



Maoist Information Bulletin - 10
Special issue on Lalgarh





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**Let us spread the Red Flame of Lalgarh
to the Nook and Corner of the Country!**

**Mobilise the entire Party, PLGA and the revolutionary masses
against the state offensive on the mass upsurge in Lalgarh!!**

(We are publishing below the call of the Political Bureau of the CPI(Maoist) to the Party cadres issued in its recently-held meeting. Some of the tasks which are not meant for open publication have been deliberately left out along with the necessary editing--Editor, MIB)

Dear Comrades!

All of us are aware of the mass upsurge in Lalgarh that has spread like a wild-fire since November 2008. Thousands of ordinary adivasi people have risen up against decades of social discrimination, criminal neglect by the CPI(M)-led Left Front government, oppression, exploitation and suppression by the various arms of the State. The immediate reason for the flare-up was the brutal reign of terror unleashed by the police in the wake of the police atrocities in the wake of the attempt on the life of the Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee by our PLGA on Nov 2 last.

So widespread and intense is the adivasi revolt in Lalgarh that some have described it as the second Santhal rebellion. The adivasis have been seething with anger ever since the indiscriminate attacks by the police and the CPI(M) goons on the adivasis of the region, particularly the severe beating of adivasi women in November last, and this had provoked the people into direct confrontation with the state. An independent people's organization called *Police Santrosh Birodhi Jansaadharaner Committee* or *People's Committee Against Police Atrocities* came into existence to protect the adivasis from police excesses. It placed just demands like apology by the top police officials of the district to the people of the affected villages, withdrawal of all cases foisted against the people, compensation for the victims of police atrocities, a halt to police raids during nights, etc. But the arrogant CPI(M) and the police officials have continued their adamant stand and provocative attitude towards the adivasis by deploying their *harmad bahini* goonda force and the state's forces.

So much has been the anger and hatred towards the CPI(M) leaders, cadres and the police that the people had even spontaneously attacked the police stations and camps, CPM offices that acted as the centres of terror, and houses of the leaders and cadres of the CPI(M) who are seen as their oppressors and tormentors. The CPI(M) was virtually driven out of the area in face of the growing wrath of the people.

While exposing the hoax of so-called development of three decades of the social-fascists, the people themselves undertook numerous development works through shramdan, like health projects, irrigation, roads, schools, etc. The arrogant, social fascist CPI(M), badly shaken by its rapidly eroding social base in West Mednipur, has been desperately trying to repeat a Nandigram in Lalgarh by organizing massacre of adivasis.

The police atrocities and attacks by the armed cadres gave further fillip to the people's movement against the police, united the entire adivasi population of the

region, and numerous forms of struggle such as boycott of police personnel, boycott of elections, blockades, non-cooperation with the district administration, demonstrations and mass meetings characterized the scene during the past seven months. In the elections hardly a hundred votes were polled out of a total of 30,000 in the Lalgarh area. Thus all the parliamentary political parties have become irrelevant and virtually non-existent after the outbreak of the adivasi uprising. These developments have shaken the reactionary ruling classes so much that both the Congress-led UPA government at the Centre and the CPI(M)-led Left front government in West Bengal have entered into an alliance to suppress the mass upsurge and the Maoists in West Bengal.

On 18 June 2009, the social-fascist "Left Front" Govt in West Bengal led by the neo-revisionist CPI(M), and aided by the UPA Govt at the Centre, has unleashed a massive brutal onslaught against the adivasis of Lalgarh and the surrounding areas in Jhargram sub-division in West Mednipur district of West Bengal. 14 Companies of central forces, including the newly-created anti-Naxal elite COBRA force, and over 3000 state police have already been sent to the area to "flush out" the Maoists. To justify this massive state offensive the CPI(M) has floated the myth that 1100 villages, spread over an area of over 1000 sq kms, have been "liberated" by the Maoists.

Right from the first day of their military operations the ruling classes have tried to create a hype about the victories achieved by the police-paramilitary forces and propagating that they have liberated Lalgarh and the surrounding areas from the control of the Maoists. While the fact was that it was the people, most of whom were unarmed or armed with their traditional weapons, who had played the main role in organising the boycott of the police and administration, the government tried to create an atmosphere that Maoists have been using the women and children as human shield, forcing them to boycott the administration and police and that the government has no choice but to deploy the state's forces to enforce the "rule of law" by securing it from Maoist control. In a way, they tried by all means to project the mass upsurge in Lalgarh as a terrorist movement instigated by Maoists. And to brutally suppress this just struggle and to justify their act as a legitimate measure the Union Home ministry declared an All India ban on our Party, branded it as terrorist, and began arresting and harassing all those who stand out firmly against the police atrocities and government's misrule. Their immediate aim is to brand the struggle in Lalgarh as terrorist or associated with the "terrorist" CPI(Maoist) and to suppress it most cruelly.

In such a situation our Party which is actively associated with the mass upsurge in Lalgarh and is active in West Mednipur, Purulia and Bankura has tried to spread the people's struggle and armed resistance to the state repression to the entire area. It tried to organise solidarity to the struggle in Lalgarh and against state repression in other parts of West Bengal as well as other parts of the country. A two-day bandh was organised on June 22/23 which was successfully observed despite the short notice. The bandh drew the attention of the people of the entire country to the developments in Lalgarh, exposed the combined military offensive by the state-central forces, gave moral support to the people of Lalgarh and surrounding areas, and had overall created a positive impact.

The police operations in Lalgarh are still continuing on a massive scale with around 5000 police-central forces carrying out combings, raids on villages and brutal attacks on the people. The plan of the rulers is to intensify these operations and break the

morale of the people, create a section from the people, through material incentives and intimidation, and utilise it as a social base and informer network for the state. They are also trying to isolate us from the people by pouring in huge amounts of funds in the name of development, organising relief camps, medical camps, ration shops etc., and threatening a section of the people not to extend support in whatever form to the Maoists which is now a banned terrorist organisation.

In this situation it is a foremost task for the entire Party, PLGA and revolutionary masses to defeat the conspiracy of the ruling classes to isolate Lalgarh movement and suppress it, to isolate our forces from the people and suppress them, and to create an atmosphere of terror among the people by branding us as terrorist. We have to mobilise all our forces to foil the plans of the reactionary ruling classes and carry out the following tasks through concrete planning in our various Party committees.

We have to keep in mind some specific features of the mass upsurge in Lalgarh. Firstly, it has erupted not on economic issues but on political issue against the state. Secondly, the people got mobilised into struggle not under any parliamentary party but under independent leadership and active participation of our Party. Third, the mass upsurge was the product of painstaking prolonged period of underground work by the Party. Fourth, people's own initiative was released fully under the influence of the Party. Lastly, we should strictly adhere to broad-based mobilisation outside and inside the area in accordance with West Bengal's specific situation.

Our Tasks in relation to Lalgarh

In the light of the present developments in Lalgarh we have to immediately take up the following tasks:

1. Take up a countrywide propaganda campaign in support of the mass upsurge in Lalgarh and against the state-central police offensive. Conduct public meetings, hall meetings, street corner meetings, torch-light processions and various types of rallies, cultural programmes etc;
2. Bring out literature in various languages explaining the democratic nature of the struggle in Lalgarh and the fascist nature of the Indian ruling classes and their representative state; leaflets, booklets, posters etc should be brought out in large number; the social-fascist character of the CPI(M) and its other allies should be particularly exposed among the people at large;
3. Send fact-finding teams to Lalgarh and the surrounding areas to bring out the facts to the outside world, hold press conferences and expose the brutal police atrocities and the condition of the adivasi population;
4. Explain the economic reasons behind the state onslaught in Lalgarh and elsewhere in the adivasi belt, the greed of the reactionary rulers and imperialists for plundering the mineral wealth of the entire region, the massive displacement of the adivasis through so-called development projects set up by Tatas, Mittals, Jindals, Essars and others;
5. Mobilise the entire Party, PLGA and the people to explore the available resources and send all possible material aid and assistance to the people of Lalgarh; keeping in mind that thousands of people have fled the villages into the jungle in the wake of the massive police crack-down this becomes an important task. This aid could be in the

form of foodgrains, clothes, medicines, money etc. We should also draw the people away from the so-called relief camps run by the Trinamul, CPI(M) and the government and call upon the people to return to their villages.

In the light of the unprecedented crisis, deepening with every passing day, there are great possibilities of Lalgarh-type mass upsurges breaking out in many parts of the country. The experiences of Lalgarh are new for our Party. There is great potential to strengthen the three magic weapons on a great scale through such mass upsurges. Such favourable situation of creating mass upsurge is seen in several areas in the country and the growing mass struggles in Orissa and Jharkhand are an indication of this trend. The PB calls on its rank-and-file and the revolutionary masses to seize every opportunity and take timely initiative and intervene effectively to lead these movements, thus creating several Lalgarhs. While doing so, the PB appeals to the entire Party to utilise the political impact and outcome of such movements to build and prepare the subjective forces to advance and extend the people's war throughout the country.

**** Let us oppose the brutal police offensive by the fascist UPA and social-fascist Left Front governments against the mass upsurge in Lalgarh!**

**** Let us mobilize the revolutionary, democratic and progressive organizations and individuals in various parts of the country in support of the just and democratic struggle of the people of Lalgarh!**

**** Let us extend all types of material aid and assistance to the people of Lalgarh!**

**** Let us transform Lalgarh into a real Red Fortress!**

**** Let us spread the red flame of Lalgarh to the nook and corner of the country!**

**Politbureau,
CPI (Maoist)
July 10, 2009**



**COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA (MAOIST)
CENTRAL COMMITTEE**



Press Release:

June 19, 2009

**Oppose the brutal police offensive by the fascist UPA and
social-fascist Left Front govts against the adivasis of
Lalgarh! The current suppression campaign will lead to
massive armed people's resistance!!**

On 18 June 2009, the social-fascist "Left Front" Govt in West Bengal led by the neo-revisionist CPI(M), and aided by the UPA Govt at the Centre, has unleashed a massive brutal onslaught against the adivasis of Lalgarh and the surrounding areas in Jhargram sub-division in West Mednipur district of West Bengal. 14 Companies of central forces, including the newly-created anti-Naxal elite COBRA force, and over 3000 state police have already been sent to the area to "flush out" the Maoists. To justify this massive state offensive the CPI(M) has floated the myth that 1100 villages, spread over an area of over 1000 sq kms, have been "liberated" by the Maoists.

The adivasi population of Lalgarh has been seething with anger ever since the police began unleashing numerous atrocities on innocent people in the wake of the attempt on the life of the Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee on Nov 2 last. It was the indiscriminate attacks by the police and the CPI(M) goons on the adivasis of the region, particularly the severe beating of adivasi women in November last, that had provoked the people into direct confrontation with the state. An independent people's organization called *Police Santrosh Birodhi Jansaadharaner Committee* or *People's Committee Against Police Atrocities* came into existence to protect the adivasis from police excesses. It placed simple demands like apology by the top police officials of the district to the people of the affected villages, withdrawal of all cases foisted against the people, compensation for the victims of police atrocities, a halt to police raids during nights, etc. The CPI(M) had been badly shaken by its rapidly eroding base and hence has been desperately trying to repeat a Nandigram in Lalgarh by organizing massacre of adivasis.

It is the police atrocities and attacks by the armed cadres that gave further fillip to the people's movement against the police, united the entire adivasi population of the region, and numerous forms of struggle such as boycott of police personnel, boycott of elections, blockades, non-cooperation with the district administration, demonstrations and mass meetings characterized the scene during the past seven months. The Left Front government, instead of solving these demands, has now further aggravated the situation by sending in more police forces. **The irony of the present offensive by the state and central forces and the fresh round of police atrocities in Lalgarh is that it is directed against the people who were agitating precisely against those very police atrocities since the past seven months. Needless to say, the embittered people of the area will become further enraged by this strong-arm tactic of the state and central govts.** Rattled by the humiliating reverses it suffered in the last parliamentary elections due to its offensive and massacre in Nandigram, and fearful of an even greater backlash if it tried a similar misadventure in Lalgarh, the CPI(M) has been begging the UPA

government to undertake the Lalgarh operation by sending the central forces. Instead of looking into its own failings and misrule in West Bengal, and its cadre-goonda raj in several pockets in the state that is leading to its alienation from the people at large, the CPI (M) has resorted to place the blame on the Maoists and opposition parties for the situation in Lalgarh and elsewhere in the state.

The CC, CPI (Maoist), calls upon the people of the entire country to condemn the brutal joint offensive by the Centre and West Bengal state on the adivasi people of Lalgarh and surrounding areas, to show solidarity to the people of Lalgarh by extending all kinds of support, and to unite to build a broad-based militant mass movement against state repression in Lalgarh. It calls upon the entire Party ranks, the heroic fighters of PLGA, and the members of all revolutionary mass organizations to mobilise the masses all over the country to protest against the brutal state offensive in Lalgarh, and to take up a wide propaganda campaign throughout the country explaining the peaceful, democratic nature of the seven-month-old people's movement in Lalgarh and exposing the social-fascist nature of the CPI (M) which cannot tolerate such people's movements.

The CC, CPI (Maoist), warns the reactionary rulers at the Centre and the state of West Bengal to withdraw their brutal offensive at least now or else their brutal offensive will only transform the present peaceful people's movement into an armed people's resistance movement. **Just as *salwa judum* in Chhattisgarh had transformed thousands of adivasis into Maoist guerrillas in a short span of time, so will the present Lalgarh operation multiply the armed strength and mass base of the Maoist revolutionaries.** We make it crystal-clear that the entire responsibility for the intensification of retaliatory violence by Maoist guerrillas and the people on the leaders and cadres of CPI (M) and the police personnel lies squarely on the shoulders of the Buddhadeb government. If the Buddhadeb govt unleashes blood-bath in Lalgarh it will spell the nemesis of the already half-decimated CPI (M) in West Bengal.

Sd/
Azad,
Spokesperson,
Central Committee,
CPI (Maoist)



Yes. It Is Possible To Build Lalgarhs Everywhere. That Is What We Learn From Lalgarh

LALGARH. The name has now become synonymous with rebellion. It has become a symbol of mass defiance and militant mass resistance, an inspiration to the oppressed and suppressed majority in India. A community that has been marginalized by rapacious exploiters over centuries and driven to carry on their lives on the periphery of the Indian society, like hundreds of other indigenous adivasi communities, has taught a billion people of our country how to fight the Indian state. It demonstrated how the Indian state is, after all, a paper tiger despite its show of might.

