night vigil. As soon as the marauding Salwa goons were sighted the militia would give a signal and people retreated into the forest.

But after that, some of the degenerated elements turned into informers and SPOs, and they started leading the Salwa goons and police, bypassing militia sentry posts through unguarded paths. Due to this the people vacated the villages and erected temporary shelters in the forest. At day break the militia first goes and patrols the village and only when it gives a all-clear signal, the people return to their villages and fields to attend to their work. The militia guards them during their work. By nightfall the people return to their shelter in the forests.

Not only the militia, the people themselves are taking every care to protect the secrecy of their shelter. They are taking care not to leave their footprints while coming or going away from the shelters. Moreover, they killed all their much-loved dogs and even their cocks, to avoid detection. Every nursing mother has been instructed to immediately attend to their babies as soon as it starts crying.

The people have to withstand unbearable hardships in these temporary camps. During the rainy season these temporary shelters could not provide any protection from the torrential rain. The pregnant women, the sick and the aged suffered the worst. But the people have cheerfully faced these hardships.

When the time came for reaping the harvest, the people got protection and assistance from the PLGA forces of the Maoists. These forces not only provided protection but also participated in cutting and storing the harvest. What is more it has been the PLGA that has been in the forefront of hitting back the enemy forces of the State.

Not cowed down by the massive enemy forces, the PLGA have been fighting back through guerrilla warfare. Last month itself there were a series of actions reported in the media. On Feb 6<sup>th</sup> nine jawans of the notorious Naga forces were killed and another nine seriously injured in a landmine blast in the Kottacheur area. According to the Economic Times (Feb 7<sup>th</sup>) “*Elsewhere*

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## ***Seminar on the “Contributions of Mao Tse-tung to the Progress of Human Civilization” held in Kolkata on 26 December 2005 - A Report:***

Rakhi

The 112<sup>th</sup> birthday of Mao Tse-tung fell on 26 December 2005. It was a day worth celebrating. Mao was one of the greatest revolutionary-philosophers of all time and contributed in more ways than one not only to Marxism-Leninism, but also to the progress of human civilization. The day was celebrated by Mao Tse-tung Smaran Committee—a committee formed in fond remembrance of that great person by a number of Bengali little magazines of Kolkata and other parts of West Bengal and Shahid Saroj Datta Smritiraksha Committee with a day-long-seminar. In September 2005 a discussion was organized by Smritiraksha Committee on the ‘Relevance of Maoism’ on which there was a report in the December number of *People’s March*. The theme chosen this time by the Mao Tse-tung Smaran Committee was ‘The contribution of Mao Tse-tung to the Progress of Human Civilization’. It was held on 26<sup>th</sup> December at the Indian Association Hall in central Kolkata from 2 PM to 8 PM. The hall with a total sitting strength of 250 persons was packed to capacity most of the time. On the whole, it was a grand success.

The proceedings began with the garlanding of a picture of Mao Tse-tung. Mahasweta Devi, the eminent intellectual and social worker, who was due to inaugurate, could not do so because of her son’s illness. The opening song, ‘Meghla dine meghra abar haoay bhesse bhesse’ (‘Clouds float in the sky on a cloudy day’) was sung in honour of Mao by Sutapa Bandyopadhyay. The statement of Mao Tse-tung Smaran Committee (Committee in memory of Mao Tse-tung) was read out by Prof. Amit Bhattacharya, one of the conveners.

The Committee, in their statement as also in the folder circulated, referred to Mao as one of the foremost revolutionary leaders, philosophers, teachers, military strategists and tacticians. Fed by the direct experience of leading the Chinese revolution, Mao made significant contribution to Marxist-Leninist theories. In a world where imperialism, notably US imperialism, has been raining death and

destruction on the people of the world, subverting their independence, sovereignty and trampling underfoot their legitimate rights, the people of China with Mao as the helmsman, had got a new direction to life and new vision of society where human values triumphed over the lust for profits. That struggle still serves as source of inspiration to the toiling people all over the world. It was also pointed out that during the Chinese revolution, Mao Tse-tung and the CPC-led revolutionaries were branded as ‘Red Bandits’ and ‘Terrorists’ by the Japanese aggressors and the Kuo Ming-tang. Later on, in the mid-1930s, the American journalist, Edgar Snow went to the red base areas of China, met the top leaders and recorded his observations in his classic account, ‘Red Star over China’. Thanks to him, the outside world could know for the first time the epic story of the anti-feudal, anti-imperialist just struggle of the people of China. In the same manner, in the present-day world, Mao’s revolutionary teachings and ideology are being branded as ‘terrorism’, ‘anarchism’ etc. by US imperialism, the Indian state and their ruling classes and government as justification of their policy of state repression.

Dr. Siddhartha Gupta, on behalf of the Committee, then presented a brief sketch of Mao’s life from his days in Shao Shan village from the late 1890s to 1921—the year the CPC was formed. Siddhartha Saha, another convener, then read out a statement on Mao’s contribution by Suniti Kumar Ghosh.

The octogenarian Suniti Kumar Ghosh, one of the founder-leaders of the CPI(M-L) from 1969 and editor of *Liberation*, himself could not attend due to his physical inability. In his write-up, he highlighted two of Mao’s contributions to the progress of human civilization. First, he pointed out the process of the socialist transformation of China’s economy from the abolition of feudalism and the redistribution of land of the landlords and rich peasants among the peasants in 1950 to the formation of the mutual-aid-groups,

cooperatives and the People’s Commune. The abolition of feudalism and the distribution of land meant that the peasants became free of the enormous burden of rent and debt and themselves became proprietors. But this did not help them much. The plots were small; most peasants had no tools; land improvement, the making of ditches and repairing of dykes, had to be done together. Thus there was the social need to improve upon mutual-aid-groups. So the elementary cooperatives were formed. There, land was still owned individually but worked collectively as one big farm; from this there developed the ‘advanced’ cooperatives, in which land and farm-implements were held in common and at harvest time surplus was divided among the families in proportion to the days of labour each family had contributed. Then the giant water conservation and irrigation programme outstripped the capabilities of the cooperatives and led to their voluntary merger and the formation of the People’s Commune in 1958. The People’s Commune combines farming, industry, forestry, animal husbandry, trade, education, culture, militia, military affairs etc. with all other functions affecting the lives of the people. Within the communes, there was no police force, judiciary or jails. There were people’s militia and young men and women received military training and became part of the People’s Militia. Thus in addition to the revolution in the organization of work, there was also an attempt to amalgamate state and society. This aspect of the revolutionary significance of the Commune was also noted by historian D.D.Kosambi. He observed that as a result of the abolition of local administration and the taking over of its power by the Commune, important parts of the state machinery have vanished altogether. “*To that extent, the state mechanism has begun to wither away. Control over peoples has been replaced by the people’s control over things*’. Thus the Commune as ‘an organ of the self-administration of the masses’, with its own militia, marked a significant initial phase in the

transformation of the state into a non-state. Ghosh writes that the Commune was invented by the people of China, thanks to Mao's leadership, during the stage of socialist revolution. It was a great contribution to human civilization, unprecedented in the history of the world. Today, People's Communes have disappeared, China has changed its colour; but this world-historic step would not go in vain.

Mao's second major contribution, as pointed out by Ghosh, was related to the principle of "democratic centralism". There is a contradiction between democracy and centralism. In order to resolve that contradiction, Lenin proposed "*unity of action, freedom of discussion and criticism*". It implies that everyone has the democratic right of discussion and criticism; but once a decision is reached by the majority, it is the collective responsibility to implement that decision. Mao Tse-tung, as Ghosh writes, went one step ahead of Lenin. Be it social science or natural science, the truth is grasped first by one or two persons. After that other people grasp it. The truth of Marxism was grasped first by Marx and Engels. The truth arrived at by Copernicus or Galileo was realized only later by others. So no opinion should be suppressed inside the party. Any member should be allowed to present his views, fight for them, but organizationally he or she would have to implement the majority decision. Mao Tse-tung said that a selfless communist should brave any obstacle. He should have the courage of going against the tide. He should fear neither removal from posts, nor from the party, nor imprisonment nor divorce, nor death. Mao Tse-tung placed dedication to the people and revolution above the party and his own leadership. This was Mao's new contribution.

With this the introductory part came to an end. After that, the main sessions—three in all—began. The first dealt with *Pre-revolutionary China*, the two speakers in this session being Prof. Amit Bhattacharya and Prof. Parimal Ghosh. The second session was on *Post-revolutionary China*, the two speakers being Prof. Siddhartha Guha Roy and Prof. Dipankar Chakraborty. The third session was on *Ideology*, the two speakers being Prof. Prahlad Sarkar and Kanchankumar, writer

and cultural worker. In the end, a drama was performed jointly by Amal Roy and Bandana Roy. In between different sessions, poems were read out and songs sung by Sabyasachi Deb, Srijan Sen and Pratul Mukhopadhyay.

Amit Bhattacharya talked on "*Mao Tse-tung and the New Democratic Revolution*". He started with the remark that the real assessment of Mao's contribution could be made only by those who are themselves directly involved in revolutionary practice, and not academicians like him. In his lecture, he dealt with some of Mao's contributions to the cause of people's revolution and also to Marxist theories, which also provide guidelines to the people fighting for emancipation in other countries of the world.

Throughout the period of the Chinese revolution, Mao had to fight against both 'left' and right deviations and establish his political and military line inside the party through social practice. It was at the Sunyi Conference held in January 1935 during the Long March that Mao was elected Chairman of the CPC—a post he continued to hold till his death in 1976. Mao knew that in the colonies and semi-colonies, the bourgeoisie inevitably split up into two sections—comprador or agents of imperialism, and national. In the writings of both Lenin and Stalin, there is this hint of such a split. However, the existing European notion was that the comprador bourgeoisie was that section which is connected with backward economic relationships, i.e., the commercial bourgeoisie; and the industrial bourgeoisie which is connected with advanced economic relationships was national in character. Mao made a departure from notions such as these and maintained that compradors could be both commercial as also industrial bourgeoisie. The question is not whether commercial or industrial bourgeoisie took part in it, but whether they retained their imperialist connections despite their investments in industries. Bhattacharya pointed out that such as analysis has a universal application in colonies and semi-colonies like India. He held that the Party Congress of the CPI (M-L) described the Indian bourgeoisie as comprador. At a later period, Suniti Kumar Ghosh showed, with a wealth

of detail, that the Indian bourgeoisie was split up the comprador bourgeoisie and the national bourgeoisie.

Second, Mao's concept of the New Democratic Revolution was a new concept (*On New Democracy*). It is the concept of a bourgeois-democratic revolution — which is essentially an agrarian revolution—to be led not by the bourgeoisie but by the proletariat with the peasantry as the main and decisive force. This was a departure from the Soviet model which put stress on the industrially advanced zones and the cities and looked upon the proletariat both as the decisive and main force with the peasantry as auxiliary forces. From the cities, Mao thus shifted the scene of revolutionary warfare to the backward villages and also developed the military strategy of encirclement of the cities from the countryside.