It is the first time after the Naxalbari phase that the state of West Bengal has witnessed mass resistance on such an extensive scale, with such a great intensity and tenacity for such a prolonged period by the most oppressed, suppressed, exploited, downtrodden masses—the wretched-of-the-earth—who have been subjected to centuries of discrimination and neglect by successive rulers of India. For decades they watched helplessly as their lands were snatched away by non-tribal outsiders, unscrupulous money-lenders and traders, and now by the state government and comprador capitalists like Jindals. They watched in silence as the khaki-clad policemen, the forest officials, and the red-robed social fascist storm-troopers called hermands, harassed them at will, raped their women, and took away their hard-earned earnings. It is the same story everywhere across the vast adivasi belt in the country where almost a tenth of the Indian population or around a hundred million adivasi people live miserable lives.

They have no one to look to. The Indian Constitution, which is just a nominal piece of paper for the vast majority of the Indian people, has no relevance whatsoever for these original inhabitants of the forests. Acts such as 1/70 in the state of Andhra Pradesh, and similar acts in every state hold the rights of the tribals over their traditional lands as sacrosanct and stipulate that no non-tribal can take possession of the land of the tribals. But these remain only on paper. What is worse, whenever the adivasis wage struggles for taking over the lands that rightly belong to them, the Indian state, representing the interests of the big landlords and comprador big bourgeoisie, sends its repressive forces to crush the just struggles in defence of the non-tribals and the wealthy class openly trampling underfoot its own laws and Acts. Such is the '*rule of law*' that imperialist agents like Manmohan Singh or Chidambaram have been bragging about. Chidambaram himself has been closely associated with the UK-based subsidiary in India—the Vedanta Aluminium Limited—that has been ruining the Niyamgiri Hills in Orissa and destroying one of the oldest indigenous tribes in India called the Dongria Khondhs. Behind the sophisticated appearance of this man lies the cruelest, rapacious, greedy nature that is the essence of every exploiter.

But once unleashed, the adivasis, who have been mute and helpless spectators to the tragedy that befell them, can also turn into lions of the forests. What they need is organization and leadership. And when the Santhalis found their organization in the PCAPA they became galvanized like steel. The age-long pent-up anger, class hatred, and revulsion towards the rulers transformed itself into a mighty rebellious force. The Santhalis have a glorious tradition of revolts that shook the mighty British colonial empire during the middle of the 19th century. Whether it was the British colonialists of

the 19th century or the Indian expansionists of the 21st, the essence of their rule is no different. Thus the Santhalis have risen up once again in a rebellion—rightly called as the Second Santhali Rebellion—against the post-British Indian colonizers. New leaders have emerged imbibing the spirit of Siddu and Kanu Murmu.

For the exploiters in power such a rebellion by the most oppressed masses is naturally intolerable. And when it is directed against the most powerful wing of the state apparatus—aptly described by the Santhalis as the *shantrosh bahini* or the repressive force—it is even more unthinkable. Hence the state mobilized a massive force from the same *shantrosh bahini*, which has been the cause for the revolt in the first place, to suppress the mass uprising. It has added fuel to the fire by committing more atrocities on a population that had risen against such atrocities. What other language do fascists, and in this case, social-fascists as well, know than that of the lathi and the bullet?

The mass uprising of the adivasis of Lalgarh if of great historical significance.

Lalgarh has shattered the myth of the might of the Indian state. It has once again exposed the fake nature of Indian democracy and the Indian Constitution and showed that these are the prerogative of only the rich and powerful classes. It has exposed the lawlessness of the rulers and their hired mercenaries who trample upon the very laws which they are supposed to protect. The visuals of the policemen and the central forces barging into the homes of the adivasis, breaking open the locked doors, beating up and kicking people who were unable to flee before this lawless force had invaded their villages, molesting women and harassing whoever came in their way, breaking utensils and destroying the meager belongings of the adivasis, burning foodgrains, and indulging in innumerable atrocities have shown how Chidambaram-Buddhadeb's goons are implementing their so-called rule of law.

Lalgarh has exposed the real essence of the so-called Left, its social fascist character, its extreme intolerance when confronted with dissent and defiance, and its scant regard for the laws of the land by which Karats, Yechuris, Buddhadebs and others swear day in and day out. While accusing the Maoists of being anarchic and indulging in 'senseless violence', these social fascists have unleashed organized state-sponsored violence by its *harmad bahini* gang which is a lumpenised armed gang that kills anyone who dares to touch their ill-gotten wealth acquired by looting the toiling masses. Through the now-universal visual of the angry adivasis pulling down the palatial house of CPI(M)'s zonal secretary, Anuj Pandey, the class nature and the corruption of the CPI(M) leadership and their cadre stood thoroughly exposed. It showed how the CPI(M)'s cadres have been eating up all the funds meant for the people and became transformed into the neo-rich. And it also showed why the CPI(M) has bared its fascist teeth in order to continue enjoying government funds meant for the people running to thousands of crores of rupees. The people's anger is mainly directed against the police and the CPI(M).

Lalgarh has shown how all the Parliamentary parties have become irrelevant to the lives of the people, how the people could be better off without these so-called mainstream parties who thrive on loot and plunder of the people. Lalgarh has also shown how a struggle can become uncompromising when it keeps the parliamentary parties at a distance and do not allow them to meddle since all these parties have the

sole aim of converting mass anger into vote bank.

Lalgarh has exposed the hypocrisy, double-speak and the bankruptcy of all the parliamentary parties. The CPI(M), which has been yelling all along about Centre's intervention in state's affairs and put up an anti-Congress, anti-BJP posture until recently, has now stooped before the very same Congress leaders begging them to send the central para-military forces to save their crumbling rule. And both the Congress and the CPI(M) have been trying to shift the blame for the current situation in Lalgarh on one another. The CPI(M), true to its opportunist character, has tried to place the onus of responsibility for suppressing the Lalgarh uprising on the Centre, while the Congress, on its part, has said that the its government at the Centre can only provide the required para-military forces to the state government but it was the latter's responsibility to use them for unleashing the blood-bath. Both these hypocrites, while being united in unleashing a reign of terror on the adivasis, are scared at the prospects of inviting the people's wrath in the coming Assembly elections in the state. With the admission of the state's failure to "flush out" the Maoists even after a month-and-a-half of military operations, and the continuing attacks on the CPI(M)'s activists in the area, the Buddhadeb government has become panicky and has been begging the Centre to deploy its forces for some more time. The hypocrisy of the Trinamool Congress led by Mamata Banerjee stood exposed before the people of West Bengal. This political chameleon who extended support to the Lalgarh struggle before the elections changed her stand overnight after sharing power with the Congress-led UPA government at the Centre. Mamata's Trinamool revealed its rabid reactionary character by becoming part and parcel of the combined central-state offensive against the adivasi people. Lalgarh has thus torn of the masks of all the parties revealing their ugly, anti-people, fascist character.

Lalgarh has shown what functioning democracy means and stood out in sharp contrast to the fake democracy practiced by the reactionary rulers of our country. By forming people's committees in hundreds upon hundreds of villages with equal representation for men and women, and taking decisions collectively, it has presented a live demonstration of how people can practice democracy if they can throw out the oppressive administration, judicial system, and the police i.e. the authority of the state which is nothing but an instrument of repression and oppression of the majority.

Even if it is for a short span of time the adivasis of Lalgarh, by boycotting the various wings of the state—the police, parliament, and the administration—have shown to the world how happy people could live when they are freed from the marauders. This is a very important lesson for the oppressed people everywhere.

Lalgarh has shown what real development means. By constructing tanks, setting up health centres, schools, laying roads etc they showed how people can achieve within six months what the rulers have failed to achieve in six decades.

Lalgarh uprising has acquired historic significance for it has erupted at a time when the oppressed masses in the country are looking for models.

In Dandakaranya, where hundreds of villages have been freed from the oppression and exploitation of the feudal forces, forest officials, contractors and capitalists, police and the authority of the Indian state, the Gond adivasis have been leading happy lives carrying on their own administration, judicial system and their own armed force committed to the people. It is this model that has scared the rulers out of their wits prompting them to suppress these embryonic forms of new people's democratic power so that the 'contagion'

does not spread to the rest of the country. The adivasis of Dandakaranya, led by the CPI(Maoist) and defended by the People's Liberation Guerrilla Army (PLGA), have been boldly waging a heroic war against the *santrosh bahini* comprising of the local police, special anti-Naxal commando force, central forces like the CRPF, the Greyhounds from the neighbouring state of Andhra Pradesh, C-60 Commando force from Maharashtra, Special Operations Group (SOG) from Orissa and thousands of Special Police Officers (SPOs). Besides these repressive forces of the state, they are also confronting the salwa judum goondas led by the Congress and the BJP just like the adivasis of Lalgarh are confronting the harmad bahini of the social fascist CPI(M). It is in the midst of such a brutal war by the Indian reactionary rulers on their own people that the adivasis peasantry led by the Maoists have begun to form and expand the people's governments at various levels. This new people's power that is emerging in the womb of the decadent semi-feudal semi-colonial society is perceived as a growing threat to the legitimacy of the reactionary rulers and that is why the Maoists have become the single biggest threat to the security of these rulers.

Lalgarh has also exposed the real intentions of the reactionary rulers in unleashing the brutal war against the adivasis. Like the biggest liar of all time, George Bush Jr, who invaded Iraq to plunder its abundant oil resources while making false claims of his mission to destroy a non-existent stock-pile of weapons of mass destruction but actually ended up in balkanizing that country and destroying it, his disciples in India—our Manmohan Singhs and Chidambarams— while greedily eyeing the mineral wealth of the region dominated by the Maoists, have been spreading lies about the great danger posed by the Maoists to Indian democracy, of how the Maoists are terrorists and bandits, and why they should be suppressed with brute force. The present war waged by the Indian rulers in Lalgarh, Dandakaranya, Jharkhand, Bihar, Orissa and elsewhere is a war for the plunder of the vast mineral wealth lying in the Adivasi regions. Renowned writer on adivasis and a Gnanpeeth award winner, Mahasweta Devi, has correctly pointed out that the military offensive in Lalgarh is taken up in order to hand over the lands and resources to the Jindal group. For these social fascists, Jindal is dearer than the people.

Lalgarh has shown how mass uprisings can be organized through persistent painstaking work among the people. Armed with the experiences of Lalgarh and taking proper lessons from this mass uprising, genuine revolutionaries and all democratic-minded people should intensify their efforts to create such mass uprisings throughout the country.

YES. IT IS POSSIBLE TO BUILD LALGARH-TYPE UPRISINGS EVERYWHERE. LET US DARE TO MOVE IN THIS DIRECTION AND DEFEAT THE GROWING STATE OFFENSIVE AGAINST THE UNARMED PEOPLE.



The Role of the corporate media

The mainstream media run by a tiny corporate elite has tried to sensationalise the entire operation through its non-stop visualization and running commentary on the advance of the *santrosh bahini* of the Centre and the state into the territory said to have been held by the Maoists for almost seven months. The ruling gang led by Manmohan, Chidambaram & Co howled that their government was carrying out a legitimate operation to “liberate” the area from the control of the Maoists. Their pet media and the hawkish reporters echoed their master’s voice and fully dedicated themselves to build war hysteria. It looked as if the country had declared war on an enemy country and every inch of advance by the security forces from Day One of their massive operations was projected as a big achievement and success against the Maoist adversaries.

The strategy of the reactionary rulers was simple. First build up an atmosphere that the enemy, the Maoist revolutionary, who is also the “single biggest threat to the country’s security” (a lie repeated *ad nauseum* by every so-called news analyst and commentator ever since it was uttered by the biggest traitor and imperialist agent Manmohan Singh), has seized a chunk of the Indian Territory, established his own administration and rule, carved out “a state within a state”, rejected the parliamentary democracy, and has engaged in mindless violence, extortion and terrorist acts. Hence it is the duty of the government to establish the authority of the Indian state and the “rule of law” under the Indian Constitution. This was nothing short of “liberation” of the Indian Territory from the enemy. One more mischievous and planned act of the media did was to project the Maoists as a well-equipped, well-trained, numerically significant force, and a formidable enemy, thereby lending legitimacy to the deployment of a massive repressive force. The actual strength of the Maoists was blown out of proportions and deliberately the situation was made to appear as if the fight was going to be fierce. By projecting such a picture the media tried to show how the *santrash bahini* “liberated” Lalgarh, Ramgarh, Kantapahari, Kodashole and other towns and villages without much resistance and how they inflicted a severe blow to the Maoist forces compelling them to retreat. The media made it appear as if it was going to be a repeat of the scenes in Sri Lanka where the Sinhala Army fought pitched battles with the Tamil Tigers.

Having whipped up such war hysteria and created a justification for the brutal offensive unleashed by the state’s armed gangs on the unarmed adivasi population, the media tried to show how each town and village was “liberated” from the Maoists and how the Maoists were on the run unable to confront the massive police force. They propagated that the security forces had scored a big victory without suffering casualties and that the Maoists were unable to offer much resistance.

The fact was that Chidambaram, Buddhadeb and the top police brass all along knew that there were only a few dozen Maoists in the three districts of Purulia-Bankura-West Mednipur, much less in Lalgarh. They knew that it was not possible for its forces to cause serious losses to the Maoists. and this was proved right when, on August 6, a month-and-a-half after the “Operation Lalgarh” began, “not a single Maoist could be arrested or killed even with massive deployment of 6000 forces of various *santrash bahinis* and also several hundred goons of the state-sponsored *hermad bahini*. What has perturbed the rulers in Kolkata and Delhi was the fact that 16 people, 12 of them

CPI(M) cadre or supporters, were annihilated by the Maoists in this short period even in the presence of such a massive repressive force. No wonder, the West Bengal government led by Buddhadeb had to admit on August 6 that anti-Maoist joint operations by Central forces and police in Lalgarh in West Midnapore district were not a total success as no major arrest could be made nor killings of CPI(M) cadre could be stopped

Then why did Chidambaram-Buddhadeb gang mobilise 6000 armed troopers to the area when it is aware that the number of Maoists is really so small? It is very important to understand this. It is not the military strength of the Maoists in Lalgarh—unlike in parts of Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra—that the state and central governments were really afraid of but the mass uprising that shook the authority of the semi-feudal semi-colonial state. If the mass upsurge was not crushed there would be more Lalgarhs across the length and breadth of the country. There would be a parallel administration and judicial system, and the state as well as various so-called parliamentary parties would become irrelevant for the people forever. Seven months of relative self-rule by the adivasis masses has unnerved every political party.

Hence the urgent, compelling need for the reactionary rulers to prove the might of the Indian state and to teach a lesson to all those who might initiate similar uprisings creating nightmares to the tiny comprador corporate elite ruling the country and their imperialist mentors. The entire coverage in the media was orchestrated to bring home this point.

Indian TV Channel outsmarts police in interrogation

When an open spokesperson of the Maoist Party in West Bengal, com Gaur Chakravorty, was arrested under the UAPA a day after the Union Home ministry declared an All India ban on the CPI (Maoist), the print and electronic media went into a hysterical reporting. They claimed that a top Maoist leader was nabbed by the police creating an impression as if he was an underground top-ranking leader of the CPI (Maoist). They hushed up the fact that com Gaur was never underground and had been carrying out open revolutionary propaganda and exposing the brutal reign of terror, cold-blooded murders in the name of fake encounters, abductions and innumerable atrocities carried out by the Indian state on the Maoist revolutionaries and the people at large. The propaganda build-up created the impression in most people that a most wanted, underground, top-ranking leader of the CPI (Maoist) was arrested by the police.

Even more amusing is the manner in which a TV channel conducted an Interview with com Gaur two hours before his arrest. Anyone watching the TV Interview would wonder if it was being conducted by a media person in the studio, or by an Intelligence officer at the notorious Lal Bazaar or hundreds of other torture chambers in the country. Of the 15 questions asked by the Interviewer, a certain Goswamy, not one seems to have emanated from the mouth of a journalist. The corporate media seems to have taken over the job of interrogation from the police. Or have police officials themselves been appointed as TV journalists?

A look at the questions asked shows the police face of the media:

"Where is Koteshwar Rao?"

"Where are your leaders? Are they underground?", "From where do the Maoists get their arms?",

"How do you justify the senseless violence of the Maoists?", and so on.

It was even more amusing to hear the Interviewer telling com Gaur that there were Chinese markings on the arms used by the Maoists and asking: "Are you getting these arms from China and Pakistan? Is it not clear from the Chinese markings on the arms that Maoists get these from across the border?" Should one think it is sheer ignorance or a mischievous play? Whatever it is, drawing such a conclusion about the "foreign hand" by this TV Interviewer by seeing some foreign markings on the arms reflects poorly on his mental faculties. Going by this logic, very few people in the country would be spared from the charge of having connections with foreign lands since most of the things used by them ranging from daily necessities to consumer durables have foreign markings. One can only pity poor Mr. Goswamy who was unable to even consider the possibility that the Maoists might have purchased the arms which are sold everywhere and which fact his channel itself had focused so many times. Moreover, this genius says the Maoists have more sophisticated arms than the police! His ignorance is also revealed when he says the police do not have AK-47s!! More than asking questions this mouthpiece of the comprador big business asserts the views of the reactionary rulers such as: the Maoists are using women and children as human shields, they kill innocent people, and so on. He even issues a threat that the options before the Maoists are over and they have no other go but to give up arms.

Looks as if some TV channels in our country have not just embedded journalists but policemen themselves as their anchors!!



**Comrade Gaur Chakravorty
arrested under UAPA by
Buddhadeb's Social Fascist govt**



**Arnab Goswamy, Times Now.
Police Interrogator ? or
TV anchor ?**

Let us prepare the entire Party, PLGA and the masses at large to defeat the criminal plan of the central-state governments to launch a massive brutal fascist offensive against our movement!

(The following excerpts are taken from a recently issued circular by the Politburo of CPI(Maoist) and released on June 12 2009 with the above call. The circular is entitled **Post-Election Situation-Our Tasks**)

“The baton of terrorism—whether it is branded as Islamic terrorism or Left-wing terrorism—is very much necessary for the rulers to enforce their imperialist-dictated anti-people market fundamentalist policies and to unleash the worst forms of state terror and state-sponsored terror on the struggling people. Just as a George Bush tried to justify the inhuman atrocities by his CIA and mercenary troops in Guantanamo, Abu Ghraib and several torture chambers in the name of containing terrorism and his ‘global war on terror’ which itself is a product of the criminal brains of the military-industrial elites ruling the US, our Manmohan Singhs and Chidambarams too justify, in the name of containing the “threat of terrorism and Left-wing extremism”, their savage, unconstitutional salwa judum in Chattisgarh, Sendra in Jharkhand, various mercenary senas in Bihar, and the limitless atrocities by the CRPF, ITBP, BSF, ERF, and other central para-military forces jointly with Greyhounds, SOG, STF, C-60 commandos, and local police of various states. Burning of adivasi hamlets, displacement of lakhs of adivasis from their traditional lands and homes, mass murders of youth, torture and rape of women, destruction of houses, crops and other property of the poor adivasis, forced closure of the weekly bazaars, are all justified as collateral damage in the so-called “determined fight” against terrorism.

“Thus the unfolding state terror and state-sponsored terror under Sonia-Manmohan-Chidambaram combine will be far more brutal, deadly and savage than under any other regime hitherto witnessed. Just as the reactionary fascist rulers everywhere carry out such savagery by imposing curfews, not permitting media personnel and feeding information and police version selectively, the criminals who have been re-elected to power at the Centre are conspiring to carry out the same in the eight districts in Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Bihar, Orissa, and particularly in Maad (or Abhujmaad as is known to outside world) region. All the preparations are nearing completion on a war-footing.”

“We have to understand that our revolutionary war is a cruel class war. The reactionary rulers will show no mercy in suppressing the revolutionaries and the masses of people who support them. The principal instrument in their hands is the oppressive state machine—police, para-military, military, jails, torture chambers and so on. They aim to contain the Maoist movement and all struggles of the masses principally through military means and go to any extent committing mass murders, tortures, arrests, abductions and illegal detentions, mass rape of women, use of private armed militias or vigilante squads, destroying entire villages and rendering lakhs of people homeless, carrying out psychological war, etc. And, assisted by the imperialists, they have been refining their counter-insurgency tactics as part of their LIC strategy, continuously increasing and modernizing the police, para-military and other armed forces, deploying more and more battalions in the areas of armed struggle, spending huge sums for setting up and further strengthening the intelligence machinery and informer network, setting up scores of private gangs, and so on. The experience of LTTE’s setback in Sri Lanka is very important for us to study and take lessons.”

“As our CC has pointed out several times in the past the reactionary rulers are having their greedy eyes on the mineral wealth of the adivasi areas right from

Bankura-Purulia-Midnapur to Vishakha-Srikakulam Agency in north Andhra. That is why they have been crying hoarse that they are losing control over the natural resources of the country due to Maoist presence in the adivasi areas which the Centre had named as the **"Red Corridor"**.

"Prime Minister himself focused on this real aim of the reactionary rulers in launching the brutal offensive against the adivasi population. Commenting on the danger posed by "Left-wing extremism" he said on June 6 that Naxals are controlling the mineral wealth and other resources of vast backward regions in the country. Mittals, Tatas, Jindals, Essars and the like are offering huge funds for the suppression of the Maoists so as to swallow the entire resources of the region without any hindrance. That is the rationale behind the current massive attack by the State on our forces in Lalgarh in West Bengal, and in Dandakaranya, Bihar, Jharkhand and Orissa and its plans to create a blood-bath. We have to prepare the people of these areas to resist the marauders and mercenaries sent by Sonia-Manmohan-Chidambaram combine to subdue them, destroy their culture, and loot the resources of the entire region stretching from BJO area to AOB zone for the benefit of a handful of exploiters.

"In this nefarious plan all the comprador-feudal parties are united. This is seen in CPI(M)'s collusion with the Congress in suppressing the people's movement in Lalgarh, the BJP-Congress nexus in unleashing the brutal offensive in Dandakatanya, and in Bihar, Orissa and other states. So much is the cooperation between the BJP and Congress in Chhattisgarh that it has become quite difficult to distinguish between the two parties in the state and the Centre. Plans are being drawn up on a war footing to unleash a massive co-ordinated state offensive on Maad. Never before was such a degree of coordination and cooperation achieved between the Centre and state on the Naxal issue."

"Let us utilize the excellent situation arising out of the ever-deepening crisis in the world economy, prepare and mobilize the entire Party, PLGA and mass organizations to face the brutal offensive the enemy is planning to launch on a massive scale in our areas of armed struggle, strengthen and expand our military formations, consolidate and expand our areas of armed struggle, and hasten the process of transforming the guerrilla war into mobile war, PLGA into PLA and guerrilla zones into base areas."



(We are publishing some leaflets and press statements regarding Lalgarh from various organisations that have boldly condemned the state terror and state-sponsored social-fascist terror in West Bengal and have also extended their support to the adivasi mass uprising in Lalgarh))

Lalgarh Solidarity Convention : Oppose 'Operation Lalgarh'!

**Unite All Democratic and Revolutionary Forces
in Support of Lalgarh Movement!**

6th August, 2009

Gandhi Peace Foundation

Time 2 PM to 7PM

Friedns,

The 'left'-front government of West Bengal under the direct supervision of the central government has launched a war against the exploited and oppressed people of Lalgarh. This war on the people has been named as 'Operation Lalgarh'. Thousands of Jawans of the police and paramilitary, such as CRPF, Eastern Frontirer Rifles, Rapid Action Force, Border Security Force, COBRA and others, have been deployed in the intensive military campaign in Lalgarh and nearby areas.

It is know that the Santhali tribals and local people of Lalgarh-Jangalmahal have been fighting for their freedom, self-respect and dignity since the days of British colonialism. Their thirst for dignity and freedom have further motivated them to stand up against the exploitative and pro-imperialist policies of the present governments in West Bengal and the Centre, against the SEZ policy of the state, forceful land acquisition, displacement and police repression. The Santhal tribals of about 1100 villages have been organizing protests and their resistance movement among several other democratic demands raised the important question of brutal police oppression which the people of the region have been subjected to continuously for the last 8-9 months. But, the state government, instead of finding out a just political solution, has started military campaign, in with the active support of the central government throwing to winds all norms of a democratic polity.

The Central Home Minister P. Chidambaram and the Chief Minister Budhadeb Bhattacharya are stating continuously that 'Operation Lalgarh' is not a repressive campaign; its only objective 'to rstore law and order' in the area. But, the truth is that the state has unleashed heavy repression upon the militant tribal movement, going on for the last 8 months against police repression. Intensive police and paramilitary raids are being conducted in villages and forest areas in order to capture the leaders and activists of People's Committee against Police Atrocities (PCAPA) and the Maoists assisting the movement. During these raids, the children, women and the aged people are beaten up, molested/humiliated, their property destroyed looted and their houses burnt. Even the barbaric police and paramilitary forces are throwing excreta into water wells and ponds so as to deprive the people from their only sources of drinking water and other purposes.

Lalgarh movement has its own autonomy, and various political streams are taking part in it. But, the government, by making a hue and cry of Maoists as terrorists, is unleashing massive repression upon the popular mass movement. None of the human rights organizations, democratic intellectuals, social activists, discerning journalists and film makers are allowed to enter the areas as a definite ploy to not let the larger public be privy to the most brutal actions of the police-military. Journalists and members of fact-finding teams, who try to go to the area of Lalgarh, are being beaten up by the police not to say implicated in various false cases. The whole effort of the state is a tell tale example of how one can mockery of democracy while exposing the dparliamentaryd aristocracy.

The situation in Lalgarh is reflective of the malaise that is deepening in the social fabric of the whole country. The people's movement of Lalgarh-Jangalmahal is the movement for the majority exploited and oppressed people of the whole country. And the military action conducted by the central government under the leadership of the so-called 'Left front' government against the movement, is nothing but a blatant attack upon humanity and the rights of the people of the country as a whole. The pressing need of the hour is to organize a country-wide resistance movement against such an operation to silence all froms fo dissent to make people mute spectators at the receiving end, one of the worst exploittive policies that the people of this country have faced.

Now, it has become an immediate responsibility of the democratic forces of the country to raise their voice against the brutal state repression upon the struggling tribals of Lalgarh. They should also stand in solidarity with all people who have been subjected to 'legal' and physical attacks for braving to go to the area to find out the real face of the "Lalgarh operation" indulged in by brutal dpolice and paramilitary. Let us express our solidarity to the defiant and daring struggles of the tribal people of Lalgarh. Let us register our strong opposition to all froms of repression and suppression gong on in the areas of Lalgarh.

We demand:

***stop immediately the 'Lalgarh Operation', against the tribal people of Lalgarh-Jangalmahal and call back all police-paramilitray forces from Lalgarh and nearby areas;**

*** The central and State governments should initiate dialogue with the defiant people's movement of Lalgarh and accept their just demands;**

***Provide due compensation to the affected people due to 'Operation Lalgarh, and punish those police officials responsible for violence, rape, loot and other crimes.**

***Revoke all the cases unconditionally which have been imposed upon the struggling people of Lalgarh and the members of the fact-finding teams;**

***Repeal the draconian Act – UnlawfulActivities Prevention Act (UAPA), 2008;**

***Allow fact-finding and solidaridty teams and journalists to enter the areas of Lalgarh-Jangal mahal.**

Speakers

Justice Rajendra Sachar, Amit Bhattachryya, Sumit Chakravarty, Pankaj Sing, Madan Kashyap and others from participating organizations.

Lalgarh Movement Solidarity Committee, Delhi, All India Federation of Trade Unions (AIFTU), Campaign for Peace & Democracy (Manipur(CPDM), Committee Against Violence on Women(CAVOW), Committee for Release of Political Prisoners (CRPP), Democratic Students Union (DSU), Forum for Democratic Struggle, Inquilabi Mazdoor Kendra (IMK), Indian Council of Trade Union (ICTU), International Association of People's Lawyers (IAPL), Krantikari Lok Adhikar Sanghatan (KLAS), Krantikari Yuva Sanghatan (KYS), Mehnatkash Mazdoor Morcha (MMM). Naujawan Bharat Sabha (NBS), Nepali Jan Adhikar Manch, Naga Students' Union Delhi (NSUD), Peoples Democratic front of INDIA (PDFI), Peoples Union for Demorcratic Rights (PUDR), Revolutionary Democratic Front (RDF), RWC, Anjani Kumar, Pawan Patel, Ravinder Goel, Sarojgiri

glimpses of a rally



Revolutionary Democratic Front (RDF)

All eyes are turned to the East, to the shining path of Lalgarh, the adivasi stronghold in West Midnapur district of West Bengal where a tribal revolt is taking place and sought to be crushed by the brutal repression of the state and central governments. Like the tribal revolts that shook the reigns of British colonialism, the santhals of Lalgarh have decided to resist the fresh onslaught of the imperialist backed model of development that our ruling classes have decided to adopt for their own benefits and the detriment of our people. Today the CRPF, the state police forces and the 'hermads' or goons of the CPI (M), the leading force in the ruling alliance are savagely crushing the movement, rather than considering its just demands – proving that the so-called Communist Party of India Marxist is nothing but a "capitalist" party tailing the same model of development that the Congress or BJP have chalked out for the country. In spite of the stiff resistance by the people of Singur and Nandigram against the land acquisition and SEZ plan, the West Bengal government had the gall to allow the Jindal group (JSW Bengal Steel Ltd) to acquire 5000 acres of land for its steel project in this pristine forest area of Salboni, near Lalgarh and, in Sept 2007, allow it to get SEZ status! This, in spite of the illegality of transferring tribal and forest land, in spite of the fact that this land was allocated to be transferred to the tribal people!! About 8 months ago, on November 2, 2008, when at Salboni, the Jindal group were to conduct the foundation stone laying ceremony, the area looked virtually like a party conference, with red flags, the symbol of the blood and toil of workers, celebrating the land grab and exploitation of the capitalists. It was then that a landmine explosion shattered the convoy and shook the morale of the Chief Minister and Union Minister for Steel Fertilizer and Chemicals, Ram Vilas Paswan, who had come for the ceremony.