Third, In the *Hunan Report*, Mao not only highlighted the emergence of a new revolutionary social force—the peasantry—but also stressed the need of revolutionary violence. 'Red Terror' to counter 'white terror' i.e., counter-revolutionary violence.

Fourth, Bhattacharya pointed out that the Long March(1934-35) from the south to the north of China covering a distance of 7,500 kms against Japanese aggression, of which Mao was the architect, was the first of its kind in history. It proved to be decisive in the history of China. Mao paid particular attention to the fact that each military unit consisted of Red soldiers from different provinces so that provincialism did not develop.

Fifth, there is no doubt that the Red Army was different from all previous armies. While the reactionary armies lived at the expense of the people, the People's Army integrated with the peasants and helped them in their day-to-day activities. They were instructed not to ill-treat the prisoners of war.

Sixth, it was during the Yen-an phase that Mao made fundamental social experiments never attempted before. His *mass line* principles, Yen-an forum on literature and art, *min pan* schools to promote basic education, creation of village militia besides the regular army, 'land-to-the-tiller' programme, formation of mutual-aid-groups, bridging the gap

between mental and manual labour, adoption of a new military strategy and tactics—all proved to be decisive for the victory of the Chinese revolution. These teachings could be applied to the colonies and semi-colonies in other parts of the world also.

Seventh, Mao adopted the policy of ‘unity-criticism-unity’ to resolve intra-party contradictions. He was opposed to the Soviet policy of purging practiced during Stalin’s times. This was an entirely new method – democratic and educative – quite befitting for those who had staked everything for a better place to live in.

Eighth, Mao’s philosophical thinking – his theories on contradiction and practice – enriched Marxism-Leninism to a large extent.

Parimal Ghosh, the next speaker, spoke on ‘Mao’s Military Strategy and tactics’. He said that Mao’s theories on military affairs cannot be separated from his political thinking. In order to attain definite political goals, to defeat feudalism and imperialism, Mao adopted a certain military policy. Mao, in his opinion, was probably the foremost theorist on guerrilla warfare. “Liberated zones” are an important element in the Maoist strategy. These zones are created in areas where there was a long tradition of political and dissident movements. Mao, as always, took a dialectical approach when he said that without liberated zones, the Red Army could not extend its network; and without the Red Army, liberated zones or base areas could not also be established. In ancient societies, there was no difference between the warriors and the common people. At a later period, isolation between the two developed. Guerrilla warfare, to start with, was warfare on a small scale; it was conducted by the people either to fight oppressors or foreign enemies. So there is no difference between the people and the guerrillas. Ghosh referred to guerrilla wars waged by the Spanish people against Napoleonic aggression in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Mao time and again pointed out “*Know yourself, know thy enemy; a hundred battles, a hundred victories*”. The strategy and tactics are determined by the specific situation and, according to Mao, there was no single panacea to deal with all situations. Mao spoke of Positional Warfare as also Mobile

Warfare. In the case of the latter, we have a shifting and indefinite, floating front, and the guerrilla army moves everywhere.

In Mao’s thinking, according to the speaker, there should be concentration of a larger force to deal with numerically smaller enemy forces. Mao’s guerrillas number not just 10 or 20, but even 10,000. ‘Oppose guerrilla-ism of the Red Army while keeping the guerrilla character of it’, Mao pointed out. By ‘guerrilla-ism’, Mao meant brashness, adventurism, i.e., the decision to counter the enemy without taking the enemy situation into account; and ‘guerrilla character’ Mao referred to mobility and the ability to penetrate enemy strongholds smoothly and swiftly. Here Ghosh indirectly made a criticism of the Naxalites who mustered numerically only a handful of guerrillas to annihilate their class enemies.

The first session ended with the recitation of two poems each by Sabyasachi Deb and Srijan Sen.

The second session began with Siddhartha Guha Roy presenting his paper on “Socialist Construction in China”. He started with the Yanan model during the anti – Japanese war and pointed out that the socialist reconstruction movement started with that model in view. He argued that the classical idea of the different stages of social development was not applicable to China, as capitalism did not develop to that extent there as would be considered a capitalist country by classical theory. In fact, before the commencement of socialist construction, there were three intermediary stages: 1) 1949-53 Transition to the New Democratic Stage; 2) 1953-56 Transition from New Democracy to Socialism; 3) Post-1956 Socialist construction. Guha Roy discussed in detail reforms in agriculture and industry and the process of transformation towards the formation of People’s Communes through mutual-aid-groups and the co-operatives. He drew the attention of the audience to the fact that Mao was in favour of the existence of parties other than the CPC so that they could air their views freely. Mao had always been against regimentation and in favour of democracy, he said.

The next speaker in this session was Dipankar Chakraborty, who spoke on ‘Mao’s economic thinking and the Cultural revolution’. He said that Mao was

fortunate to have the Soviet example before him; in fact, Khrushchev was a teacher by negative example.

Mao believed that socialism had a bright future and that the state would wither away through a long-drawn process. He wanted to give a concrete form to that. But in a socialist society, there was always the possibility of the restoration of capitalism, and in order to forestall that possibility, Mao initiated the Cultural Revolution—the first of its kind in the history of socialism and one of Mao’s major contributions. Planning should be central, but it should also be democratic. Unlike the Soviet leadership, Mao believed that development of human beings could be brought about mainly by ideologically arming the masses, and not just by developing technology (*A Critique of Soviet Economics*). Chakraborty referred to Engels’ statement that in capitalist society, labour was not the source of pleasure; but it was so in the socialist society. The Cultural Revolution failed because China could not produce hundreds and thousands of such self-less new men like Wang Hais. In fact, as Mao pointed out, more and more such cultural revolutions are necessary.

The speaker assailed the so-called ‘development’ policy of the present-day WB government which caters to the interests of the foreign capital and the rich. He ended his speech by pointing out that the Cultural Revolution is dead; long live the Cultural Revolution.

After his speech, the noted singer, Pratul Mukhopadhyay sang a number of songs such as “Jete hobe bohu dure” (we have to walk many miles), “Juddhake muchhe felte bhai, amra juddhe nemechhi tai” (we have started the war to efface war from this earth for ever), the song of the Long March and others. He symbolically sang a song and called upon the audience to continue to make struggle until final victory is achieved.

The third session commenced with a speech by Prahlad Sarkar on ‘Mao’s Philosophy’. He started with the philosophical contribution of Hegel and then came down to Marx, Engels, Lenin and Mao. I do not know whether Mao had the opportunity to read Engels’s dialectics and Greater and Lesser Logic, Sarkar said;

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***On the Occasion of the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the launching of the  
People's War in Nepal  
The revolutionary masses of India send Revolutionary greetings  
for the Ongoing People's War In Nepal!***

The ongoing people's war in Nepal has just entered its tenth year. In the process it has under its control roughly 70% of the country. We the people of India hail the historic gains in the people's war in Nepal and will stand shoulder to shoulder with the struggling people of Nepal against the oppressive regime. The Indian expansionists have always used Nepal as its backyard and have exploited it ruthlessly in all ways. It has always interfered in the internal affairs of the country as a part of its expansionist ambitions.

As we go to the press reports have begun coming in of the farcical elections boycotted by both the parliamentary opposition and the Maoists. On the eve of the polls the Maoist withdrew their general strike that had paralysed most of Nepal. More than half the 4,146 seats had no candidates, and people were appointed in 22 of Nepal's 58 municipalities, even before the election, due to the lack of any opposition candidate. Though the official figure churned out says 21% participated in the voting the actual figure is much less. So, till one hour before the end of the voting in Kathmandu the turnout was less than 10%. During poll dates clashes shook the entire Himalayan Kingdom. The Indian government surprisingly condemned the elections when it itself adopts the most despicable forms in the elections in India. While the Government is butchering Naxalites in the most cruel ways in Chhathisgarh (salwa judum), AP (the Cobras, etc) and Jharkhand (Sendra, etc), as also in other parts of the country it's waxing eloquent of democracy in other countries sounds hollow. The India rulers criticised the elections soon after the US gave a similar statement. Obviously the imperialists and expansionists want to fish in the troubled water of Nepal to further their own geo-strategical interests in the region.

Meanwhile on the occasion of the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary we print the latest actions of the Maoist guerrillas of Nepal :

**MILITARY ACTIONS ROCK THE COUNTRY (MIB-11)**

After the breakdown of unilateral ceasefire, intensive military actions by the People Liberation Army (PLA) have rocked the country since then. Everyday dozens of military actions, mostly in the form of charismatic commando attack, sabotage and annihilations, have taken place in almost all the urban center of the country. The discernible new trend has been to focus the military actions more in the cities and Terai (plain) areas and carry out more of decentralized actions, which has spread panic on the enemy headquarter. Among them, commando raid in the main entrance gate of Kathmandu valley, Phaparbari of Makawanpur, Nepal Gunj and Kailali's are significant fighting at this incident.

On January 14 at 5:40 P.M, PLA stormed into the police check post (2 K.M. near unified command base camp) at Thankot, right on the periphery of the capital, Kathmandu, within minutes. Thankot is the major overland entry point to Kathmandu. PLA, also simultaneous raided on same day at the same time at Dadhikot a police post, in Bhaktapur district, second main entrance gate of Kathmandu valley. Total of 17 policemen were Dadhikot stationed during the time of offensive. Courageous attacked simultaneously after entering the police office and check post at Thankot, and 14 policemen including one Inspector were killed in these two separate and all arms and ammunitions were captured by PLA. There were over 40 police personals were stationed at the Thankot check post during the time of surprise PLA raid. These coordinated attacks launched by selected Urban Special Task Force of Bethan Memorial Fifth Brigade under the Valley Central Command. Meanwhile, the PLA launched similar attacks at ward police posts in Kirtipur Municipal office; ward no 9 of Lalitpur municipality at Chyasal, ward no 6 office of Kathmandu metropolitan at Bouddha, and Sankhu at same evening.

There has been no casualty on the part of the PLA.

This is the first major assault on criminal Gyanendra and his butcher company in the Kathmandu valley by the PLA after the breakdown of the four-month-long unilateral ceasefire. In December 2004, PLA had assaulted a police post at Sankhu at the outskirts of Kathmandu killing four police personnel. Referring to 14<sup>th</sup> Jan attacks in the Kathmandu valley, in-charge of the "Valley Central Command", Com. Ananta, in a statement issued, said, "This is the beginning of our military strategy to strike the enemy's head." Com Ananta also reiterate the party's "commitment" to work in unity with the seven parliamentary parties, the civil society, and all democratic and left forces of the country to end the "feudal monarchy" and establish a "democratic republic."

Another heroic successful attacked on 20 Jan evening (around 6:15 P.M.) in the various parts of Nepalgunj Municipality, headquarters of the mid-western old state security forces. B.P. Chock base station and Jamunaiha police post (check post near Nepal India border) were completely destroyed. At least 6 armed policemen were killed at that fight. The PLA have seized various types of 11 weapons and arms. At least six policemen were killed and three others injured when Nepalese heroes attacked two Police Check Posts in Nepalgunj, in Mid-Western Nepal. Once again, Revolutionary fighters launched massive attacks at almost all the royal security posts in Nepalgunj on Jan 24<sup>th</sup> evening. The fighters simultaneously attacked ward, district and zonal police offices, police training center, District Administration Office, along with army's posts with courageous ideological weapons at around 8.15 p.m. that evening. At least six security personnel were killed and eight others were injured in the attack. One PLA fighters attained martyrdom during that fighting. This is a second major attack within one week in Nepalgunj. As part of a series of attacks on old-

government offices, the PLA sabotaged Biratnagar Sub-Metropolitan office and MechiNagar Municipality on Jan 21. On 14<sup>th</sup> Jan night, PLA sabotage the house of Chief of RNA PyarJung Thapa at Besigau, Jorpati in the Kthmandu valley. Similarly, the PLA on 14<sup>th</sup> night bombed the old state's Dadeldhura District Development Committee office and Amargadhi Municipality simultaneously in far western region.

In some of the most heroic money-actions more than 3 million rupees were captured from government-owned commercial banks in Birendranagar, Surkhet district located just a few hundred meters away from the RNA barracks, on first week of Jan.

Similarly, revolutionary fighters have caused bomb explosions and destroyed the relay tower of the old state-owned Nepal Television at Hetauda on 18<sup>th</sup> Jan. They exploded bombs at the relay tower

located at ward no. 9 of Hetauda municipality at around 5 p. m. that evening. Within the last fifteen days, successful raids and annihilations were carried out against police outposts and old state strategic regime base office (District Development Office and Municipality Office) in Meachi to Mahakali, specially terai region and elsewhere. Dozens of police (civil and armed) and RNA soldiers were killed in successful clashes in Shyangja, Makwanpur, Nepalgunj, ect, and several informers annihilated. A series of high sabotages against the government offices in more than dozens of districts as well as Kathmandu valley on 1<sup>st</sup> January to till date and PLA broke down the spine of the reactionaries.

Apart from these innumerable decentralized actions throughout the length and breadth of the country, a major encounter took place with a 300 strong

RNA force (with ranger battalion) at Jhurijhure in Phaparbari (Makawanpur) on January 21. In one of the longest exercise of positional warfare extending overnight at 19 hours, the valiant PLA fighters successfully repulsed the RNA mercenaries, killing 64, injuring more than 50 and capturing thousands of rounds of precious ammunitions and other equipments. 22 PLA fighters with battalion assistant commissar Com. Kalyan, company Commander Com. Rabin, company vice Commander Com. Shikhar attained glorious martyrdom during the process. "The PLA have seized various types of weapons and explosives including LMG, INSAS, more than five thousands bullet and logistics from the clash site," said Com. Ananta (In-charge, Valley Central Command, CPN-Maoist and Deputy Commander PLA).

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so-called development and know what it means for them. Also they see some hope in the coming battles with the armed Naxalite force present to take on the mining mafia and their paid henchmen — in uniform and out of it. For an effective fight against this new monster there is a need of all forces, Naxalite and others, to conduct a joint uncompromising struggle to defend their right to life and a livelihood. Development must be people oriented, not imperialist oriented. Or else India will be ravaged by a new civil war of the mining mafia and their henchmen vs the local inhabitants. Kalinga Nagar would be just be a dress rehearsal of what is to come.

On dec.16<sup>th</sup> 2005 the Kasipur tribals observed their 5<sup>th</sup> Martyr's Day in memory of the three who lost their lives in police firing. This year was the 12<sup>th</sup> year of the ongoing struggle of the Kashipur tribals against the mining companies. Last year repression increased manifold. There was balnk firing, tear-gas shelling and lathi-charges three times in Kashipur and 52 people were arrested. Till today 13 people are in jail and 250 more are on the police's 'warrant list'. The local police pick up people whenever they want, on the village roads, in the weekly bazaar, on the river banks, and even when the Adivasis are working on the fields. The CRPF, the Indian Reserve Battalion and the Orissa State Armed Police are being used to crush the people's resistance.

The entire system, the district administration, the police top brass, MLAs, MPs, the ruling BJP and BJD leaders, the Congress politicians, the contractors and dalals — they are all aligned with the profit machine of the UAIL. It is the Adivasis vs the might of the bureaucracy, the political establishment and big business.

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*in the State, the ultras hurling explosives and firing shots, attacked the Arra police post killing two security personnel and wounding eight, and blew up a communication tower in Jashpur district (bordering Jharkhand). The Maoists, numbering 150, took away a huge quantity of arms and ammunition, Chhathisgarh Director General Of Police said in Raipur. He said the Maoists also blasted a communication tower in the area before fleeing, cutting off communication links with Jashpur."*

On Feb.10<sup>th</sup> eight CISF jawans were killed and nine injured when PLGA guerrillas attacked an explosives depot of the National Mineral Development Corporation in Dantewada district of Chhathisgarh. The Naxalites took away a large catche of explosive materials and weapons from the depot located at Hiroli near Kirandul. The news report said that about 400 were involved in the attack and were able to take away large quantities of Ammonium Nitrate, a high grade explosive, among other things. Besides, the press reported they took away 14 SLRs, one 9-mm pistol, two wireless sets and several rounds of ammunition.

No matter what the level of the repression the ruthless forces of the State are bound to be defeated. The enemy forces represent a microscopic section of the population while the Naxalites stand with the huge masses of the poor. Their struggle is for a just cause, so it is bound to triumph. In the battle there may be ups and downs, but victory is assured. By attacking the entire populace it is proven yet again that they enjoy no support of the masses, who are firmly with the Maoists even under these extreme conditions. Besides they will push the entire masses to be direct participants in the people's war as they will be left with no other alternative. Even with a total black out in the media they cannot hide the blood-thirsty nature of the Salwa Judum. Thousands and lakhs throughout the country and world are bound to react to the extreme brutalities being perpetuated there. This will further turn more sections of the people against the government forces. There is urgent need for all progressives and democrats in India and abroad to come out in condemnation of the brutalities being perpetuated in Chhathisgarh and support the ongoing people's war in India.

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but there is a clear continuity from Engels to Mao. 'On Contradiction', 'On Practice', 'Where do correct ideas come from' and 'On the correct handling on contradictions among the people' are some of Mao's major contributions to world philosophy, according to Sarkar.

The speech was followed by the enactment of a short drama by Amal Roy and Bandana Roy entitled 'Prothom Juddha' (First Battle). It was concerned with Mao's boyhood days and his fight against patriarchy.

Kanchankumar spoke at the fag end of

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**base areas are the problems faced in the women's movement. We must allot more time for those who can read. The leadership committees must plan to send women to MAS (Mobile Academic School) and MOPOS (Mobile Political School); so that women can pay more attention to study. However, I have the opinion that the women must have more initiative to achieve a qualitative change in all aspects. We have to take serious effort for the struggle to change the world outlook of men and women.**

**Q7: Could you tell us the role of women in militia in arming the masses?**

**A: There is no militia unit in Dandakaranya without women. There is no PLGA force without women.** Women are 40 to 60 per cent of the main, secondary and base forces of our PLGA units. They are taking up responsibilities in the *gram rakshak dal*, platoon, *janathana sarkar*, LOS, LGS and other such formations. They do

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time, the Naxalites have gone far ahead of Bhagat Singh, but they represent similar democratic and revolutionary traditions. Besides, Bhagat Singh could not properly evolve and develop his views fully as he was martyred at a very very young age.

But not only the Maoists, all democrats and progressives can in some way lay claim to the heritage of Bhagat Singh. Let all anti-imperialist forces in the country come out with huge celebrations of Bhagat Singh turning them into a gigantic force

the session on 'Mao's contribution to culture'. Mao's writing on Yen'an forum, in his opinion, was essentially the product of the summing up of the experience of the revolutionary movements in China and other parts of the world. This culture is for the workers, peasants and the Red Army. Then he referred to the role played by the writers, artists and other cultural workers of Andhra Pradesh who, in the true Maoist spirit, integrated themselves with the peasants of Dandakaranya, the coal miners of Singareni and reflected their rich experience in their creative works such as 'Rago', 'Aranyakanya' etc. Mao spoke of

various work starting from sentry duty to being commanders of the assault teams. In all the levels of formations they are members. They are the leaders for some units.

The majority of the members have ordinary education. They are from a very backward area. This is a major limitation at the initial stage. This is seen in regard to delivering various responsibilities of social consciousness and in conducting revolution. Anyway, our women comrades are working with a firm will and the Party is imparting training. Thus they are able to develop their responsibilities in all spheres.

Whatever the level, many women comrades are slightly hesitant until they participate in two or three incidents and raids. They have certain limitations in applying their presence of mind. We can overcome these limitations only through intensifying the war. In the past two years our power of resistance and the role of militia have increased qualitatively.

against the present policies of imperialist globalization adopted by the comprador rulers of the country. They may do this both jointly and also independently. **Let the Bhagat Singh celebrations go from the confines of passive meetings and seminars to agitation and propaganda against the imperialists and their comprador agents within the country. Let us hit at symbols of foreign domination and create an massive anti-imperialist awakening in the country. This alone will be a true tribute to the memory of Bhagat Singh and his**

popularization and uplifting the standard of literature and these writers in parts of India integrated these two aspects in a creative manner. The roles played by Vempatapu Satyanarayanam, Subbarao Panigrahi, Sri Sri, Cherabanda Raju are notable examples. The speaker felt that works such as these should be done in Bengal also.

The session ended with thanksgiving on behalf of the committee by Siddhartha Saha with the promise that the proceedings of this day-long seminar would be published by the Mao Tse-tung Smaran Committee in future. n n

**Q: Any last words?**

I would like to say a few words in the end.

Mao says that human consciousness plays a decisive role in any place in war, in his article on Protracted People's war. This has happened in China and in the whole world. It is going to happen in our country. So intensifying the war and developing the number of women in all the departments of the militia and PLGA as good fighters is one of our most important tasks.

The necessity of guerilla war would increase in future. We are working for the forming of base areas, and developing the PLGA into PLA. On the other hand the ruling classes are deploying huge forces to destroy the organized capacity of the masses. Ours is a People's war. It is a just war. So the masses would gain the final victory. The party would gain the final victory. We are half of this. We are half of the struggle and half of the sky. n n

**heroic colleagues.** While the reactionaries and revisionists confine themselves to mock functions let the progressives and revolutionaries take the celebrations to the streets.

Let these celebrations and mass anti-imperialist awakening begin from March 23 2006 and build up to a rising crescendo of huge countrywide activities culminating on Sept.28 2007, the birth centenary of Bhagat Singh.