Whoever may have been responsible for the attack, the repression fell upon the villagers of Lalgarh. Indiscriminate arrests, beatings and torture; women, children and even a pregnant woman were not spared. One woman lost her eye. The assault was also sexual in nature, as the police and hermads had revealed their expertise in this in Nadigram itself. But the people, as always fought back. The very next day 12000 adivasis gheraoed the Lalgarh police station and the following day a demonstration and rally of 10,000 thronged the area. The struggle between the adivasis on the one hand and the state machinery, the CPM goons and administration on the other began. Soon the area virtually became its name – a red fortress, and the administration and police were totally boycotted by the people. Roads were dug up and cordoned off with trees felled down and no one could enter without the local people's permission.

From here were born the various peoples' committees like the People's Committee against State Repression, the Bharat Jakat Majhi Madwa Juan Gaontha and other Adivasi-Moolvasi Committees that led the agitation.

Their demands were initially of the nature of democratic rights – compensation of Rs 2 lakhs to the women assaulted, release of those arrested and withdrawal of paramilitary forces from the area. They did not demand any death warrants but suggested simple punishments like those responsible should rub their noses on the ground or hold their ears in their hands and apologize to the people! Later, they went beyond this to ask for simple socio-economic demands like land to the adivasis, for electricity and potable water, for health facilities and education in Santhali. They protested the

setting up of projects that were leading to environmental degradation like the Japanese hydro-electric project and sponge-iron industries. They demanded agro-based industries and those from which the people would benefit. They stressed on the 100 day work programme and that minimum wages should be Rs. 125. What an irony that instead of considering these very basic demands, the CPM government should have decided to face the tribal people of their own state with lathis and bullets. The very same party which takes up these demands for workers and peasants in other states and celebrates May Day and Women's Day now has decided to crush the toiling people of the state where it rules. They even went to the extent of joining with the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha of Shibu Soren and forming Adivasi-non-advasi Committee for Peace and Development to crush the movement in the lines of the Salwa Judum of Chhatisgadh.

Having not considered any alternate forms of development in the 33 years of its continuous rule in West Bengal, having dismal figures of unemployment (between 2004 to 2006, 41,24,000 people lost their jobs and only 84,000 acquired jobs in the contract and casual sectors); having neglected its tribal population to this extent, the CPM seems to have dug its own grave. The rigid bureaucratic approach that the party has had with the people, the populist middle class support, by pandering to middle class values and the alienation of dalits, adivasis, minorities and women who see it as patriarchal and pro- upper caste have all gone to turn things sour for them. It is for this reason that the Nadigram, Singur and Lalgarh struggles drew such wide support from various sections of activists, students and intellectuals from the cities, not only of West Bengal but outside as well. Since the struggle in Lalgarh started, city based activists have been lending support, visiting the area with medical help or legal aid...responding far more positively than the government that is supposed to take care of its people. A building housing the CRPF saw the people turning out the forces (at an earlier stage) and housing a health centre run by the People's Committee against Police Atrocities! Journalists visiting the place before the 'police action' have written how roads in the villages were being made by the people's committees.

With water up to its nose, the state government which could have chosen to solve the people's problems chose to turn to the centre for help. The newly formed UPA government responded by promptly declaring the Maoist party as a terrorist organization, just in the way the British government of the colonial days had branded Bhagat Singh and his comrades as terrorists. However, this was just eyewash because the two erstwhile Naxalite groups, the People's War and MCC were scheduled as banned organizations since the last 20 years and now a technical correction of using their new name after their unification was being done. Since it is impossible to "ban" an ideology that is serving the interests of the people, the Maoist movement continues to grow despite the longstanding ban. The state government after some semblance of dilly-dallying decided to arrest a "Maoist" and an activist, Gour Chakraborty, was picked up from a media office in Kolkata city, where he was speaking to the press and the draconian UAPA slapped on him though he has no links with the Maoists at all and may only be having some respect for the ideology. After this the fact finding teams of activists and intellectuals from other states, as well as prominent film makers and artists of Kolkata who tried to visit Lalgarh were detained and charges slapped on them. A film maker, Gopal Menon was brutally beaten up.

In fact, the ruling coalition could have responded to the tribal peoples' grievances long before. Since 1998, the erstwhile People's War and MCC groups had been working among these neglected sections in Belpahari and other areas of Midnapur. Here too, in response, the CPM had take the stand of brutal repression. In 2001 in Chhota Anguria, 5 activists of People's War group had been locked in a hut and burnt alive. Leading activists were arrested, tortured, killed in encounters. The people of Midnapur knew their fate. The only way to lead a respectful life was to unite and resist. They had learnt the lessons from Singur and Nandigram as well. They turned a deaf ear to other ruling class parties as well. After all, what difference is there between the Congress, BJP, Trinamool or CPM except for a few fine lines? The tribal people are organizing by their own standards, not even listening to their traditional elders if their views go against the people's interests. Their organization is democratic giving equal representation to men and women. They organized so widely that it was difficult to crush them. They came in bus loads to hold rallies Kolkata city carrying their traditional weapons, their songs, dances and musical instruments, inspiring the people, tired of commercialization, like a fresh breeze. But like a sick person afraid of the wind, the CPM administration banned the entry of the adivasi women from Midnapur when in early June, this year; they were to hold a rally against Violence on Women. They began the crackdown, arresting, torturing, raping, and spreading the lies that the desperate do when they are exposed. But the people of Lalgarh, of Midnapur and Jharkhand will not give up. Nor will the other sections where the agrarian crisis and the imperialist backed pattern of development is driving thousands to suicide and starvation, where displacement is giving rise to huge agitations. The worldwide economic crisis is still smothered behind another cloud of lies and its effects will soon be felt. With large-scale retrenchment, closures and food crisis, the suffering people will turn to the only answer they know...struggle! And as the ruling classes try to divide them with religion and caste or ethnicity, the masses will learn their lessons as the people of Lalgarh have done and turn the tables upside down. The people are making history and we have no alternative but to join it!

.....



Expose SFI-CPM's Lies!

Stand by Lalgarh's Struggle against State Repression!

Masses make their own histories, not in the best of circumstances of their own choice but in the circumstances given to them. –Marx

The old is dying and the new is struggling to be born; in this interregnum there arises a great diversity of morbid symptoms.

–Gramsci

As more and more write-ups and commentaries on the people's uprising in Lalgarh is pouring in, it is important to respond to some of the salient points that keep coming up albeit couched in political sophistry. Whether it is from the sensation-crazed media or from Karats to Yechury, Biman Bose or Buddhadeb and their likes in the Liberation, or the SFI and AISA in this campus, all have striking similarities. The most striking aspect which also speaks volumes of their political bankruptcy is their latent and mortal fear to accept that people, the masses of the people, can also think. They do have a political will determined by their objective and subjective experiences of the harsh realities of eking out a livelihood in some of the most economically backward regions of the subcontinent. This is a deliberate vice of all ruling class ideologies and their practitioners to portray people as lifeless beings, empty receptacles who can only be 'gullible' and 'innocent'. So like the "white man's burden" it is for the righteous CPM, Liberation and their torchbearers in the campus—including some of the learned faculty—to show the people the 'true' path. But this path is of servility to the existing exploitative, blood-thirsty policies promoted by all the political parties that have put their money-bags in the parliament.

Why are these parties insisting that the people of Lalgarh are gullible, ignorant, innocent, illiterate...? It is only in that way they can justify their massive police-paramilitary build up in the region to 'liberate' the people from the clutches of the Maoists who have led them astray under the barrel of the gun. What CPM, Liberation, SFI and AISA is conveniently forgetting is that the same people of Lalgarh has long been fighting the *harmads*, the fascist goons of the CPM armed to the teeth with ammunition provided from the government ordinance factories. These storm-troopers were the forces through which the CPM used to maintain their control over the people, enforce elections, corner government money meant for the development of the adivasis, and maintain an informers' network which used to work in tandem with the police. So to say the Maoists have terrorised the people of Lalgarh into submission to indulge in their 'infantile disorder' is to refuse to admit the bold and daring initiative of the masses of Jangalkhand, their efforts to build a future free from all forms of exploitation and domination.

The efforts to build health centres, roads linking up all the villages, small check dams and other water harvesting methods through which they have managed two crops a season are all definite indicators of the political will of the people, their vision of their future. Through these efforts where the people –adivasis and dalits were at the centre of development and not CPM and its village strongmen – the impoverished masses of Lalgarh has succeeded in freeing themselves from CPM's stranglehold in the last eight months of the movement against state repression, and to reverse their dependency on migratory labour outside the region. This people who have dared to manage their own future can rebel against any form of domination and exploitation, and as per SFI if the Maoists are doing that, then they too will be taught a lesson by the masses. The People's Committee have given an open call for everyone to visit

these areas to have a first hand knowledge of what is becoming and what is passing away in the unfolding struggle of Lalgarh. Perhaps the SFI and AISA members should go to these areas and see the initiative of the masses for themselves, and discover the truth.

SFI was quoting Mao perhaps to teach the DSU a lesson or two on the need for politics to be in command of all the actions by the revolutionaries. But strangely one thing that is missing in all the SFI and AISA pamphlets was politics from the point of view of the oppressed, deprived, discriminated and exploited. While reading Mao, SFI might have also come across this great insight from that Marxist practitioner—*to have faith in the masses and only the masses. All the parliamentary parties fear the masses. Whenever the masses rise in revolt they grab the constitution which normally and conveniently they forget*. They turn upside down all dissidence of the people into a 'law and order' question. So when Yechury is busy asking Manmohan Singh to show his seriousness by deploying the forces with immediate effect in Lalgarh and adjoining areas, Prakash Karat makes a song and dance about the virtues of dealing with the Maoists politically and 'administratively'.

To add to this, Brinda Karat has gone senile to the extent that she has harped on the imperialist backed (for CPM's alleged opposition to the Nuke Deal) efforts of the Congress-Trinamul-'Ultra Left' combine to dislodge a democratically elected government of West Bengal. In all this double-talk of the CPM leaders, their fascist face could not be hidden from the masses. Soon they set the gun on Chidambaram's shoulder to declare the CPI (Maoist) as a terrorist organisation. So much for their political and ideological dealing with the Maoists. They have even declined to differentiate between the Maoists and the members of the People's Committee leading the struggle, paving way for the persecution of one and all resisting state repression. When we look into the arms-haul made from the CPM office in Khejuri near Nandigram—which Mamata Banerjee had declared as 'liberated from the clutches of CPM'—nobody asked as to how a party could have police uniforms and ammunition from the ordinance factories in its office. Predictably, there was no police-paramilitary operation against Mamata's 'liberated' Khejuri. This also shows the class character of ruling class oppression of all forms of dissent—whether armed or unarmed—that are genuinely from the masses of the people. As long as it is turf war between CPM and Trinamul, Congress or BJP, it is not a law and order question.

SFI has blamed the Maoists for making people's struggles a 'law and order' question. Does that mean the people do not have any right to defend themselves against the flagrant violation of their right to livelihood, dignity, and security? There was also an indication that in Kandhamal it was due to the Maoist killing of the Hindu Fascist Lakshmanananda that the people of Kandhamal had to suffer the persecution of the RSS-Bajrang Dal goons. So does that mean by the same standards, the people of Lalgarh have to suffer in the hands of the security forces because the Maoists sided with the oppressed masses? The SFI should come clear. They would make even an RSS and ABVP proud with their findings, which lacks any class analysis and reads like the handout of the officialdom.

Today anyone who defiantly speak against the anti-people policies of the government and at the same time keep all ruling class parties away from their struggle are branded Maoists. And Chidambaram-Buddha combine have also called the Maoists as terrorists. The SFI taking cue from that has also started profiling the

very ideology of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism. If they have differences with the ideology of the revolutionaries, they should state first their ideological-political differences. Who is the genuine representative of the revolutionary ideals of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Mao and all people's heroes will be determined by those who have dared to make their own histories not in circumstances of their own choice but in circumstances given to them. Lalgarh and its people have dared to do it. The progressive and democratic forces including the Maoists have said they are with them. It is only the CPM, SFI, Liberation and AISA by indulging in duplicity have turned against the fighting masses, or are parroting the oft-repeated sophistry that 'innocent' [read ignorant] people are caught between the state and the Maoists. They should know that the failure of the revisionist CPM in West Bengal or Kerala does not mean the defeat of communist ideology in the subcontinent. It only shows the failure of a party that turned against the cause of social change by caricaturing Marxism, by becoming a part of the Indian ruling class, and thereby the trusted agents of imperialism, feudalism and the big bourgeoisie. The complete failure of CPM in addressing the genuine demands of the adivasis and poor peasants even after their 30 years of virtual reign in West Bengal is a tell-tale sign of the party's deviation from the basics of Marxist politics. Their reactionary political ideology as is visible from the failure of land redistribution among the masses, and also from the invitation to the Tatas and Jindals for establishing the industries at the cost of poor peasants and adivasis. It is no different from Congress and BJP's pro-imperialist political line.

Branding anyone who is standing against state oppression as Maoists has become a license to torture and kill. And it is not a new tactic, it was employed when dalit Christians were burnt alive by the RSS goons in Orissa, in persecuting adivasis in the name of Salwa Judum, in the cold-blooded murder of adivasi youths on mere suspicion of being Maoist supporters in Chattisgarh, and in the present state repression in Lalgarh. The SFI is trying hard to justify the butchering of poor adivasis because they have started to resist the perpetuation of decades of organized and systemic violence on the most oppressed sections of the society. The SFI is ruining the punishment of Avijit Mahatos and Anuj Pandeys of the CPM, who has generated people's wrath because of their fascist stranglehold over the poor masses. SFI must understand that Marxist politics is not what is propagated by CPM, but what is manifested by the conviction of Lalgarh's adivasi masses to fight against the ruling class's dictatorship. No amount of 'course-correction' and 'introspection' can save CPM from its eminent doom, and no amount of repression can break the resolve of the heroic Lalgarh masses for their liberation.

Withdraw the State and Central para-military and police force from Lalgarh!
Immediately address the demands of the Adivasis!