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## ***Women's movement in Dandakaranya – Half of struggle and half of sky***

{An interview with a member of the Dandakaranya Special Zonal Committee;  
Comrade Maina printed on the Occasion of March 8<sup>th</sup>}

**Question :** Would you please explain the main changes in the women's movement in Dandakaranya?

**Answer:** The women's movement of Dandakaranya is nearly two decades old. Throughout these years thousands of women have become part of the movement either directly or indirectly. The backward adivasi areas are revolutionized with various kinds of struggles and with various forms of organizations. Each and every aspect of the people's lives is linked with the struggle for the seizure of state power. The struggling consciousness and political understanding of the masses is increasing and this in turn has increased their active role in revolution. The Bastar women's movement started a little later than that of the Gadchiroli (Maharashtra) women's movement.

The readers are aware of the forms of struggle we had adopted in the initial stages of the movement. I shall explain the main changes in the women's movement.

Women now hold meetings independently. They not only mobilize in thousands in rallies but also stand in the forefront. They talk with non-adivasis fearlessly. They oppose police atrocities. They question the domination of the tribal heads. If the husbands torture them or if the parents force them into marriage they complain to the organization and discuss it in their meetings. None of this was possible in their old life. These are just a few examples of change in the past few decades of the women's movement in Dandakaranya. Earlier, when the women did not have the knowledge of struggle they suffered silently. Readers of revolutionary literature are familiar with the women of Dandakaranya through the novel *Rago*. Now the Ragos have revolted and become Goldflowers, Nirmalas, the recent Karunas and many others. As the revolt started the chains

started breaking. By the mid 1980s, the women's organizations took good form; and by the mid 1990s they gained more strength.

With the understanding gained in this process the women now know that men must become part of housework and child rearing. They know that woman too go for organizational work like the man. If only one can leave the house, they know that it is necessary to discuss democratically and decide who has to go. Earlier the women were not allowed into the places where the harvest was stored. Now this tradition is not seen. The fight for wearing blouses was a turning point in the women's lives. In the areas where the Revolutionary People's Committees were formed, the men have been democratized and they now understand that they have to discuss with their wives before doing anything that involve both. Readers are aware that land pattas are issued by the RPCs in the name of both men and women in the newly occupied lands.

Now no one can impose the age-old traditions on the women. Perhaps these changes have not as yet occurred in society outside the struggling areas. Here the picture has changed. Here women have the right to assert power. They would demand it. Forcible marriages are almost non-existent. Women are part of all kinds of struggle and have even become leaders. The Bastar adivasi woman, who earlier never participated in a rally independently, who never led one such, is now enlightened with the consciousness of organization. Her revolutionary political consciousness has developed. They are now gheraoing the police station for the dead bodies of martyrs. They play an active combat role in ambushes. Due to this increased consciousness of organization, women are mobilizing into organizational activities, starting from the village level up to the state level. They

are not only questioning the civil and the police officials, the Bastar women are blowing the siren of struggle as an indispensable part of the present revolutionary history in India.

The police are unleashing all kinds of repressive methods to discourage women from participating in the movement. They are assaulting them sexually, they are misbehaving with them and are going to the extent of killing them in fake encounters. Of late in the so-called Salwa Judum women activists have been gang raped, tortured and then brutally killed. To contain their assertion tribal heads are especially making ill propaganda against the activist women. But none of these could stop the women from participating in the revolution.

Women have been tempered in the difficulties of guerilla life. In the initial stage of their recruitment, they felt they would work only in their native areas. But now they are prepared to go wherever the party assigns them, with revolutionary responsibility. They are becoming professional revolutionaries. They are fighting heroically and are attaining leadership positions.

The women even question the discrimination they face in guerilla life in order to gain their rights. In the past, though they did not understand what elections meant, a few people voted. Now, they are in the forefront in implementing the election boycott as a form of struggle. This indicates the increased political consciousness in them. We feel this is an important change. We observe that women actively respond to each and every call of the Party. Women play a considerable role in the struggles, starting from protest against imperialism to that for the construction of martyr memorials.

So we are able to sustain the movement in the struggle areas and are able to realise the establishment of liberated area as the main objective. The

domination of the tribal heads and the government bureaucracy and their domination/authority have been destroyed in the main areas of the movement. We are enriching the Revolutionary People's Committees (janathana sarkar) that are the embryonic form of democratic people's political power as the real alternative. Men and women have an equal role in this process. As far as state power is concerned women have an indispensable role in all the organs of the people's power, the village level party and the militia units. There is a major change in lives with the seizure of state power.

**Q:** What is the role of women in the RPCs? What kind of responsibilities are they taking up?

**A:** In traditional Adivasi areas women do not have any authority and say in public matters. A Woman is a victim of the chains of tribal customs. She does work in the fields, cuts wood in the forest, and works day and night. But she does not have any power. As the Kranthikari Adivasi Mahila Sangam strengthened and women started leading their struggles, the eyes of the women in the forests opened. They became part of the people's war. The results of this war are seen in the *janathana sarkar* (Revolutionary People's Committee), that are the embryonic form of the New Power.

Women take up various responsibilities in each and every RPC unit. Some women are even holding the post of president in the *janathana sarkar*. In some places they are holding the post of vice-president. In addition to this the women are working in the various departmental committees of the RPC. Whatever responsibility they take up they are making distinct efforts to fulfill their responsibilities.

Let us take the example of the Jungle Bachao Committee. The members of this committee take care of the forest. They check regularly to make sure that no one has cut the forests without the permission of the committee. They also check whether anyone is taking away timber and other such forest produce. The checking done by the forest

department in other areas and that by the RPC is fundamentally different. It has a different class perspective. The forest department harasses and loots the poor while they join with the tribal elites to illegally cut wood and make fortunes. The RPCs impose restrictions on cutting considering the environmental damage. It is nothing but an example of people's power being asserted in the interests of the people.

Today, we have definitely laid the seeds for a new democratic power. The red guerilla base areas (in embryonic form) in the country are the first of its kind. We introduced the form of the present *janathana sarkars* taking into account the positive aspects of traditional Adivasi society (negating the negative) and destroying the ruling class mechanism and the state structure. Women are in the forefront of this struggle. Democratic consciousness rises through this struggle. Look at the situation in the other areas. Here feudalism and imperialism have crushed democracy under its iron heel. We have to destroy these two mountains all over the country. We have made the men and women stand firm in this struggle. They own and assert the new state power to an extent. In this process we have revolutionized the family. Husband, wife and children, all are an indispensable part of revolution.

Women are part of the judicial department too. It is unimaginable in the traditional Adivasi and feudal societies for women to give judgments. Participation of women in health, education, medicine, protection and other such departments have helped develop their organized strength. It helped them overcome an inferiority complex. We see this assertion in many spheres, due to the assertion of the New Power.

**Q: What are the changes in the village culture? How far were they accepted among the masses?**

**A:** As a part of building the movement, we have revolutionized people's thoughts and are making efforts to enhance New Democratic values. Scientific knowledge is necessary in

order to achieve this. We are working in an extremely backward area. Market, transport and other modern facilities are comparatively poor. In the last two decades market relations and transport facilities have increased in a big way. The influence of feudal and imperialist culture is increasing in the areas near the roads and the markets.

Chathisgarhi, Bengali, Telugu and Oriya cultures are now influencing Bastar from four sides. This apart bourgeois culture is also infiltrating. Sangh parivar and its frontal organizations entered the forest areas in many forms in the past decade. Missionaries and mandirs started making their presence felt in all these areas. Rama, Sankara and Christ are seen. Some have changed their surnames with this propaganda. In the past few years, the situation revolutionized people's thoughts in order to control the culture of the dominant tribes and decide what is necessary and what is not. The organizations conducted struggles against expenditures for the village priests and the quacks preaching blind superstitions. They closed the doors to reason in the name of domination and traditions.

**Q. How could you make the adivasi people celebrate International Women's Day?**

**A:** As the revolutionary movement strengthened and the people participated in the movement more and more under the leadership of the Party the women's organization and the movement strengthened. In the decade of the 1990s, the party guided the women so that their role increased in the movement. As a result people developed the understanding that if there are **no women there would be no revolution**. We could make the people understand that women are half of the revolution. And we did not achieve this only through propaganda. We turned this issue of propaganda into struggles in practice. This struggle now enlightened the women.

When non-advasis came to Bailadilla and abused the adivasi women, the government took up tear shedding

reforms. It opened centers for them. But the decaying culture only increased. It did not help the women stand up on their own legs. It did not give them the necessary scientific knowledge. Now, the path we chose gave confidence to the women that we can eliminate oppression on women through struggle. International Women's Day penetrated in the hearts of the masses as the day of women in struggle, as a part of this enlightenment.

Repression was unleashed in various forms. But the people always stood against it. The KAMS alone did not achieve this success. The PLGA and all the revolutionary mass organizations jointly opposed them under the leadership of the Party. In this process the KAMS strengthened. They were participating in the class struggle and as a part of it we organized and enlightened the women to oppose the oppression on them. We thus brought forward 8<sup>th</sup> March as an important day of the KAMS programme. For the past 15 years we have been deciding the theme of the 8<sup>th</sup> March program each year and conduct seminars, meetings and rallies on that day. Once it started we saw that it continued unhindered. So, though the repression increased, the party and the masses had the initiative and upper hand. We understood the situation and adopted the mass line with flexibility. As a result of this, 8<sup>th</sup> March symbolised the form of women's struggle. We are aware that revisionists and bourgeois parties conduct 8<sup>th</sup> March in the cities and the plain areas. But we cannot expect these celebrations to mould the women as fighters. Even in the parliamentary form they do not give them the necessary consciousness to take up programmes. Moreover these forms do not break with the domination of patriarchy and do not allow women to stand on their own legs. We see this in each and every place. Feminists and the NGOs are bringing forward anarchism, liquidating their mental preparedness and developing opposition towards males, etc. We have to mainly develop a political struggle on all these issues. We must fight against the bad tendencies. We have to fight for

the solution of the problems.

Throughout the past decade women in Bastar have been increasingly participating in struggles. The period between 2003 and 2005 indicates the period of a rising revolutionary movement. People's armed resistance increased unprecedentedly and progressed forward. The wide mass base improved through the active role of the masses in the struggle. The movement did not gain the upper hand through sympathy. This applies to the women's movement too.

A few days before 8<sup>th</sup> March, scores of batches take up political propaganda campaigns. Last year (2005) propaganda was conducted in more than one thousand villages. In South Bastar alone we could mobilize around 20,000 women. The number of women mobilized in North Bastar, Maad and West Bastar is no less. On the whole nearly 60 – 70 thousand women came for the meetings. However much the attendance, the meetings take place secretly. There are police camps and one or two police stations in a radius of 4 to 10 kilometers. Right from the beginning meetings would be conducted without any information going to the police. All the KAMS meetings, initial meetings of the organizations and conferences are being conducted secretly without the knowledge of the enemy. The executive committees formed from the village level to the division level work secretly. Conferences are conducted at three levels in an assigned form and the executive committees are functioning. Women's rights and their participation in the revolution would be the agenda in all these activities.