Join **PROTEST DEMONSTRATION**

of intellectuals, workers, students, youths, writers and social activists
called by Revolutionary Democratic Front (RDF) and Naujawan Bharat Sabha (NBS)

11am, 30th June 2009 (Tuesday)

in front of CPM Office, (A K Gopalan Bhavan), Bhai Veer Singh Marg

ASSOCIATION FOR PROTECTION OF DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS (APDR)

PRESS RELEASE

22 JULY 09

Lalgarh operations enter 35th day

Normal life is continuing to be affected in large areas of three western districts of WB in the Lalgarh operations jointly undertaken by the combined forces of the central and state for the 35th day today. In a situation, when the area has been sealed off and no persons are allowed to enter the area except a few media persons, reports of gross human rights violations continue to be trickling in in media. From the media reports, statements of state government officials and other sources it has been learnt that almost all the villagers were forced to flee their homes for varying periods in the face of armed operation by combined forces, people, including women and children are being brutally assaulted, household articles and valuables are ransacked, looted and destroyed during search operations, daily necessities has become non available. A large number of people has been arrested for which there is no clear data, people arrested are almost invariably being charged with various sections under Chapter VI of the IPC relating to sedition, conspiracy against state etc. and for which the required statutory permission of the Governor is being made available indiscriminately.

Almost all educational institutions are kept closed to make room for the accommodation of the huge forces and students agitating peacefully for their classes to be held were repeatedly replied with brutal Tear gas and lathicharges. In addition the meager health services facilities available in the area were suspended as the health centres too were occupied by the combined forces.

APDR'S VIEWS AND DEMANDS ON THE LALGARH SITUATION

1. The basic problem in Lalgarh and other similar areas is that of nondevelopment and underdevelopment, of hunger, of deprivation, of denial of social justice. The socio-economic problem is compounded and aggravated by the State Government's policy and resolve to counter the Maoist politics with large scale arbitrary and indiscriminate police atrocities since 2002. The November 2008 outburst of the people's anger against police atrocities is only a consequence of state's insensitive and repressive handling of a socio-economic and political problem.

We hold, and all past experiences show that there can be no military solution of the Lalgarh or similar problems, the only way out is a political process and dialogue.

2. The state government was holding negotiations with the "Peoples' Committee against Police Atrocities (PCPA)" to end the seven month old agitations going on there. The last round of talks were held on 12 June, which decided to continue the dialogue and the next round of talks was scheduled to be held on 14 July. Without waiting for the dialogues and without announcing that the path of negotiation to solve the problem is being abandoned, the government initiated the campaign by the combined forces. This only worsened the situation and there is no indication (and even no claim from the state government) that a viable and lasting solution is in sight on this 35th day of campaign.

APDR welcomes the PCPA's persistent call even during this whole period of operations by the combined forces to resume negotiations and condemns the government's attitude of spurning the offer and resolve to seek a military solution of a problem which is essentially socio-economic and political in nature.

A Short Note on Lalgarh Operations, UAPA, Police reform and Human Rights

As war is not 'declared' against the Maoists in Lalgarh, human rights laws and obligations takes precedence over everything. Operation should not exceed what is minimally required to restore law & order. Govt. has to strictly follow the rule of law.

But, the rule of law collides with basic human rights when it is UAPA, 2008 based as is in the Lalgarh case. The 2008 amendments have not altered the provisions in the 2004 Act regarding immunity from prosecution for government officers and authorities and for members of the armed forces. Thus, an individual wrongly arrested, detained, tortured and/or imprisoned and other barbaric acts committed by the security forces has virtually no legal recourse to seek compensation or combat impunity. There is no safeguard against the executive misuse despite the existence of Section 45(2) . Also, the state govt is evading Apex Court Order dated 22.09.2006 in Writ Petition (Civil) No. 310 of 1996 regarding police reforms, and it has yet to establish a Police Complaints Authority to ensure that police actions are within the law and to allow citizens to lodge complaints against police abuse of power such as arbitrary arrest and detention which the people are complaining of. On the contrary, Sec144 is clamped to debar human rights activists and other concerned public to visit Lalgarh and conduct fact-finding and subsequently verify this or that claim of the government side.

UAPA ,2008 abrogated presumption of innocence i.e. right to a fair trial along with forfeiting the right to silence for the people. But, the state reserves its right to be presumed innocent after resorting to all sorts of brutalities and enjoy right not to disclose what made it jump into such a big coin venture against the so-called Maoist terrorism. Even the WB govt partners are not so convinced about such a state-terrorist venture in Lalgarh except the CM & his party men. The state has preferred to act mainly on the basis of suspicion which is inherently difficult to disprove. That's why it chose draconian UAPA, 2008. This is just an expression of a terrorist mindset of the govt. Lalgarh facts proved the urgency of a thorough police reform together with reforms of existing criminal justice system and eradication of the deep rooted corruption in administrative machinery of the state of West Bengal.

The Government side has waged a sub-conventional war against the people of Lalgarh organized under the banner of PCPA . Such actions are only valid under certain conditions under international law. The intensity of hostilities and the regularity and mode of armed clashes prior to 18th June, 2009 in Lalgarh does not support the Govt's decision to go for such a large-scale counter-insurgency operation as is undertaken in Lalgarh and adjacent areas.

In Lalgarh the opposing forces are the CPI(M) activists on the one hand and on the other, the victims of police brutalities organized under the banner of PCPA. The PCPA is neither declared a terrorist outfit, nor a rebellion group by the Govt. The 13-Point demand charter of the PCPA is not a call for a war against the state. Rather, it was an eye-opener to all about the virtual *Police Raj* in vogue in Lalgarh as is true for every Police Station area in West Bengal .

Utter failure of the state administration to developmental drives forcing the indigenous people of the state to live in a condition of abject poverty and the clandestine intention of the state overnment to hand over fields ,mines and forests to the organized class of speculative traders and businessmen of dubious origin needs to immediately

reversed. In realm of political administrative setup of West Bengal today the least respected things are the human rights.

The govt should explain why no stringent action was taken against the police personnel who tortured people in Lalgarh, who killed Rizwanur Rahman , who've made police stations hell for the people and why various reports of the police commissions were not paid heed to at all? Those who gritted their teeth for getting hold of the state police administration and finally got it, should explain it first before raising fingers at others and hoist unfounded allegations.

A healthy, well-functioning democracy, good governance, a secular and liberal mind-set, which makes no distinction between the majority and the minority and treats both as equal in the eyes of the law and the political leadership, an administration, which has attentive eyes and ears for the grievances and feelings of the people and the required sensitivity to redress the reasonable grievances instead of letting them fester are essential minimum prerequisites for a successful countering low-intensity conflicts throughout the state.

PUCL president Kannabiran on Lalgarh

June 25, 2009

President of People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) KG Kannabiran has come down heavily on the West Bengal Government as well as the Centre for unleashing a wave of repression against the people living in Lalgarh. In a letter to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, the PUCL president said that there were complaints against the CPM's vigilante motorcycle riders who had become a law unto themselves after Jindals were given land for setting up an SEZ. He took objection to the Centre deploying Army, which cannot differentiate between common people and the ultras, to deal with the Maoists and to quell a constitutionally valid right. "Maoist intervention or for that matter any political intervention on account of the failure of the successive governments to perform their fundamental obligations could not be considered an act of terrorism and justify invocation of draconian laws," Kannabiran said. He pointed out that to consider any political movement as a problem is obnoxious, particularly when it is persisting for over four decades.

Banning an organisation or killing its members in "encounters" had never provided the answer to a problem, he said and urged the Prime Minister not to tread this punitive course of action. Kannabiran wanted the Prime Minister to "to fix certain economic and social goals for immediate attainment of non-violent revolution and any resistance to these demands would only complicate the problem". He said that he was not against any peace talks and the State could call the Maoists to suspend armed violence by staying all moves by the Army and para-military forces and withdrawing Cobras and other intelligence agencies from all States. The Prime Minister could ask the Maoists to come forward with their demands on issues affecting the people in the areas like Singur, Nandigram and Lalgarh assuring immunity to them at least for a period of four weeks initially, he suggested.

Police, “Harmad vahini” and Lalgarh people

Many media houses are branding as ‘anarchy’. We have a different opinion. We have seen the genuine anger of the people, their tolerance, their suffering. And we have no hesitation at all in holding the police, administration and CPM responsible for the current precipitation of the situation.

The fact finding team of nine students from Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) visited Lalgarh recently to probe into the realities of the ongoing movement of the people in the area. Here is the preliminary report on details of what was observed.

We heard through various media and other sources that there had been massive state repression in Lalgrah and other adjacent areas in November 2008, after the attempted mine blast on the convoy of Buddhadeb Bhattacharya. We heard of incidents of rampant police atrocity especially on women and school children in Chhotopelia and Katapahari. We also heard that post that rampage the people there have formed the Pulishi Santrash Birodhi Janasadharoner Committee (PSBJC) and have blockaded Lalgarh and other areas out of police and other administration. With these preliminary facts we had been inside to Lalgarh.

We stayed there from 7th of June to the 10th of June. We visited the Chhotapelia, Katapahari, Bohardanga, Sijua, Dain Tikri, Sindurpur, Madhupur, Babui Basha, Shaluka, Moltola Kadoshol, Basban, Papuria, Komladanga, pukhria, Korengapara, gopalnagar, Khash jongol, Shaalboni, Shaal danga, Andharmari, Darigera, Bhuladanga, Chitaram Dahi, Teshabandh, Bhuladanga villages and talked extensively to people. We attended one big meeting in Lodhashuli called by the Committee and witnessed other small meetings which were held inside the villages. The current firing and frontal battle between the people and the state and CPM in Dharampura and Madhupur/Shijua had started while we were there. So we believe we have observed many facets of this movement pretty closely.

The visit to Lalgrah and talking closely to people broke many of the myths which we still held before going there. After listening to the chronological narrative of the history of police atrocities in the area, we realized that the November incident was not unique. It was just the continuation of extreme state terror and police atrocities that the people of the regions have tolerated since 2000. What is unique this time is the resistance.

The people in all the villages virtually demonstrated how police had tortured them, entered houses at the wee hours of night to break everything and beat up people in the name of ‘raids’, how any movement of the people at night even to look for their cattles were banned, how almost in every family there is some one or the other who had been booked for being a ‘Maoist’, how 90 year old Maiku Murmu of Teshabandh was beaten to death by the police way back in 2006. Young school girls were regularly molested by the police in the pretext of ‘body check’, women were forced to show their genitals at night during ‘raids’ to confirm their gender. Before every election 30-40 people from every village were picked up as ‘Maoists’ in order to debilitate the opposition. The incident of Chhotopelia, where a number of women were ruthlessly beaten up and one of them Chhitamoni lost her eye, virtually broke the limit of patience of the people. They have now risen up against this long drawn police atrocity.

Coupled with Police terror they talked of CPM terror too. CPM cadres and leaders have only acted as informers to police they said. Today when we saw the jubilation among people after demolishing Anuj Pandey's house, we can understand the emotions of the people. Because what we saw among the people was utter hatred for CPM. They showed us around in Madhupur how the local panchayat office was turned into a camp of the harmad vahini. They told us how the 'motor cycle army' of the harmads zoomed around the villages, terrorizing people, breaking their houses brutally, firing in the air, and beating people up. We talked to one villager whose house was being demolished by the harmad, he helplessly kept calling the police to no vein. It was only after an armed resistance was put up, that the harmads were forced to retreat to Memul and further to Shijua.

Similarly, they narrated the incident of Khash Jongol, where because of the lack of armed preparedness from the committee, the harmads abruptly entered with the help of the police and open fired and killed three people, injuring three others and fled.

Police and CPM are not just in alliance, they are the same thing. They told us how the police stood as mute spectator whenever the harmads went on a rampage. The haramds have even used police jeeps to move around. The local CPM cadres provide information about the people within the villages to the police.

From our team, therefore when we see the current violence, which many media house is branding as 'anarchy', we have a different opinion. We have seen the genuine anger of the people, their tolerance, their suffering. And we have no hesitation at all in holding the police, administration and CPM responsible for the current precipitation of the situation.

The committee was formed against police atrocity. But what impressed us most was the alternative developmental work that the Committee and the people have been doing inside Lalgarh in the past seven months. These areas are marked by extreme poverty and backwardness. Rainfall is scanty and the people are dependent only on rainfall for agriculture. We saw the dysfunctional government canal, which is lying dry. They described the faulty nature of governmental dams which ultimately dry up the natural falls. The showed us the pathetic condition of roads which becomes completely inaccessible during the monsoons. The Committee on its own has made 20 km of roads with red stone chips ('morrum'). The people have volunteered labour to make these roads. The total cost to make this 20 km of road, they showed were Rs. 47,000, while the panchayat always shows at least Rs. 15,000 for 1 km of road. They have repaired quite a few tube wells, and have installed new ones at half the price than the panchayat. They have started to make a check dam in Bohardanga to fight the water crisis. The two best things that have been done by the Committee is to start land distribution and run a health center in katapahari. The vested forest lands are supposed to be distributed to the landless tribals according to a bill passed by the west Bengal government. But it never happened. Now the committee is taking initiative in Bansheri and other villages to distribute the vested empty lands adjacent to the forests to the people who have no land. We saw the distribution of the patta in one village. The condition of health facilities was also in a pathetic state in the villages, as there was not a single functional health center. The nearest ones are in Lalgarh and Ramgarh town. Patients often died the way to the hospital, often there had been cases of snake bite of the people who were carrying the patients to the hospital in the

monsoon. There was a dysfunctional building in Katapahari which was supposed to be a health center. The administration decided to turn it into a police camp. After police boycott, the committee turned it into a health center. Doctors from Kolkata and other regions visit there thrice a week. It is flocked by more than 150 patients every day.

We had also attended a huge meeting called by the Committee in Lodhashuli against a sponge iron factory located in the region. We visited the factory site and saw the adverse effect of pollution on the trees and regions. The people informed that even the paddy grown in the region have turned black, so much so that even the panchayat has refused to accept the paddy. There are hospitals and schools in the vicinity of such polluting factory. The meeting despite a bus strike called by CPM was attended by huge masses of people (around 12000), coming from different parts of the district. It was a vibrant meeting, where the committee resolves among other things to boycott the factory and build a resistance to stop the factory for good.

The presence of the Maoists within Lalgarh is one of the most contended issues right now. We saw the open presence of Maoists and their mass acceptance. They paste posters and have also held meetings where about ten thousand people have participated. And unlike the popular myth that Maoists are outsiders from Jharkhand etc. we saw the Maoist brigade to be flocked by locals. The people are pretty clear about the need for an armed resistance in the face of the regular joint attacks by the CPM and the state. The restriction of carrying traditional arms by them is a clear signal by the state to debilitate this movement.

By the time we left Lalgarh, the struggle has intensified. By now the people have been successful in making their immediate enemy CPM to escape along with the police. The enthusiasm we saw in the people was exuberant. For the first time they are being part of not some vote minting political party but a committee which is their own organization. They are living a life free of state terror and building their own developmental projects. In different villages many residents held one opinion in common, 'we have got independence for the first time'. Their fight is against age old exploitation, deprivation, torture and terror. In this way this is a historic fight. And we strongly feel that what is deemed 'anarchy' by many is real struggle for independence.