The KAMS propagates the slogans to be taken among the masses on the occasion of 8<sup>th</sup> March. For example this time it took up the two issues of government reforms and the revolutionary alternative, and for developing the role of men and women in the cooperative teams formed for the development of agriculture. The slogans are formulated according to the necessities of the war and the main resolutions of the day. The

implementation of these all depends on the strength of the movement, organizational capacity and the initiative of the KAMS.

**Q: What are the problems you are facing in taking up the war with the enemy forces in the guerilla war and on the other hand taking up the struggle on patriarchy.**

**A:** In the past it was said *muthina maata mulaku* (meaning keep aside the wife's opinions). Man was dominant in all family relations. Now wife-beating, beating children, etc. are relatively less than in other areas. In society a woman is looked down upon as a part of social oppression. This is the main aspect in the contradiction between men and women. Initially, that is in the first half of the 1980s, KAMS was not formed. Masses (men and women) participated in the class struggle together. They started joining the people's army and the Party. It is not easy to start a women's organization without forming any organization or struggle.

Women are part of the wage struggle for tendu leaves, road labor, harvest, transplantation, wages in the bamboo fields, etc. But the men opposed forming women's organizations. Women too were reluctant or would say the men would not agree and such other things. The members of the organization too opposed encouraging the women members of their families to join the organization. It took two to four years to change these opinions. This is of course a part of the contradiction between man and the woman.

Earlier men never received the opinions, suggestions and the activities of women in the leadership in the Party, squad and mass organizations. Most men would not accept them. There was a lot of discussion on these issues. There was education. There was constant struggle and criticism and self-criticism. To an extent this helped to solve the contradiction. Now women are respected for whatever responsibility she holds. Her opinions are received in a serious manner.

Coming to power the contradiction between man and the woman is the main

one as earlier on ly male authority existed. Now we are solving this too. **Strengthening the women's movement, equality, equal status to women, authority and any such thing cannot be achieved without struggle. We are gaining these rights only through struggle. But our first and immediate aim is to intensify war against the enemy, strengthen the PLGA, build liberated areas and build the state. The struggles and forms of struggles of the women's movement are formulated according to this.**

The contradiction between man and woman is a friendly one. We adopt the attitude to solve it in time and in a proper manner. We brought women to participate in the revolutionary people's committees in the village, area, district or any other level. Women are participating in all these. If they were not made part of these they would fight. They make the concerned person realize and give them responsibility. They criticize.

We have to understand one more issue in this. There is an inferiority complex among women. Though there are changes in struggle, study and consciousness, there is a lot of patriarchal ideology among the women. So many of them hesitate to take up responsibilities. They have to struggle against these thinking so that they could take up the responsibility. Constant efforts are necessary to overcome this. The Party is taking up education campaigns to rectify this. This has to continue and improve. Women's organization and training should be made a part of the women's movement in all the areas across the country.

Let us see how we are linking the war against patriarchy with the people's war. The erstwhile People's War took up a rectification and education campaign against the evils in the party. Patriarchy was one of the evils. In view of the importance to this issue we took up a special campaign. Later the members of the DAKMS and KAMS, i.e., both the men and women participated in the political propaganda

and education programme. They explained the specific form of patriarchy in this society. Two thirds of the participants of these meetings were women and one third were men. We took up the campaign in nearly 400 villages. ***No women, no revolution. We must eradicate patriarchy, demand equal rights to men and women, making women part of each and every work.*** These were the main slogans of our campaign.

Women are part of all the military formations formed for the protection of the village from the enemy offensive. Now there is no satirical comments on women that they are weak or that they cannot work for revolution. They are part of all kinds of actions starting from bandhs to ambushes. When the women are not made part of the struggle in a democratic manner we take up struggle and rectification to achieve a higher level of unity. In facing the enemy all stand united. **It is said that we cannot gain victory on patriarchy without the victory of revolution and that we cannot concentrate on this issue right now. This is not correct. The struggle against patriarchy increases to the extent to which the class struggle and war rise. We cannot separate it mechanically.**

**Q : What are the problems and progress in training women politically and militarily?**

**A:** We have considerable experience in mobilizing women in large numbers so that they become half of the movement. Basing on this we took up many programs. Right from the beginning the Party has the understanding that we have to specially concentrate to improve the role of women. So we made such efforts in DK too with specific plans. We now see the results.

As a part of organizing women we formed organizations where they were not in existence. We reconstructed wherever they were weak. We strengthened the weak ones. We developed the village, area (range), division and state units. The organizations are carrying out their

activities amidst enemy repression and are being tempered. Now there are more part-timer comrades working like professional revolutionaries who are able to work regularly and guide the respective units. Professional revolutionaries are taking the responsibility of the mass organizations, PLGA and other such responsibilities in the Party. In the past decade there have been a lot of changes. These changes now took a leap and speeded up the development process. Thus the participation of women too increased. We conducted special women's meetings, special military camps for women, political classes, women's magazines were brought out and knowledge was imparted through education schools, MAS and MOPOS. All this developed the consciousness of women. Women are increasingly coming into the leadership of the party, military and mass organizations. Women who were ordinary members have been made members of Area Committees. A few are on the Special Zonal Committee too. They are working as section deputies, platoon commanders. They are holding responsibilities at the village leadership to the state leadership and in various departments. They are working in the RPCs as presidents, as staff members in the technical field and such other work. On the whole, these results were possible due to the efforts in the past twenty years. The Party made relentless efforts to develop the consciousness of men and women and planted the seeds for this leap. The seeds have now flowered.

**There are yet certain problems to solve. Mainly women do not have a considerable role in the theoretical and political fields. They have a positive role in implementing the policy of the Party and the decisions taken in the committee meetings. However, we have to develop more role of women to play in decision making. Women are half of the combat forces but their fighting capacity and war skills have still to increase. To become more and more a part in the people's war and to understand the problems in building**

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## ***Support the Just Struggle of the Baloch People Against Pak Terror***

In December 2005 the Pakistan Army began massive attacks against the Balochi nationalists. They attacked by land and air bombing villages. Using combat jets, helicopter gunships and artillery, the military has been pounding tribal guerrillas in the gas-rich and strategically crucial Balochistan since mid-December. Hundreds have so far been killed. The Sui gas fields are said to have the largest reserves in the world. The crackdown coincided with the announcement of plans to privatize two gas distribution firms in the province.

The Balochis have been facing a step-motherly treatment from the Pak rulers ever since the formation of Pakistan. The Balochi population is divided between Pakistan and Iran, but they consider themselves neither Pakistani nor Persian. In the Pakistan section they have a population of 5 lakhs. In all these years they have been deprived of all political, social, cultural and economic rights. They have little educational facilities and have been kept in a state of backwardness. There are no Balochis in the top bureaucracy and of the 52 secretary level posts 31 are from Punjab alone. According to the secretary of the Baloch Nationalist Jamuri Votari Party, Aga Shahid, both Pakistani and Irani secret police routinely arrest and torture Balochi youth, students and political activists. Over the years thousands have been killed. In the Pakistan part of Balochistan there are over 600 check posts and over 60,000 military forces present.

Musharraf has further alienated the Balochis by sidelining mainstream parties in favour of Islamists. He has alienated both the old non-religious tribal leadership as well as the new secular urban middle classes of Balochistan, who see no economic or political place for themselves in the present military-Islamic dispensation.

Balochistan is not only rich in gas but is strategically placed; the Iran-Pakistan-India pipeline will have to pass through it. The gas resources are in the control of Anglo-American consortiums. India has always been trying to fish in the troubled waters of Balochistan as part of the Indian ruler's expansionist ambitions. While

brutally suppressing all nationality movements in India they make a pretense of supporting the Baloch nationality movement with the single intention of destabilizing Pakistan. The Indian rulers and RAW have been arming and funding sections of the Balochi nationalists, to serve their interests in the region.

The origins of the problem date back to 1947. In that year the Khan of Kalat, the quasi-autonomous monarch who ruled Balochistan under the umbrella of the British Empire, chose independence. While Pakistan troops moved into the region in March 1948, the Khan of Kalat dragged his feet on signing the Document of Accession to Pakistan. Pakistan settled the issue by sending two combat jets to strafe the Khan's palace.

By the middle of the 1950s the Prince of Kalat launched the People's Party representing a new Baloch nationalism that cut across tribal and linguistic lines. In 1972 the People's Party and the NWFP-based National Awami Party allied with the Islamist Jamaat-ul-Ulema-i-Islam to oppose the centralizing regime of President Bhutto. Having won the elections, the alliance sought to increase the representation of the ethnic Baloch in government and demanded greater control over development and industrialization. Bhutto resisted and matters came to a head in 1973.

In Feb. 1973, Pakistan Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI) discovered a consignment of arms allegedly shipped by Iraq's Embassy to members of Mari tribe. President Bhutto promptly dismissed the provincial government; Baloch nationalist responded with a full-blown guerrilla warfare. Led by the Marxist Balochi People's Liberation Front and Balochi Students Organisation one 55,000-strong Baloch irregular force fought six army divisions, backed by air strikes. By the time the fighting ended, with the overthrow of the Bhutto government, an estimated 5,300 guerrillas and 3,300 soldiers were dead, along with tens of thousands of civilians. The general Zia-ul-Haq regime arrived at a political settlement with some Baloch leaders.

Over the next few decades, pipelines began carrying gas from Sui to distant

Karachi, and work began on a massive port at Gwadar. But the benefits mostly went to the migrant Punjabis and Sindhis who arrived in hordes. Balochis continued to remain in a state of backwardness (e.g education of women was just 7%; the lowest in Pakistan).

Tension again began to grow when the military regime saw that Islamists came to power in the 2002 elections, further marginalizing the Balochis. The tribal leaders began to hit back. A succession of attacks by the Baloch National Army, notably against the Chinese engineers working at Gwadar, followed the 2002 elections. Preparations to develop a full-fledged guerrilla war began. An investigative report showed that well-organised 'farari' camps were running, where hundreds were being trained in military skills.

Conflict again flared up in early 2005 when four Pak soldiers raped a doctor employed with by the Pakistan Petroleum at the Sui gas field. Bungti tribesmen then attacked the gas field. Other tribes joined in hitting the port of Gwadar as well as military facilities and railway lines. Pak forces retaliated ruthlessly. Fighting has been escalating since January 2005 when tribesmen stormed the Sui gas fields, which produce an estimated 45% of Pakistan's total gas consumption. Bugti guerrillas fired 430 rockets and 60 mortars at the Pakistan Petrochemicals Ltd production facilities in Sui killing eight people and disrupting supplies for over one month.

The current military assault was provoked by a rocket attack on a rally held by President Musharraf in the town of Kohlu. A day later guerrillas opened fire on a helicopter carrying the Inspector General of the Frontier Corps, Major general Shujat Zamir Dar and his deputy. Soon after these attacks, Frontier Corps paramilitary and regular army units, backed by helicopter gunships launched a full scale attack on the guerrillas. Hundreds have so far died in the fighting, mainly civilians. The aircraft have been strafing and bombing either side of the Sui and Loti valleys. Two army brigades stationed at Sui were pressed into action and 25 tanks have also been called in.

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## ***Calls to Release Political Prisoners - Reports***

Sulekha

After a long time, on 29<sup>th</sup> December 2005, the city of Kolkata was witness to a lively procession in support of the long-standing demand for the release of political prisoners who are still languishing in the different jails of West Bengal. These include top Maoist leaders like PB member Com. Sushil Roy (Barun, Shome), CC member Com. Patit Pawan Haldar (Tapas) and SC member Com Chandi Sarkar. The procession started from College Square, went to Sealdah, crossed the fly-over, and then took S.N.Banerjee Road to reach Esplanade East. The total number of people who joined totalled something above 1500. It was impressive not because of the total number of people, but because of its composition. In fact, people from different strands of life and organizations—those who had never joined or were not called upon to join the Bandi Mukti Committee earlier, came to the fore to raise their democratic voice in support of the release of those who sacrificed a lot either to bring about a better social order or to improve the condition of the people of their nationalities. Besides various Naxalite organizations, National Alliance for Peoples' Movement, APDR, RYL, AISA, which normally join such efforts, a large number of new organizations also joined hands. The Madrasa Students' Union, Hawker Sangram Committee, Gana Unnayan O Jana-Adhikar Sabgram Samiti, Nepali Jana-Adhikar Suraksha Samiti (Bharat), Anagrasar Muslim Samaj and others. People came from different districts including North Bengal. First the memorandum to be submitted to the governor of West Bengal was read out in its original English version and then rendered into Bengali. The speakers from the new organizations were mainly invited to speak and they highlighted the different forms of state terrorism that are being resorted to by the West Bengal police force. Those who sat on the dais were members of the prisoners' families. A team of 5 members went to Raj Bhawan to talk to the governor and hand over the memorandum. Such a movement created enthusiasm among the people who crowded on both sides of the streets as the procession passed by with participants shouting

slogans. One could expect civil rights movements of different types in the days to come. The BMC circulated copies of the Memorandum among the media-persons. We have got a copy of it and are reproducing it, as that would give our readers some idea of what type of state terrorism is being pursued in WB under the 'more developed' left-front government.

Besides this we also produce a copy of the PUCL (People's Union of Civil Liberties) Report on the incarceration and inhuman treatment meted out to political prisoners. Ironically all such atrocities is not going on in merely the BJP/Congress-ruled states, but under the so-called left front government led by the CPM. These two reports bring out glaringly the extent of the brutalities being perpetuated by the CPM, with little difference from what is going on in the rest of the country. In Some cases it is even more widespread due to the CPM using its wide cadre base as a mafia force and for setting up an extensive police-informer network:

### **Memorandum of the Bandi Mukti Committee submitted to the Governor of West Bengal on 29 December 2005:**

It is a matter of deep concern to us that for the last four years and more, the Government of West Bengal has been pursuing a policy of ruthless state repression against their political opponents such as the 'Maoists', 'Kamtapuris', SIMI activists and others and arrested and tortured about two thousand and five hundred people, most of whom are poor villagers, on the charge of their supposed association with those parties. It is pertinent to point out that none of the organizations such as the CPI(Maoist), KPP, KLO and SIMI is banned in West Bengal. The recent arrests and incarceration of 59 Greater Coochbehar activists have only added to the long list of political prisoners. The government has targeted particularly the CPI(M-L) PW and the MCC—now called CPI(Maoist) for marginalization and elimination from the

political map of West Bengal, as has been made amply clear by the chief-cum-home minister in his budget speeches of 2001, 2003 and 2005—and in his speeches made from time to time on numerous occasions. What is of grave concern to civil society is that in order to achieve that 'objective', the government has given the widest possible power to police and para-military forces to arrest, intimidate, implicate anybody, thereby encouraging the policy of impunity to delinquent police personnel and arrogantly brushing aside all criticism against the repressive policy. The government has been attacking the political and organizations and, as a result, poor villagers have been facing severest repression for the last few years, even leading to deaths due to starvation in certain areas of West Medinipur.

That the police forces of West Bengal are showing no respect for the law of the land and are trampling underfoot all constitutional and democratic norms .....

#### **Our Demands**

1. All forms of police repression and brutality should be stopped.
2. All cases against prisoners, arrested on political grounds—whether released on bail or still in jail—should be withdrawn, and they should be released immediately and unconditionally.
3. The status of political prisoner should be granted to all political prisoners, irrespective of their political beliefs and activities.
4. Adequate compensation should be given to the families of Bisadu Barman and Chitta Roy, who were killed in police firing on 20 September 2005 during the Greater Coochbehar movement and that the state should look after the education of their children.
5. BMC representatives should be allowed to meet the political prisoners in all the prisons of WB.

Chhotan Das  
Convenor, BMC,  
Kolkata, 29 December 2005.

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# ***State Repression on Political Opposition in West Bengal***

*{Report of fact finding by a team of human rights, democratic rights and civil liberties organisations December 27 -30, 2005}*

## **Background**

From the middle of 2005 several leading political figures belonging to opposition political groups and parties, specially those belonging to CPI (Maoist) and their frontal organisations were arrested by the West Bengal police. None of those arrested had any specific case registered against them or was named in any FIR lodged at any police stations. This is in continuation with the police onslaught on political opposition going on in the state, which intensified since the middle of 2002 as a result of which about 3000 opposition political workers and common people were arrested.

In this context several Human Rights, Democratic Rights and Civil Liberties organisations from all over India decided to conduct a Fact finding on the nature of arrests, conditions of the political prisoners in WB Jails and detention centers. Accordingly nine journalists, lawyers and Human Rights activists from seven such organisations visited two WB jails and three places of arrests/police raids in West Midnapore, Nadia and Hooghly Districts.

### **Programme of the team**

The team was able to meet four Under Trial prisoners lodged in Jhargram Upa Sangsodhanagar (sub Jail) and heard the accounts of their arrests and treatment at the hands of police and in the jails.

Interestingly the District police authorities recorded the whole proceedings on video and several media persons were also present. While the team was still appreciating the openness exhibited by the Jhargram Sub-Jail authorities, it received a jolt when the Nadia District Jail authorities at Krishnangore refused to allow the team to meet any of the several political prisoners lodged there. After an hour's wait at the jail gates, the team was told that as per instructions of the higher authorities' the jail authorities are unable to allow the team to meet any prisoner. The team visited the place at Madras Lines, Konnagar, Hooghly District from where Shri Sushil Ray (described by the police as a Polit Bureau Member) and Patitpaban

Halder (described by the police as State Committee Secretary) of the CPI (Maoist) were arrested. The team also visited two villages — Kathgora in Tehatta Subdivision, Nadia District from where Shri Chandi Sarkar (described by the police as a leader of the Kishan Majdur Sangram Samity was arrested and village Mathurapur in the same area where police atrocities are going on for the last several months. At those two places several hundred people assembled on hearing the news of the teams visit to narrate and complain about police atrocities. Due to lack of time the team could not give a patient hearing to all those assembled.

The team also talked to the lawyers defending Sushil Ray and others in Jhargram SDJM Court.

### **Findings and observations**

**1. Role of the police while conducting arrests :** In all the cases looked into by the team, the police flouted all legal provisions and Supreme Court directives.

(i) Shri Sushil Ray and Shri Patitpaban Halder were arrested at about 7.30 AM on 21 May, 2005 while they boarded a Rickshaw emerging from a hutment of Madras Lines, PS Uttarpara, Hooghly. They were pounced upon by four men in mufti and forced into a waiting car.

(ii) The happenings were corroborated by local people, whom the team met on 27 December night and who declined to identify themselves for obvious reasons. Immediately both were blindfolded and after over twelve hours journey Shri Ray's blindfolds were removed, when he found himself at a BSF camp in a Jungle area. In the midway Shri Halder was removed to another car, keeping blindfolded. While keeping blindfolded both were continually interrogated by many people.

(iii) At the BSF camp Shri Ray was accused to be an ISI agent. They were produced before the SDJM, Jhargram on 24 May as accused in Belpahari PS FIR No. 28/05 dated 23.5.05 u/s 120B/121A/122/123/124A showing them to have been arrested from village Tamajuri in Belpahari

PS on 23.5.05 at 9.45 PM.

(iv) Shri Santosh Debnath was arrested on 29 May from a street at Konnagar at 2 PM. He was similarly blindfolded and taken to many places and finally on 2 June produced before the SDJM, Jhargram as accused in the above case. The FIR submitted by the police on 24 May did not name Santosh Debnath among the 11 named accused.

(v) Sk. Jakir Hossain said that he was 'kidnapped' on 22 June at 11 AM from the Sovabazar Crossing, Kolkata while he was about to board a Bus. He too was forced into a car, blindfolded and taken to a forest. He too was produced before the SDJM three days later. In all the above cases with some exceptions in the case of Chandi Sarkar.

The police blatantly lied about the date of arrest, place of arrest and situation of arrest.

All the arrested persons were kept in illegal detention for three to five days and were not produced before a judicial officer within 24 hours of arrest as per rules and laws.

No Memo of arrests was prepared, relatives were not informed about the arrests and no medical test was conducted as per rules and laws.

**2. Interrogation and treatment while in police custody :** From 21 May to 24 May before producing at the Court and again from 24 May AN to 6 June during police custody—almost for 16 days Shri Ray was kept blindfolded except for one or one half hours a day. While keeping blindfolded he was interrogated day and night and was not allowed to sleep. A battery of senior officers from all over WB, Jharkhand, Delhi, Orissa and probably from other states conducted the interrogation at the Special Control Room at the office of the SP, Midnapore. The IG from Jharkhand while interrogating threatened him to keep him behind the bars for the rest of his life. Shri Ray said that he apprehends to be killed by the Jharkhand police. Shri Ray said that though the police did not assault him physically, the whole 16 days of police custody is a nightmare of physical and

mental torture and all the senior police officers including SP, Midnapore took part in this torture.

Shri Halder, Shri Debnath and Sk Hossain narrated their similar experiences of treatment at the custody. In addition all three were brutally assaulted all along. In addition to kicks, blows and verbal abuses time to time during interrogation they were given the 'cherai' treatment in which legs of the victim are stretched side ways by two assaulters in a straight line so as to inflict unbearable pain at the groin and anal areas.

The team was unable to meet Chandi Sarkar and others lodged in Nadia Dist. Jail, but learned from Mr. Sarkar's wife Sm Mahamaya Sarkar and relatives and friends of the others that they too were severely assaulted during police custody. Shri Sarkar alleged before the SDJM, Krishnanagore on 2 Oct when he was produced before him that he was assaulted in the face with shoes by the Nadia SP Rajsekharan himself.

The police did not abide by the legal stipulations of health examination by an authorised physician immediately after taking a person in custody. Neither the legally binding provisions of health checkup every 48 hours during police custody were adhered to. As a result Shri Ray developed a high blood pressure and had to be transferred to the Jail Hospital and then to the NRS Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata immediately after the end of the police custody.