We urge the media houses to revisit Lalgarh. The movement has its roots in the extreme impoverished socio economic conditions of the people because of the inaction of the state. To the state is bound to strike back to this fight of the people. The CRPF will soon come back with the orders to open fire on the resilient masses. The state government is also shamelessly asking the notorious and infamous Grey hounds and Cobra to come and crush the people's movement. And that will be the most unfortunate and condemnable thing. The anger of the masses against massive state terror, underdevelopment and corruption is valid. And so is the long awaited fight against it. We are going to publish a detailed report back in Delhi about this movement of the people. We remember that the media especially the regional media in Bengal had played a pretty progressive role during the Nandigram movement and would appeal to you to also stand by the people of Lalgarh and their genuine fight before the state carries out yet another genocide.

Thanking you,

Priya Ranjan, Banojyotsna, Anirban, Gogol, Kusum, Reyaz, Yadvinder, Veer Singh and Sumati.

Growing protests against the state offensive in Lalgarh and Solidarity to the Lalgarh mass uprising

A forum called Lalgarh Mancha (Lalgarh Forum) was formed with Mahasweta Devi as the convenor on 26 June 2009.

At a press conference at Kolkata, on behalf of the new forum(LM), Sujato Bhadra highlighted the main demands: 1) Immediate withdrawal of joint forces from Lalgarh; 2) Immediate cessation of state terror in Lalgarh; 3) Repeal the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act(UAPA); 4) No organization can be banned; 5) Immediate unconditional release of all political prisoners including Gour Chakraborty; 6) Withdrawal of the case under section 144 against the intellectuals. It was pointed out that no ideology can be banned. The Lalgarh Mancha does not consider the CPI(Maoist) a terrorist organization. As none of the constitutionalist parties could solve the problems of Jangal Mahal, the villagers themselves had invited the Maoists to fight for their cause. Finally, Sujato Bhadra said that all the contending parties should sit together and try to resolve the problems through discussion(*Dainik Statesman*, 27 June 2009). Anuradha Talwar, Manik Mandal, Sabyasachi Deb, Pradip Banerjee and others spoke.



Mahasweta Devi

On 28 June, Mahasweta Devi said that the whole military operation against the adivasi people was conducted to hand over large chunks of land to the Jindal industrial group so as to set up a SEZ there. She urged upon the people to build up a mass movement in solidarity with the Lalgarh people's struggle(*Dainik Statesman*, 29 June 2009). Rajkishore, Debabrata Bandyopadhyay and Gopal Menon, among others, spoke on that day. The dharna mancha in College Square continued for some days and decision was taken to organize a mass procession on 11 July with as many participants as possible. Meanwhile, decisions were taken to initiate matador campaigning in different corners of Kolkata from 8 to 10 July. A number of organizations are reported to have decided to organize a procession on 9 July in Asansol, district Bardhaman.

Rallies were held in other areas as well. The Bandi Mukti Committee(Political prisoners' release committee), WB, organized a demonstrative programme on 26 June in front of the office of the district magistrate, Nadia district with a 8-point charter of demands, which included immediate withdrawal of joint forces from Lalgarh, cessation of police terror, granting of political prisoner status to captives and the immediate unconditional release of all political prisoners(*Dainik Statesman*, 27 June 2009). On 30 June, in the town of Berhampur, district Murshidabad, eight organizations organized a mass sit-in demonstration at the crossing of the Berhampur Textile College amidst torrential rains. Civil rights bodies, cultural organizations, Union of rickshaw-pullers, workers' union, college students joined the programme(*Dainik Statesman*, 1 July 2009).

Discontent is brewing also among the adivasis in other districts. The adivasis of Murshidabad took to the streets on 6 July against state repression of the adivasis of Jangal Mahal. On that day, more than 100 adivasis on Nabagram block gheraoed the Nabagram police station and demonstrated. The secretary of the cell of the block told reporters on 7 July: "The state government is solely responsible for the volatile situation in Lalgarh. In the name of nabbing the Maoists, the intense brutality has been perpetrated on the adivasis of that place. We are demanding immediate cessation of military operation and sit down for dialogue with due respect to their hopes and aspirations, failing which police station would be gheraoed for an indefinite period".

On 6 July at the initiative of the Berhampur branch of Paschimbanga Ganasanskriti Parishad protest demonstration was held by the intellectuals at the crossing of the Berhampur Textile College(*Dainik Statesman*, 8 July 2009).

Political prisoners on hunger strike in protest against the state offensive on Lalgarh adivasis

Thirteen Maoist political prisoners in Krishnanagar jail in the Nadia district of WB started an indefinite hunger strike from 22 June demanding withdrawal of joint forces from Lalgarh and resolution of problems through mutual discussion(*ABP*, 23 June 2009). About 100 political prisoners from different parties started an indefinite hunger strike in Alipur Central Jail, Kolkata from 24 June(*Dainik Statesman*, 25 June 2009).

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women at a rally



Comrade Chatradhar Mahato
PCAPA leader



Police personnel



Protests in other countries against state offensive in Lalgarh

There have been a number of protest demonstrations in foreign countries. On 2 July, there was a demonstration in front the office of the Indian High Commission in Aldwich, UK organized by the ILPS. On 8 July, people demonstrated in front of the Indian High Commission office at Athens, Greece condemning military intervention in Lalgarh. Another demonstration took place in Birmingham, UK on 10 July organized by the ILPS(International League of People's Struggle). There are news of preparations of more such protests in Canada and the USA also. Lalgarh has become an inspiring symbol of resistance against displacement, destitution and state terror.

Statement of ILPS

Support the Heroic Struggle of Adivasis in Lalgarh, India

Over the past week, thousands of Indian police and paramilitary forces have descended on Lalgarh, West Bengal to crush the just struggle of the adivasis (tribal people). Progressive people around the world must raise our voices to help break the reign of military terror that has been unleashed upon the people.

In November 2008, the adivasis of Lalgarh rose up against decades of abuse by the police and the "new landlords," the local kingpins of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), commonly known as "CPM." This is the same "communist" party that tried to take away peasants' land in Nandigram and Singur, only to be beaten back and exposed by determined struggle.

In recent years, hundreds of adivasis in the Lalgarh area have been imprisoned on false charges of having ties with the Maoist insurgency. They formed the People's Committee against Police Atrocities (PCPA), which has extended its influence to hundreds of villages in the Lalgarh area. In recent months, Maoist activists who have been working in the area for years initiated development projects for drinking water, irrigation, roads and health centers that have involved over 200,000 people.

After CPM cadre fired on a demonstration led by the PCPA in early June, thousands of adivasis burned down CPM offices and police camps, symbols of unbridled power and oppression. As the movement spread to new areas, the West Bengal Left Front government, led by the CPM, asked the central government to send in its armed forces to "retake" the area. As several thousand West Bengal police and central paramilitaries moved towards Lalgarh, they were met with dug up roads, felled trees and massed demonstrations of adivasis trying to obstruct their progress. They also were dogged by landmines and a series of ambushes by the Maoist forces. It took them 2 1/2 days to reach the Lalgarh police station.

When the police and paramilitaries reached Lalgarh, they moved to teach the adivasis a lesson. CPM cadre dressed in police uniforms pointed out homes of PCPA members. Police broke into their houses and dragged villagers outside to be beaten. Children were not spared; they broke the leg of a seven year old boy. Hundreds of women were stripped naked and humiliated: a woman was raped with a rifle butt by a policeman. The paramilitaries forced local youths to act as "human shields," searching for hidden mines and explosives. Faced with this brutality, tens of thousands

of adivasis were forced to flee their villages. Hundreds of houses have been burnt down and several thousand families were herded out of their villages. More than 20,000 people are placed now in make shift camps looked after by the opposition parties.

Even during this military operation, the Maoists operating in the area held mass meetings of villagers only a few kilometers from the state forces. According to the Bengali daily Sanbad Pratidin of June 27, the U.S. and Israel have provided technical assistance that has allowed a recently launched Indian satellite to locate Maoist guerilla units in the dense forests. The West Bengal government also clamped down on outside observers. A team of intellectuals from Kolkata, included the film maker Aparna Sen, that visited Lalgarh and called for a cease fire was arrested and charged with subversion. A week later, the Communist Party of India (Maoist) was banned throughout India, and Gour Chakravarthy, the open spokesperson of the CPI (Maoist) in West Bengal, was arrested in Kolkata while giving an interview inside the studio of a TV channel in Kolkata.

The adivasis of Lalgarh need the support of progressive and freedom-loving people around the world. The brutality of the West Bengal state and the Indian government must be brought into the light of day.

The International League of People's Struggle (ILPS), (a worldwide alliance of democratic, anti-imperialist mass organizations) supports the heroic and just struggle of the people of Jangal Mahal -Lalgarh and condemns the reactionary and anti-people ruling classes in India that hand in glove with the imperialist powers are hell bent on use of brute force to crush the peoples resistance.

We urge all ILPS members, and other progressive, democratic and anti-imperialist people everywhere, to urgently build support for the struggling people of Lalgarh. Statements of support, public meetings, and demonstrations at Indian embassies and consulates around the world can put pressure on the state to withdraw its occupying forces, and can let the struggling people of Lalgarh know that they have friends far beyond West Bengal.

**Down with the fascist aggression of the CPM, the WB state and
Central Indian state against people of India!
Down with the imperialism, Zionism and all other reaction!
Support the Heroic Struggle of Adivasis in Lalgarh, India!**

Arman Riazi, General Secretary

International League of Peoples' Struggle(ILPS)

28/06/09

[Further information on the resistance of the people in Lalgarh and Jangal Mahal can be obtained from ILPS websites (www.ilps-web.com) and the website of the International Campaign against Force Displacement and SEZ www.no2displacement.org

LALGARH: WHOSE SIDE ARE YOU ON?

The People of Lalgarh have spoken! The adivasis of India have spoken!! The voices of oppressed people of the Third World everywhere are calling for another round of freedom struggles!!!

Whose side are you on?

On 18 June 2009 the federal government rushed 6 companies of Border Security Force (BSF) and 4 teams of CoBra, a special security force descended on Lalgarh in a massive operation against the tribal populations of the West Midnapore region of West Bengal. Why? On 2 November when the Chief Minister of West Bengal and the federal minister for mining were returning from the inauguration of the Jindal Steel Works in a new Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in Salboni in West Midnapore district, a landmine explosion occurred targeting the ministerial convoy. Since the mid nineties when the Indian government launched its economic liberalization programme following "globalization", it has taken away thousands of acres of land from adivasis, dalits and poor peasants and handed them over to transnational companies, Indian and foreign. The state has created SEZs where industries are exempted from environmental, labour, and tax laws and from the judicial processes of country. 5000 acres of land was taken by the government of West Bengal for a SEZ, where 500 acres was given to Jindal, a leading Indian multinational steel company with interests in India and outside, including Bolivia a country with a large indigenous population. The ministerial convoy was returning after celebrating the displacement of thousand of adivasis from their homeland in the company of Jindal. Instead of investigating the mine blast on 5 November the state began a massive police operation against the people of the region arresting them indiscriminately, torturing and raping them, and killing many. None of this is unusual. Adivasis have always been arrested indiscriminately, tortured, raped and jailed. What is different is that this time the people of Lalgarh said ENOUGH IS ENOUGH. They gathered at the police station where three school boys had been detained and demanded:

1. Unconditional apology from the superintendent of police for the indiscriminate arrests, torture, rape and illegal detention of the people.
2. Apology from the policemen involved in the operations.
3. Compensation for those injured and families of the dead.
4. All negotiations be held in public and not behind closed doors.

Their demands have met with support from a wide area to the point where 1000 sq. acres is bounded off and the area is expanding. The Indian state says this is an attempt to create a "liberated zone" and instead of giving an apology has sent a massive special security force to suppress the people.

YOU DECIDE – ARE THE DEMANDS OF THE PEOPLE OF LALGARH JUST?

In India people have spoken. Some are with the state against the adivasis. Others are bystanders who stand on the sides not with the state and not with the adivasis. Others are with the adivasis.

WHOSE SIDE ARE YOU ON?

Those who are with the Adivasis will join:

PICKET at 3pm on 3rd July 2009

INDIAN CONSULATE IN BIRMINGHAM

The Spencers, 20 Augusta St, Jewellery Quarter, Birmingham, B18 6JL

ILPS MESSAGE TO THE LALGARH SOLIDARITY CONVENTION

By Prof. Jose Maria Sison

Chairperson, International Coordinating Committee

International League of Peoples' Struggle

6 August 2009

The International League of Peoples' Struggle (ILPS) extends its most militant greetings of solidarity to the Lalgarh Solidarity Convention that has been organized by the Lalgarh Movement Solidarity Committee in support of the struggle of the people of Lalgarh-Jangalmahal for their livelihood and their democratic rights. The ILPS firmly supports the just struggle of the people of Lalgarh-Jangalmahal against the pro-imperialist policies of the West Bengal government and its brutal repression of the people who are resisting such policies. The ILPS condemns "Operation Lalgarh" that is being unleashed by the West Bengal government mobilizing thousands of police and paramilitary forces against the people of Lalgarh-Jangal mahal. The tribal people of Lalgarh-Jangalmahal have long suffered from the exploitation and oppression of the Indian ruling classes since colonial times. They have been repeatedly dispossessed of their lands and their livelihood. Now they are being brutally displaced to give way to a Special Economic Zone for big multinational corporations. Their resistance to such anti-people policies has been met with state terror. The people of Lalgarh-Jangalmahal have not been cowed and have put up the People's Committee Against Police Atrocities to demand justice for the victims of state repression. They have formed more than 1000 village committees to strengthen their resistance. These people's committees not only take care of the defense of the communities from the incursions of the police and CPM goons, they also carry out development work for the benefit of the people. The courageous resistance of the people of Lalgarh-Jangalmahal has inspired progressive forces from other parts of India and from all over the world to give solidarity to their just struggle. An All-India Fact Finding Team which was organized by progressive forces in June 2009 to look into the atrocities being committed by the West Bengal government was prevented from reaching Lalgarh. The members of the fact-finding team were arrested, maltreated and detained. An international team of Amnesty International was also prevented from entering Lalgarh.

The ILPS fully supports the demands of the Lalgarh Solidarity Convention: ·

- * Stop immediately the 'Lalgarh Operation', against the tribal people of Lalgarh-Jangal mahal and call back all police-paramilitary forces from Lalgarh and nearby areas.
- * The Central and State governments should initiate dialogue with the defiant people's movement of Lalgarh and accept their just demands; ·
- * Provide due compensation to the affected people due to 'Operation Lalgarh, and punish those police officials responsible for violence, rape, loot and other crimes; ·
- * Revoke all the cases unconditionally, which have been imposed upon the struggling people of Lalgarh and the members of the fact-finding teams; ·
- * Repeal the draconian Act - Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA), 2008; ·
- * Allow fact-finding and solidarity teams and journalists to enter the areas of Lalgarh-Jangalmahal.

The ILPS calls on all its member organizations and allies around the world to extend their solidarity and support to the struggle of the tribal people in Lalgarh-Jangalmahal by sending solidarity messages, conducting information campaigns and soliciting support for the people of Lalgarh-Jangalmahal, sending out action alerts and other forms of support. Resist imperialist globalization and plunder! Long live the courageous resistance of the people of Lalgarh-Jangal mahal! Long live international solidarity!

LALGARH IN NEWS PAPERS

Santhali scholar quits post over Lalgarh

June 28, 2009. *The Times of India*

Noted Santhali author Dhirendranath Baske has written to the West Bengal government, asking it not to use his name any longer as adviser of the magazine Paschimbanga, published by the department of information and cultural affairs. Baske was the former editor of this magazine.

"The state government is behaving in a merciless manner in Lalgarh. In protest, I wrote to the director, department of information and cultural affairs, on Thursday, detaching myself completely from any of its publications," Baske said.

"The tribal population in Bengal has always been neglected. Norwegian missionary Paul Olaf Bodding did a lot of work among the Santhals between 1889 and 1933. In fact, it was Bodding who created the first alphabet and wrote the first grammar for the Santhals. His works have been microfilmed by the University of Oslo. After much effort, I succeeded in getting copies to Kolkata in 2003. Since then, nobody bothered to conduct any research on them. These documents contain the traditions and culture of the Santhals. This proves what the government feels about the community."

It was Baske who first wrote Santhali in the Bangla script. He is also associated with the Loko Sanskriti O Adivasi Sanskriti Kendra and is the former vice-president of the Santhal Academy.

Police atrocities continue

June 29 2009

As the central forces sanitise an area and move on, state police are facing charges that they are repeating the brutality which had provoked the Lalgarh agitation in the first place.

The police allegedly beat up villagers at Pathardanga yesterday and destroyed their food grain, reminding residents why they "hated the force so much" and providing the retreating Maoists a chance to play "protector" again.

After the police left the village, the Maoists returned. They persuaded the villagers to shift to the relief camps the rebels have opened at four places between Lalgarh and Ramgarh under the banner of the People's Committee Against Police Atrocities.

Last afternoon, the security forces had come under fire from the direction of Pathardanga, 3km from Lalgarh, during a sanitising operation. They fired back and waited, but nothing happened. The central forces then headed for committee leader Chhatradhar Mahato's village, Amliya. The state police stayed back to conduct a "search" at Pathardanga.

The state police's first target was day labourer Manoranjan Mal, 30, who had stayed back when the other males fled the village.

The police kicked the door of his house and broke it open. They began slapping and punching Mal, wife Jharna said. *"Tor ghore IED rakha aachhe (you have a bomb at your home),"* a policeman shouted as Jharna and her two young sons cowered.

The "search" began, with the police flinging utensils around and tearing the mattress apart. Then they came across the sack of 30kg of relief rice from the government. They ripped it open, spilled the rice on the floor, stamped on the grain and emptied a can of kerosene over it.

"This was our month's supply but now the rice is inedible," Jharna said at the committee's Kantapahari camp. "This is why we hate the police so much. This was all the rice I had to feed my two sons." Mal, whom the police took away, is in detention.

Jipita Soren said she was alone when the police barged into her home. *"They threw my dinner — a bowl of cooked rice — on the floor and stamped on it."* Kamalmoti Tudu said the police poured water on her firewood, so she couldn't cook. *"In the evening, the Maoists came and said they would look after us."*

IG (western range) Kuldiep Singh said he hadn't heard of the incidents but promised to "look into it". *"It's a large force; so it's possible there are some bad pennies,"* he said.

72-hr PCPA bandh in three districts

July 18 2009

Both the People's Committee against Police Atrocities (PCPA) and the Maoists have called bandhs one after the other.

While the Maoist-backed PCPA has given a call for a 72-hour bandh in West Midnapore, Bankura and Purulia districts from Sunday to protest the month-long operation and torture of innocent villagers at its core committee meeting near Lalgarh on Friday, CPI(Maoist) has called a bandh on July 22, immediately after this strike ends in Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa and Bengal in protest against the price hike of petrol, potato and essential commodities.

"We saw police and CPM-backed goons torture innocent people in the name of anti-Maoist operation for the past one month. They even heckled women. Many villagers have even been forced to leave villages. So, we have called a 72-hour bandh, demanding a stop to such torture and immediate withdrawal of security forces from the area," said PCPA leader Chhatradhar Mahato.

"We have also decided to distribute farmlands among landless farmers and labourers of CPM leaders, who have left. Everyone knows that CPM leaders had encroached and evicted many farmers," he added.

For example, CPM's Binpur zonal committee secretary Anuj Pandey, who left Dharampur on June 14 following the exchange of fire between CPM and Maoists, used to possess two bigha vested land, after evicting the original patta holder.

According to PCPA, Anuj and his two brothers Ujjwal and Manas have 7 bigha cultivable land and 2 bigha vested land. Anuj's maternal uncle and CPM zonal committee member, Binoy Pandey, and his three brothers had 12 bigha in all. Binoy's brother Amal Pandey became Dharampur gram panchayat pradhan and owner of a 30-bigha plot. Another CPM leader, Dalim Pandey, and his three brothers have 12 bigha at Harina. All of them fled Dharampur and Harina on June 14.

CPI(Maoist) leader Bikash said: *"Maoists will observe a bandh in Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa and Bengal to protest the price hike of essential commodities like petrol and potatoes on July 22."*

Scared Lalgarh cops using youths as shields

22 Jun 2009, *The Times of India*

PIRAKATA: The message from Writers' Buildings to show a human face while dealing with the warring populace in Lalgarh apparently hasn't reached the force. Why else would a section of the state armed police (SAP) — terrified of IED explosions - catch hold of local youths and force them to poke around for hidden mines and explosives? Acts like this will trigger more calls for vengeance and lead people to doubt the sincerity of the government's attempts to pacify the tribal villagers. It also exposes the lack of preparedness of the administration.

There are just two CID bomb disposal experts stationed at Lalgarh. A second team is kept in reserve in Midnapore town to be deployed in case of 'VIP movement'. A third is cooling its heels in Kolkata. There is not a single explosives expert with police forces anywhere else in the war zone.

Ever since Friday evening's blast at Kuldiha, in which the Domkal SDPO's vehicle was hit and three policemen were injured, police have been wary of such attacks. The moment they come across any culvert, many policemen are scared to cross, fearing that Maoists might have planted an IED. Four blasts and half a dozen gunbattles have been reported ever since forces started their march to Lalgarh. Though no policeman has died, the guerrillas have scored a psychological victory — they have sown the seeds of fear and anxiety. It's this fear that has led some policemen, who are themselves not trained to detect explosives, to force local youth to do the dangerous job for them.

Eighteen-year-old Shambhu Ghosh, Madan Mahato (20) and Shakti Ghosh (23) from Dhangori village were among the unlucky locals. They have been on the run since last Thursday when security forces entered the village searching for Maoists.

On Sunday morning, they were having breakfast at a roadside eatery, close to the Pirakata camp, when a team of policemen surrounded them. One of them asked if they were from Dhangori village.

"When we said yes, they asked us where we had been hiding for the last three days? We didn't give any answer. One of the policeman grabbed us by our collars and threatened to arrest us if we didn't work for them," Shambhu said.

The two were taken to Pirakata camp and given three-foot-long S-shaped rods (possibly taken from a construction site). They're then told to scan for any suspicious object — say, an abandoned bag or a box — lying on the roadside and use the rod to poke around and see if it triggers an explosion.

The police divided the locals in two groups to scan the 7-km stretch between Pirakata and Bhimpur. The first stretch was from Pirakata to Kaima and from there to Bhimpur. The 10 youths worked for four hours, checking every culvert and every roadblock site. Some officers had no qualms about admitting to using locals for this dangerous work. "Even in Bankura, local youths have been pressed into service. There aren't enough experts to deal with the situation," explained an SAP officer.

Sources said that DIB has suggested combing the roads every five to six hours after an operation is complete unless the roads are cleared, central forces cannot move forward. But certainly not this way. Forcing local youths to do the dangerous job will end up alienating more villagers.

Near mutiny within joint forces

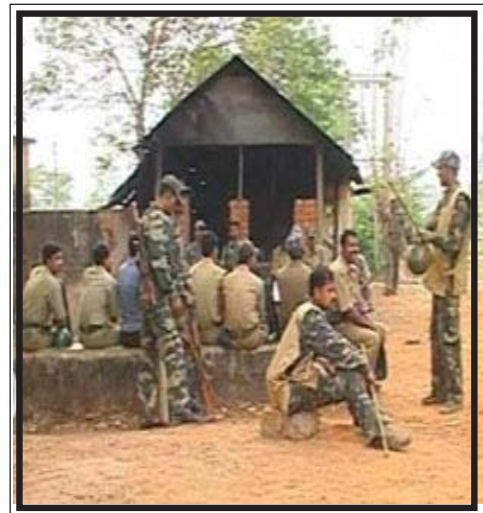
According to press reports, resentment is brewing among the police and joint forces as the government has virtually failed to provide them with basic amenities such as food, toilets and a place to sleep. On 23 June, troops from an IRB deployed at Lalgarh were relieved after four days of constant duty only after they threatened to rebel. In Lalgarh's primary health centre, at least seven to eight security personnel are in bed because the heat has got the better of them. The only casualties that helicopters have evacuated are security personnel who suffered heat stroke. Bengal's 1 IRB, however, was close to mutiny in the middle of an operation because of faulty planning. The whole operation, it is now felt, was started in rather a hasty manner without any back-up, particularly of doctors and paramedics accompanying the forces. In fact, since the security forces are aware that they are entering hostile terrain, they is little they can expect by way of support from the villagers. Even in areas through which soldiers had passed, villagers did not conceal or disguise their dislike of the forces(*The Telegraph*, 24 June 2009). Sensing that such discontent within the IRB might have a negative effect among other units of the joint forces such as the CRPF and the BSF, the administration took care to send those units on patrolling duty(*Dainik Statesman*, 26 June 2009).

A woman constable said: "We are barely managing. The time we get to get ready before an operation is too short, while long queues form outside the toilets. Men are worse off, as they are more in number. They have to go to the river bank to answer nature's call. The condition of the toilets is deteriorating every day because of the pressure. We feel as if we have been simply dumped here". Meanwhile eight street dogs have been requisitioned to guard the cops at the Lalgarh police station, keeping a watch through night and barking every time they see an unfamiliar face(*HT Live Kolkata*, 2 July 2009).

Transfer requests from Lalgarh cops pour in

The cops feel that the battle for Lalgarh is far from over. At least that is the feeling among those who have fought the Maoists for the last two years from behind the locked gates of the Lalgarh police station, scared to even venture out for a cup of tea or buy essential goods. According to press reports, most constables and officers manning the Lalgarh police station have applied for transfer. According to a sub-inspector posted at Lalgarh, "This is only a temporary victory for the security forces. most of the hardcore Maoists have left the area for a safer place. The para-military won't be here for long. What happens then?" "The last two years have been a terrible experience for all of us. We have seen our colleagues die from landmine blasts or bullet injuries", he added.

The mental plight of the state policemen and women who have come in various areas in Bengal is also not at all encouraging. Many of them confessed to journalists that the operation was indeed dangerous and they had not informed their families about the exact nature of the assignment. "It is just a beginning and those who will have to stay in Lalgarh will have to face the consequences. I have applied for a transfer and I hope my seniors will oblige" said another officer on condition of anonymity(*HT*, 1 July 2009).



5000 villagers raze govt building in Salboni to keep cops out

Nearly 5,000 tribals in Salboni, wielding shovels, axes and hammers and allegedly led by Maoists, today demolished a government building that was a police camp until a week earlier.

The structure at Kalaimuri near Lalgarh in West Midnapore — the first government building to be torn down by the tribals — took three hours to destroy.

Chhatradhar Mahato, who leads the People's Committee Against Police Atrocities that is at the forefront of the Lalgarh tribal resistance, said: *"We had appealed to the villagers not to demolish the building as we planned to set up a health care centre there, but we could not persuade them."* He added: *"The people have lost faith in the police and they feared the security forces would return."*

Today, neither Chhatradhar nor the secretary of the committee, Sidhu Soren, was present at Kalaimuri when the villagers rained blows on the building.

One of the tribals who helped bring the building down was 35-year-old Paritosh Mahato, a farmer from Gadra near Lalgarh.

"When we started our agitation in November last year, the police withdrew several camps, including this one in Kalaimuri. But the camps started functioning again in December," Paritosh said. *"Had the building remained standing, the police would have returned with reinforcements. That's why we demolished it."*

Bimal Tudu, a 40-year-old labourer who too was in the demolition team, echoed Paritosh's fears. *"Now the police won't be able to return to Kalaimuri,"* he said.

The policemen stationed at the camp used to patrol parts of Lalgarh, an area the tribals have made inaccessible to the force after alleged excesses on villagers following a blast on the chief minister's convoy route last year.

The 90 policemen stationed at the camp left it on April 27 after the tribals pushed them to the brink of starvation by preventing them from buying provisions for several days.

Manoj Kumar Verma, the West Midnapore superintendent of police, said he had received news of the demolition and had informed his superiors.

"We will not move into Kalaimuri now because it may lead to untoward incidents. We don't want a confrontation with the villagers at this moment. Today's demolition of the camp was led by Maoists," he said.

The police said that around 11am, a group of Maoists gathered in front of the camp, one of four in Salboni.

"They (the Maoists) contacted people in the neighbouring villages and asked them to assemble near the camp," a police officer said. *"Nearly 5,000 villagers with bows, arrows, axes, iron rods and shovels gathered within half an hour. Some in the demolition squad were women."*

The officer added: *"The Maoists held an hour-long meeting with them and the demolition began around 1pm. The camp building was completely destroyed by 4pm."*

Police sources said the tribals had come from about a dozen villages

Security forces lathicharge tribal women in Lalgarh

July 29, 2009 Lalgarh (PTI): Shortly after a three-member team of Trinamool Congress, including two Union Ministers, visited Lalgarh demanding withdrawal of central forces, a procession of tribal women was allegedly lathicharged by the police.

A huge procession of the women supporters of the People's Committee against Police Atrocities headed for Lalgarh police station at around 4:00 pm with placards and posters demanding withdrawal of the central forces and police from Lalgarh, The Lalgarh police station was recaptured from Maoists through their operation since June 19.

"There were at least 300 women, mostly tribals who were prevented from entering Lalgarh police station. We had to fire four teargas cells to disperse them," top police sources said. There were sounds of firing and mine explosion from the nearby villages, the sources said. "We are yet to determine the exact area from where the sounds came."



PCPA sources, however, claimed that the security forces lathi-charged the women and even kicked some of them. *"The government is trying to throttle the voice of the people,"* they claimed.