They were not allowed to avail legal assistance during police custody as per rules.

**3. Jail Custody:** All the four persons, whom the team met at Jhargram Sub-Jail complained about subhuman living conditions in the Jails. The food is substandard both in quality and quantity and even below the standards set as per Jail manuals-as a result all of them lost weight to the tune of 2 Kg to 7 Kg during their six months' stay. Shri Ray developed an ischemic heart as a result of treatment meted out in the police custody. Chandi Sarkar, lodged in Nadia District Jail has Piles and gastritis. It is reported however that as per the advice of the Jail doctor, he is being provided with spiceless boiled food.

It is amazing to learn that though the prisoners in the Jhargram sub-jail get a

daily news paper, they get it only after censoring and cutting out some of the news items. It is beyond the understanding of the team, what objections the Govt. could legally have against items published in National dailies.

All these persons satisfy the conditions laid down in sections 24 (1) (g), and 24 (2) (vi) of the West Bengal Correctional Services Act 1992 to be classified as political prisoner. The indiscriminate slapping of sections relating to sedition and conspiracy against many arrested persons also are clear indicative of the political nature of the allegations against them. Most of

these sections are included in Chapter VI of the IPC and the explanation A(1) Section 24 of the West Bengal Correctional Services Act specifically mentions that 'an offence coming within the purview of Chapter VI of the IPC shall always be deemed as a political offence.' It is deplorable that the State Govt. is shying away from its minimum responsibility of recognising its political opposition.

**4. The Cases:** The team has gone through the FIR, Charge-sheet, seizure lists in respect of Belpahari PS case No. 28/05 dated 23.5.05 (GR No. 212/05) and the FIR of Kotwali PS case No. 333/05 dated 2.10.2005. All these papers bear evidences of pathetic concoction. The lawyers defending the prisoners in Jhargram Court pointed out that as per seizure lists submitted by the police in the court, the police seized series of articles necessary to build up a case against the persons from a locked room at 199 Battala By Lane, PS

Uttarpara. On 1 June 2005 the police searched the locked room eight

times at 12-05 hrs, 12-25 hrs, 13-35 hrs, 13-45 hrs, 2-05 PM, 14-15 hrs, 14-20 hrs and 15-05 hrs. Each time the police some articles relevant to the case and seized them. The house at which Chandi Sarkar was staying in village Kathgora in Nadia was searched during his arrest on 23 September 2005. In mid December the police took away two pillows from the house saying that they are needed for the case. It was later learned that the pillows were made exhibit in the case against him claiming that a bullet was found in one of the them.

Shri Ray, Shri Halder, Shri Debnath and Sk Hossain informed that they had nothing

incriminating while they were picked up from roads and nothing incriminating was seized from their persons, neither it was possible for them to have the seizure listed articles with them when they were arrested. It is learned that immediately after Shri Ray and Shri Halder's arrest on 21 May, the police began stacking arms/money/ photographs etc in the above house and with much fanfare and before the full media glare staged a drama of search and seizure at the room at Uttarpara on 1 June 05. The defence lawyers cited several other indications of concoctions in the seizure lists. It will not be prudent at this juncture to dwell upon all of them.

The charges against Shri Ray and others are essentially of sedition and conspiracy against state. As per newspaper reports the top police brass of the state intelligence were entrusted with the job of building up a full-proof case against them. The defence lawyers already complained to the court on 17 Dec 05 that the original chargesheet submitted to the court on 20.8.05 has already been tampered with. The certified photo copy of the Chargesheet and its annexure given by the court to the defendants do not tally with that kept in the court file, clearly indicating fabrication and tampering.

Shri Chandi Sarkar and fifty others are implicated in Kotwali PS case No. 333/05 dated 2.10.2005, which is based solely on a purported confessional statement of Sri Sarkar made in police custody. According to laws of the country, statements extracted in police custody cannot be accepted as evidence. The police preferred to use such a statement to book 50 odd people, including several Human Rights activists and several political activists belonging to the non-CPI(M) political strata.

**5. Government response:** It was pointed out to us that the government failed to respond to innumerable complaints regarding illegal police practices during and after arrests, custodial torture and other related matters.

The team have gone through several such well documented memoranda. The state government even declined to make public the report of the Arun Mishra Commission. This commission was appointed in the face of widespread protests from the people and eminent citizens to enquire into allegations of illegal

activities of the police resulting in the death of a Central Govt officer Avijit Sinha in July 2003.

The team also learned that the Chief Minister (who also holds the Home portfolio) refused to meet Human Rights Organisations, Bandi Mukti Committee and even a group of eminent intellectuals on the issue.

On behalf of the team a letter was sent to the Principal Secretary, Jails, Govt. of WB and IG of Prisons, Govt. of WB requesting them to permit the team to meet political prisoners lodge in Jhargram Sub-Jail and Nadia Dist Jail. No response to the letter was given and the team was refused permission to meet Chandi Sarkar and four others lodged in Nadia Dist. Jail after keeping them waiting for more than an hour. The team sought the intervention of the Minister of Jails over the phone, who declined. We learned from news paper reports that within the last one month while a congress MP (Adhir Choudhury) and a CPI(M) minister (Narayan Biswas) were sent to Judicial Custody by the courts for criminal offences, they held regular Darbars, feasts and conferences inside the Jails. The refusal of the govt to allow this team to meet the prisoners at the Nadia Jail is highly discriminatory and lacks transparency.

#### **6. Demands and recommendations:**

1. The state Government must stop all repressive measures against political activists and organisations.

2. Fictitious cases registered against political activists and common people should be withdrawn and all such persons be released immediately.

3. All persons detained in any form for political activities, should be treated as political prisoners as per the provisions of sections 24 (1) (g), and 24 (2) (vi) of the West Bengal Correctional Services Act 1992. Such persons should be provided with appropriate facilities for their study and academic work while in Jail

4. The police and other law enforcing agencies must act as per law and stop violation of rights of a person during and after arrest. All complaints of violation of such rights as laid down in the Apex court judgment dated 18.12.1996 in D.K.Basu v WB Govt case (WP No.592/1987) shall have to be enquired and the violators should be dealt with as per law.

In particular the team calls upon the state govt to institute an impartial commission to enquire into the complaints of torture, maltreatment and illegal detention of Sushil Ray and others as mentioned in this report to prove its transparency and commitment to the rule of law.

5. The practice of Badli arrests, detention in the name of enquiry and harassment of relatives and friends of opposition political activists and villagers should stop.

Amitadyuti Kumar, Rajkishore Singh  
Kolkata 30 December 2005.

On behalf of the fact finding team:

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PUCL Report released at a Press Conference in Kolkata Press Club on 30 December International Response to the Arrest of Com Narayan Sanyal

As has already been reported in the last issue of the magazine PB member of the CPI(Maoist), Com Narayan Sanyal (popularly known as Com Vijay and Prasad) was picked up from Raipur on Dec 28<sup>th</sup>. He was kept illegally by the AP police and only when a habeas corpus petition was filed was he produced on Jan.3<sup>rd</sup> 2006. Also many organisations in India and internationally publicly demanded that Com Sanyal be produced. Demonstrations took place in some cities of India and also before the high commission in some countries.

He has been subjected to grueling questioning even though he is at the age of 68 and in bad health. On Jan 3<sup>rd</sup> the police said that he was arrested at a bus stop in the town of Badrachalam in AP. They also claimed that he had weapons on him. It was a completely fake story. Since then he was again remanded to 15 days police custody when he was interrogated by the police from nine States. Finally he has been thrown into a prison at Warangal. This is nothing but further harassment as he neither knows the language nor is he familiar with the State. He is being falsely implicated in nearly each and every major case by the Maoists in the country, from the abortive attack on Naidu, to the Jehanabad jail break.

Com. Prasad is a veteran communist leader who has stayed as a communist

since the 1970s fighting all the revisionist trends that enveloped the communist movement in the country. Not only the CPI/CPM type ruling class parties but also the various revisionist trends within the M-L were fought by him to steer the then CPI(ML)(PU) along the revolutionary path and initiate the merger with the CPI(ML)(PW) and then the MCCI.

All democrats and the people demand his unconditional release and an end to all harassment. They strongly condemn the notorious AP police for their inhuman treatment for which they are now infamous. Given his frail health and age and also his veteran commitment he must be treated with due respect and dignity.

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international gangster George W Bush to our country. Let us teach this head of the most blood-thirsty imperialist country in the world and his covert agents ruling our country a fitting lesson by organising massive protest rallies, road blockades, effigy burning and all forms of protest if at all he dares to visit our country against the wishes of the vast majority of the Indian people.

It is a great honour for our Party to have been blacklisted by this enemy of the world people-the US imperialism-since it shows how our Party poses a serious threat to the interests of these gangsters in India. It places great responsibility on the shoulders of our Party to lead the vast masses of India against this monster that is fleecing the blood of the world people. We shall fight shoulder to shoulder with the oppressed people of India and the entire world against this monster of US imperialism, which, despite all its deadly arsenal and weapons of mass destruction is, after all, a 'colossus with feet of clay'. Like all reactionaries, it too, is a paper tiger when confronted with the might of the people.

Azad,  
Spokesperson,  
Central Committee (provisional)  
CPI(Maoist)  
20<sup>th</sup> February 2006

**Press Release:**

**Say "NO" to the proposed visit of World's No.1 Terrorist and Warmonger  
George W Bush to our country!  
Let us teach Bush and the comprador Manmohan Singh government a fitting  
lesson through massive protests!!**

George W. Bush, the No.1 International terrorist and the greatest enemy of the world people, has announced his plans to visit India in the month of March this year. The visit of this world's biggest rowdy to our country is only meant to further tighten the grip of the US Super Power over our country. The immediate aim of Bush's visit is to coerce the Indian comprador rulers to completely toe its line of isolating Iran, Syria, North Korea and other countries that have adopted an anti-US stance at least to a certain extent, and to win support for its blood-bath in Iraq and Afghanistan and for its war mongering policies all over the world. The Central Committee of CPI(Maoist) calls upon the people of our country to oppose the proposed visit of this international gangster and prevent his entry by all means at their disposal. We, on our part, will leave no stone unturned to stop this butcher of the world people from setting his foot on the soil of our great motherland.

Using the pretext of 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon, this big bully, egged on by the oil lobby and the military-industrial complex in the US, had unleashed the bloodiest wars of this century by invading Afghanistan and Iraq and creating unending gory blood-baths. He has threatened to attack Iran, Syria, North Korea and several other countries in the world. He had openly supported the bloody terrorist attacks by the Israeli Zionist rulers against Palestinian civilians, massacring even women, children and the old-aged in so-called acts of retribution. He had fomented disturbances in Venezuela, Bolivia and other countries of Latin America. In the name of containing terrorism he had launched attacks on "targets" in other countries such as the missile strike in Damadola in the Bajur tribal region of Pakistan on January 13 this year that killed 13 civilians. He is openly blackmailing countries such as India as seen in the open threat by David Mulford,

the US Ambassador to India, on the 27<sup>th</sup> of January that India should vote against Iran in the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The Indian government is being pressurised to abandon its plans of investing in Syrian oil project jointly with China.

In the name of fighting Islamic terrorism and, duping the people by aggressively propagating CIA-fabricated lies, the US imperialists led by Bush had unleashed heinous attacks on the Muslim people all over the world. This global terrorist had either outlawed, or declared as terrorist, several Maoist Parties such as the CPN(M) in Nepal, CPP in the Philippines, CPI(Maoist) in India, and provided massive aid to the reactionary regimes in these countries to enact fascist repression on revolutionary and democratic movements. Such is the real aim behind the so-called war on terrorism led by Bush and other imperialist chieftains. To allow this blackmailer, arm-twister, rapacious plunderer, greatest liar and the principal enemy of the world people into our country will be a shame to the hundred crore plus Indian people.

It is only outright comprador agents like the Congress-led UPA, BJP-led NDA, the TDP, AIADMK, etc., who kowtow before this big bully and willingly sell out the interests of the people. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, has proved himself as the trusted agent of the US imperialists during his visit to the US last July when he assured his mentors in Washington that India will not pursue the proposed gas pipeline project from Iran to India. The US tightened its vice-like grip over the India by offering the so-called Indo-US nuclear deal under which the US will lift sanctions on dual-use technology trade with India provided India separates its civilian and military nuclear establishments. The deal is yet to be ratified by the US Congress and this is used as a bait to bring India in line with the US stand on Iran. The conditions agreed upon by

the comprador Manmohan Singh government in the civilian-nuclear agreement is kept a guarded secret and is said to entail inspection by the IAEA, which is a humiliation to the Indian people. The UPA government had also voted against Iran on September 24 last year in the IAEA in the most humiliating manner in accordance with the dictates of the US imperialists. In exchange for a few crumbs from Washington it is all set to repeat this humiliating act in the IAEA meet on 2<sup>nd</sup> March and push the issue to the UN Security Council that is responsible for creating the greatest insecurity in the world. The treacherous acts of these traitors in power should be opposed by the freedom-loving people of India tooth and nail.

Let us pledge our unflinching support to the heroic fighters of Iraq, Afghanistan and the Palestinian territories who are waging daily battles against the US imperialist marauders. Let us extend our support to the people of Iran, Syria, North Korea, Venezuela, Bolivia and in all countries that are threatened by the US imperialist aggressors. Let us extend our support to the people of Pakistan who are protesting the air strikes by the US imperialists in Bajur. Let us join the people of the entire world to oppose the wars of aggression unleashed by the US imperialists led by the world's No 1 criminal Bush and their acts of interference, bullying and subversion in other countries that undermine even their limited sovereignty.

The visit of Bush to India is only meant to be an exercise in arm-twisting and bullying our country and striking nefarious deals with the traitorous comprador UPA government which is ever ready to place the Indian people's interests most shamelessly at the feet of this blackmailing gangster. Let us unite all democratic and revolutionary forces in the country to oppose the proposed visit of the

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## Red Salutes to heroic Martyr Com. Ravi (Naemuddin)

Comrade Ravi (alias Naemuddin) was martyred on Dec.28 2005 at the hands of the cruel police and paramilitary after being brutally tortured. At the young age of 35 he braved martyrdom as secretary of the UP-Uttar Bihar-Uttarkhand Special Area Committee {3U-SAC).

In the month of December Com Ravi was in the Tirhut and Patahi region of East Champaran District of North Bihar, taking mass meetings of the oppressed of the area. On the day of Dec.28, Com. Ravi, accompanied by a detachment of the PLGA, were resting in Batona village when the police and paramilitary launched a massive attack. They fired thousands of rounds with automatic-weapons and mortars after encircling the entire village. The PLGA fought back heroically injuring two jawans. The battle went on for one-and-a-half hours and as darkness came they were able to break through the cordon and retreat to safety. But, Com Ravi was injured in the battle and could not accompany his comrades. He was arrested, taken to the police station, brutally tortured and then murdered in cold blood.

First the police gave false reports that that six were killed and then they said four Maoists. They then said that a Nepali Maoist had been killed. But these were all false. The martyred comrade was none other than Com. Ravi of Mohamedda village. He was from a poor peasant



background and has studied till graduation. His village was dominated by upper-caste landlords. While organising the oppressed he had to struggle against enormous social, religious and casteist humiliation. While organising the poor the landlords tried to give the struggle a communal character. But in their conspiracy they totally failed and he successfully in building a solid class unity of all the oppressed.

A statement issued by Com. Vijay, a spokesperson of the 3U-SAC, of the CPI(Maoist) said "He was born in a poor peasant family. He was 35 and had studied till graduation. He joined the Party in 1997. He mobilised the poor for higher

wages in a revolutionary way, fighting all forms of economism and legalism. Landlords tried to kill him on many occasions. Just then our Party entered his village. He aligned with the Party and became a Marxist. He started by being a member of an activist group. With his dedication and conviction he slowly grew to be a SAC member and then after the unity became the SAC secretary. On the very next day of his murder the police took away a number of youth — both male and female — and brutally tortured them. The girls were also subjected to filthy abuse and sexual harassment. We strongly condemn the brutal murder of Com. Ravi and the torture and harassment of the villagers. We call on the masses to wipe their tears and intensify the people's war to avenge the death of our beloved comrade".

Com Ravi struck terror in the hearts of the oppressors due to his uncompromising stand in the class struggle. So panic-stricken were they that in June 2005 itself they falsely spread the rumour of his death. The entire masses mourn his death saddened that they have lost a heroic and selfless fighter of the oppressed. But they have turned sadness into a burning fire against the monstrous forces that terrorise and ruthlessly exploit the oppressed of this country.

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The struggle of the Balochi people for their right to self-determination including secession is a just struggle. The people of India lend support to their struggle against the terroristic Pakistani rulers, and at the same time oppose all forms of interference by the Indian double-dealing rulers in their struggle. No amount of repression can stop their struggle for self-determination.

On Feb.7<sup>th</sup> tribal guerrillas blew up several gas pipelines in the South-west region cutting off supplies to a US and



British-owned power plant for the fourth time in one month. The main shareholders of the plant are Britain's International Power Plc. and US firms Tenaska Inc. and GE Capital. One blast damaged a pipeline near the town of Dera Murad shutting down supply to the 586 MW Uch power plant. In other incidents, militants blew up pipelines taking gas from three wells in the Loti gas field to a nearby purification plant.

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**Support the proposed countrywide indefinite strike of the railway workers!**  
**Condemn anti-worker attitude of the imperialist stooge Manmohan Singh government!!**

**On the Occasion of 75<sup>th</sup> Death Anniversary of Bhagat Singh:**

## **Carry Forward the militant anti-imperialist Traditions set by Bhagat Singh and his Colleagues!**

### **Commemorate Bhagat Singh by Turning the entire Year into an anti-imperialist Festival of the Masses!!**

Exactly 75 years back, on March 23<sup>rd</sup>, Bhagat Singh and his colleagues were hanged by the British government. In September this year also begins the hundred birth anniversary of the birth of Bhagat Singh. His birth centenary will be celebrated on Sept.28 2007.

Bhagat Singh and his colleagues were hanged on this day 75 years back for their uncompromising struggle against the British and the advocacy of violence as the means of throwing the British out by the Hindustani Socialist Republican Association. As Bhagat Singh and his colleagues languished in jail between 1929 and 1931 and there was a massive upsurge against the hanging, M.K.Gandhi and other Congress leaders were busy collaborating with the British supporting their punishment. People throughout the country were shocked to see these young patriotic men in their early twenties being sent to the gallows. And as they ascended the gallows anti-British slogans and Inquilab Zindabad (Long Live revolution) rent the air. Bhagat Singh and his colleagues became an icon for coming generation of anti-imperialists in the country, just as Che Guvera became in the West.

The Legend of Bhagat Singh lives on and becomes even more relevant in this age of imperialist globalization. Bhagat Singh was in every way a true democratic revolutionary, though not a communist. He was uncompromisingly anti-British and so despised the collaborationist approach of the leaders of the Indian National Congress who were only pleading for crumbs. Unlike the other revolutionaries of Bengal, who were deeply into Hinduism, Bhagat Singh was to a large extent anti-feudal — he was against religion and an atheist. In fact his very first book he wrote was “*Why I am an Atheist*” and he was one of the rare revolutionaries who also wrote on the dalit question and against untouchability. All these writings were done at the young age before his



martyrdom. In spite of all his revolutionary activities he was a voracious reader. In the three years in jail even though he faced the death sentence he read extensively making notes and comments. This has come to light in a recent publication entitled “*Shahid Bhagat Singh's Jail Notes*”. He read extensively the works of Russell, Marx, Engels, Ingersoll, Tom Paine, Rousseau, Grele, Upton Sinclair, etc. He also read Lenin and was veering towards becoming a Marxist towards the last days of his life. Besides these, Bhagat Singh made systematic studies of text books on law and the history of political thought from the Greek and Soviet experience — his main focus of this study being in relation to the role of the State. He also studied the French Revolution as also the Soviet revolution. He was initially influenced by the anarchism of Bakunin but towards the end of his life he shifted closer to Marxism.

In the coming year all will try and take the mantle of Bhagat Singh; from the revisionists to even the RSS. But who are the true *varis* (followers) of Bhagat Singh who have the right to use his name. Let us look at them all.

The RSS were at that time British collaborators and are to this day highly feudal and religious. Their views are exactly the opposite that of Bhagat Singh. Their use of the name of Bhagat Singh, if at all they do so, is totally fake.

So also for the Congress whose then leader, Gandhi, was directly responsible for sending Bhagat Singh and his associates to the gallows. The bulk of the Congress leaders, then and now, have been imperialist collaborators acting as a ‘safety valve’ to diffuse the people’s anger against the British. They are also deeply feudal, casteist and religious. They have nothing in common with the ideals of Bhagat Singh, so their taking his name is false and hypocritical.

Those who will be most active and in the forefront of these celebrations will be the revisionist CPI/CPM. Today, both these parties are with the central government, implementing all their imperialist-dictated policies. So also in the States where they are in power they are implementing the same policies. They are vehemently against any violent opposition to imperialism. They term all violent opposition as ‘terrorism’ just as the imperialists do. Though they may be atheists they generally compromise with feudal and casteist thinking. So, in practice, notwithstanding all their rhetoric and demagoguery, they too are imperialist collaborators. They too are nowhere near the ideals of Bhagat Singh and have no right to their legacy.

The true claimants to the Bhagat Singh legacy are the Naxalites or Maoists, as it is only they who believe that the imperialists can be kicked out only through violent revolution, who are also atheists, and who are also consistently anti-imperialist and anti-feudal. Though Bhagat Singh may not have been a Marxist like the Maoists of today, both have the above common characteristics. Ofcourse given the flow of

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