Earlier Leader of the Opposition in the state assembly Partha Chatterjee, Union Minister of State for Rural Development Sisir Adhikary and Minister of State for Shipping Mukul Roy visited Lalgarh to distribute relief. *"We demand immediate withdrawal of the joint security forces committing atrocities on innocent villagers in the name of nabbing Maoists and urge the Centre to take up development programmes at Lalgarh as early as possible,"* Mr. Chatterjee told PTI. West Bengal Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee had 'misguided' the Centre to send central forces for 'committing atrocities' on villagers in the name of curbing Maoists, he alleged.

Mr. Chatterjee claimed that villagers tearfully narrated tales of 'torture' they faced during the anti-Maoist operations. Charging the Left Front government with failing to do any development work at Lalgarh in the past 32 years, Mr. Chatterjee said *"there is no food, drinking water and no sign of development."* The TC leader demanded that school buildings, particularly at Gohomidanga, be immediately vacated by the security forces for resumption of a normal academic atmosphere. The TC leaders were provided security by the administration for the visit, which had earlier advised them not to visit Lalgarh.

Guns, at every twist and turn

By Sujan Datta. The Telegraph, June 25, 2009

A nearly finished building for a 100-bed hospital at Kewakole on the road to this town will get its first occupants shortly — they will not be doctors, nurses or patients but uniformed security personnel with guns and bullets.

The Bengal government is deploying so many forces in its offensive in Lalgarh that there isn't enough room to house them. Even a hospital — there is only a primary health centre in Kewakole with the bare minimum in facilities — is now designated as a camp for security personnel who are on their way here. Every school and college in Goaltore has been requisitioned.

There is too much firepower in too small an area. Police walk into shops with guns and ask for food, they talk to people with guns slinging from their shoulders. They talk about guns and forces. The chatter intimidates the villagers. It is like living in a militarised zone, not unlike scenes in Nagaland and Manipur and Kashmir.

Even if the army is not here, there uniforms are — so many of the state and central forces wear the army-issue fatigues that they are difficult to distinguish from the military. The forces have the bearing of the army but do not have its training.

Bengal's Lalgarh offensive has already taken in 5,000 troops. The figure has not been announced officially. A senior security officer told *The Telegraph* today that the combined forces of the state and the Centre total 50 companies. There are another 10 companies of central forces coming in.

The "operations" are designed to sweep through 200 villages, with 100 in a core area. The official suggested using Kantapahari, the village on the south-to-north road from Lalgarh to Ramgarh —that the forces have not entered as yet — as the centre of the region.

"It will take time. There is no hurry. Our strategy is to clear-and-hold, clear-and-hold," he said. *"There is no point in simply going ahead without consolidation or we may land into a trap because the Maoists know the area well. We need to round up their ringleaders. So, normal policing activity has to be started in the areas we are holding,"* he said.

Since the offensive began, the forces have only gone down an east-west axis to Lalgarh police station.

The forces will ultimately seek to secure about 500 sq km of territory inside which the villages are spread out. There are jungles and four roads "like fingers" that lead to Lalgarh.

The eastern periphery of this region is the road that runs from Midnapore through Salboni to Goaltore and up to Sarenga in Bankura district. The security forces are now pouring into Goaltore in a build-up for an offensive through Pingboni where the Bengal armed police were stopped by rebels last Saturday.

A total of 5,000 security personnel in an area of 500 sq km means an average of 10 police personnel per square km. The security forces have not yet been able to spread out.

With the Maoist rebels displaying that they are capable of putting up a fight — like they did in Pingboni where even today the police are not venturing — Lalgarh's offensive and the build-up is putting thousands of lives at risk despite the delicate handling that Writers' Buildings has ordered.

The presence of the troops here pleases nobody, including the police themselves. "I was posted in Birbhum," says a Bengal Armed Police constable carrying a .303 rifle with him into a little roadside eatery for a lunch of rice and dal.

He is camping, he says, in the Goaltore Boys High School. "There are 50 of us in a room and the ceiling fan hardly moves. I am on guard duty from 8 in the morning till 3 and it's bloody hot."

He asks for vegetables to go with the rice and dal. There is none available in the eatery. "The central forces move with their cooks and provisions. We have been sent here without any arrangements. Thank God for this shop here, I haven't gone hungry the last three days," he says. He left Birbhum eight days ago.

Three more soldiers walk into the eatery. They are from the India Reserve Battalion. Each of them is carrying an AK-47. The armed police constable's .303 weighs 7 kilos. One of the IRB troopers says his weapon "weighs exactly 4 kilos and 700 grams and can fire 30 bullets in a second". The constable says he will take 10 seconds to fire 10 rounds because he has to pull the catch back every time.

In the eatery are four other people — the owner, the cook, the helper and a customer. They are agog, listening to this chatter about guns and bullets. The customer trudged from Babuibasha, a village about 4km from Goaltore past a forest. He forgets to chew his food.

He talks after the police have left. He said people in his village — in a zone that the police have not yet gone — were terrified. He does not talk of the police. In village after village here, the local people call the security forces by a different name — "shontrash bahini" — repressive force.

Beneath sari, brutal scars: Emerging stories of 20,000 refugees

June 22. By Sujan Dutta, The Telegraph

Shame is abandoned with great effort. But the women of this village are willing to draw up their saris, just to show how brutalised they are.

At a relief camp in Pirakata, the crossroad that practically marks the end of the authority of the West Bengal government on the route to Lalgargh, they pulled up saris to reveal weals and scars to show how mercilessly they were beaten by the police.

The police did not have orders to open fire. They were free to beat and brutalise.

Kuldiha is 4km up ahead from Pirakata. It is desolate, save for the cows tethered to bamboo masts. The village has about 40 households. The refugees from the village say there was only one person in the village with a regular job — a government employee in the land reforms department. Most were farmers and cowherds. But this afternoon there is no one in any of the houses. The village is desolate. The men fled to the forests when the security forces began assembling.

The battered women of Kuldiha roamed the fields and forests around here for two nights. This morning and afternoon, they began trickling into the camp at the Pirakata Primary High School set up by the local Trinamul Congress.

Every armed conflict must have its share of refugees. The relief camp in Pirakata is the first to shelter the first in Lalgargh's latest round of violence.

The village is spread on either side of a narrow metalled road. Inside, a motorcycle upturned into a pond is evidence of the violence that it has been through. There isn't

a soul in sight. Cows tethered to bamboo masts moo because they are hungry. Their owners have left home. They are in the relief camp this afternoon.

"The policewomen lifted my sari," sobs Bijola Mahato, "and kicked me while lathis rained down and a man shouted 'since your husband is not at home, let me come tonight and be your husband'".

The Bengal government's order to the security forces it has amassed over here to go easy on the trigger has meant they can go hard with the lathi.

In the wake of the advance to Bhimpur and Lalgarh over the last three days, armed police of the state force have been entering villages on either side of road, battering the people, rounding up at random, abusing and hurling obscenities.

"When the police came into Kuldiha they were accompanied by two or three men," said Jamuna Mahato, whose 18-year-old son is missing. "They broke down the door of my house and dragged me out." There were policewomen and policemen.

Belarani Mahato, who said she made tea at a shop in Kuldiha, said she was pulled by the hair. *"The policemen were dragging the children but mostly our saris were being pulled up and we were being kicked and beaten with lathis," she said.*

Lalgarh: Fight is not over, says Maoist leader Bikash

July 26, 2009

KOLKATA: Maoist leader Bikash on Saturday denied that the movement in Lalgarh suffered a setback due to the joint operation, warning that guerrilla warfare had its own tactics and that the security forces would suffer heavily in the future.

"The fight has not finished," he said, dismissing as propaganda reports that leaders had fled the region. People would not be fooled by the government's "hollow promises" on development projects, he added.

Speaking from his hideout in the Lalgarh area to *Hindu The* on the phone, Mr. Bikash said, "Kishenji and all the core leaders who are leading the guerrilla warfare against the security forces are presently in the Lalgarh region only and have not fled anywhere."

Mr. Bikash gained prominence as a Maoist leader when he held a press conference on June 15 at Dharampur, 14 km from Lalgarh, openly declaring for the first time that the Maoists were supporting the Police Santrash Birodhi Janasadharaner Committee.

"We belong to the Jangalmahal [a common name for the forest area in and around Lalgarh], and are fighting for the cause of the people of this region. Why should we flee? It is a ploy of the police to mislead people," he said.

Asked if the Maoist movement suffered a setback following the security operations, and as the security forces reclaimed almost the entire area without much resistance, Mr. Bikash said, "Guerrilla warfare has its own tactics, and just because they could set up some camps it does not mean they have won. The fight has not finished and they [security forces] will suffer heavily in future."

On development in the region and the projects initiated by the government, he said: "People of this region have been listening to such hollow promises for the last 32 years, though nothing has materialised so far. It will be the same this time too."

Asked if the Maoists would take up development programmes, he said certain projects like building schools and healthcare centres had already been taken up, and the process would continue.

People's Committee against Police Atrocities vows to fight until death

June 20, 2009. The Telegraph

The tribal body that started the seven-month- old Lalgarh agitation with Maoist backing today threatened a "**fight to death**" in the face of the government offensive.

"We were born here, we are agitating here and we will die here," said Chhatradhar Mahato, chief of the People's Committee against Police Atrocities.

"The barricades will continue. The more they are forcibly removed, the deeper will be the (public) anger at the police and support for us."

Mahato, speaking to *The Telegraph* at Barapelia, 5km north of Lalgarh town, said the movement had begun because of the *"government's long neglect of the tribal people, who have been surviving on ant eggs for far too long"*.

"Our movement is for the development of the people. They (the government) cannot gain people's confidence by using force," Mahato, the secretary of the committee, added.

Lalgarh operations not a total success: WB Home Secretary

August 6, 2009, PTI

Kolkata: The anti-Maoist joint operations by Central forces and police at restive Lalgarh in West Midnapore district were not a total success as no major arrest could be made or killings stopped, the West Bengal government said on Thursday.

"Even though it brought success initially, the second phase of operation proved unsuccessful," West Bengal Home Secretary Ardhendu Sen told reporters.

Stating that there were 40 companies (4,000 men) of Central force in Lalgarh currently, he said killings and abductions were continuing. *"Obviously the forces cannot be everywhere and the Maoists are taking that opportunity. In most cases Maoists are targeting CPI(M) party members,"* Sen said.

He was speaking after a meeting to review the Lalgarh operations which were launched with much fanfare on June 18.

"We have urged the Centre to extend the stay of the Central forces till the situation normalises. We have not given any timeframe. We are yet to receive any feedback from the Centre," Sen said. The state government had earlier urged the Centre for retention of the forces for another three months.

Asked how long it would take to restore normalcy at Lalgarh, Sen said that it could take a minimum of two months. *"We are reviewing the situation and appropriate steps will be taken within a timeframe,"* he said.

On the occupation of school buildings by Central forces, he said the security forces have vacated some of the premises, while the others would be relocated.

Naxals hold armed rally in Lalgarh

TNN 8 August 2009

LALGARH: A day after the West Midnapore district administration admitted its failure in tackling the Maoists, the Red rebels in a brazen show of strength held an armed rally in Lalgarh about 200 km from Kolkata. Attended by around 1,000 villagers, the rally was held on Friday (August 7) evening at Domohani, barely 2 km from Dharampur police station, where the rebels assured people that they were completely prepared to take on the armed forces. "None of our people has been killed or arrested," claimed Maoist leader Bikash.

Police, too, were busy devising a new strategy to counter the Maoists at a meeting in Lalgarh. With chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee scheduled to visit Jangalmahal on Tuesday, the meeting definitely sent out a strong signal to the administration.

Addressing the meeting barely a kilometre away from the spot on the Dharampur-Lalgarh road where the central forces marched on Friday, Bikash admitted to killing three CPM workers Jhontu Soren, Naru Samanta and Asit Samanta who have been missing since June 14.

"We have served the death penalty on people who exploited and tortured tribals. Who started this violence? When the villagers started their movement at Sijua, Salboni and Khasjungal, who assaulted them," asked the Maoist leader. "These are examples of peoples rage," he said.

Bikash, however, denied their involvement in Wednesday's murder of three Jharkhand Party (Naren) men. He also denied the Maoist hand in the abduction of two policemen from Brindabanpur. After targeting CPM leaders and party offices, Maoists seem to have trained their guns on Congress now. They have threatened to stop Congress leaders from opening their party offices and do any work.



SOME ARTICLES ON LALGARH FROM THE MEDIA

(We are publishing below some selected articles related to Lalgarh taken from various sources. The views expressed in these articles do not necessarily represent those of the CPI(Maoist). But they help the reader to understand the Lalgarh uprising and the role of the state, the social fascist government in West Bengal, and the media)

Lalgarh: an analysis of the media's war hysteria

By Partho Sarathi Ray, Sanhati. June 24, 2009.

War-hysteria in media: cobras, shields, and sanitization

We have been witnessing what can only be described as "war hysteria" in the media coverage of the current situation in Lalgarh and adjoining areas. It appears as if the great protectors of the "rule of law", the West Bengal state police, propped up by the CRPF and a plethora of other armed forces, with suitably scary acronyms like COBRA, are out to regain a chunk of Indian territory occupied by a hostile country. **What is conveniently not being mentioned is that for ages the police itself has behaved like invaders in the area, willfully torturing and humiliating people, and that is why they had been boycotted in that area for the past six months.** With blow-by-blow accounts of their progress, and description of how they are penetrating "human shields", and "sanitizing" whole areas, it doesn't seem that their adversaries are the poorest of the poor, the most marginalized sections of Indian society, the adivasis who are armed with traditional weapons like bows and arrows, and some Maoist cadre, who would be a few dozen at the most, and armed mostly with weapons looted from the police and improvised explosive devices.

The trigger in Dharampur:

a popular response to rampaging harmad militias

More importantly, what is being represented as a war between the Maoists and the Indian state, conveniently glosses over some points that we need to pay our attention to. The rural area of Lalgarh has been out of bounds for the administrative machinery of the state since last November, since the uprising of the adivasi-moolvasi people of the area against police atrocities. With the setting up of the PCPA, the adivasis had been running their own affairs, and even taking up much-needed developmental work, a whiff of functioning democracy in the middle of the hoax that goes on by the name of democratic governance in large parts of India.

Then, what suddenly triggered this confrontation, and this cascade of events that is today witnessing police dragging out women from houses in the Lalgarh area and beating them blue and black and hundreds of people fleeing to relief camps?

It points to the incident which happened in Dharampur, near Lalgarh town, on June 14th. It was reported in the press on that day, but now has been conveniently forgotten as the press is busy to set up the Maoists, and the PCPA, which they repeatedly call Maoist-controlled contrary to all evidence and denials by the PCPA leadership, as the arch-villains in this episode.

Dharampur is near Lalgarh town, and it was a CPI(M) stronghold where the house of the zonal committee member, Anuj Pandey, was located. On 14th June, a PCPA rally was proceeding towards that place, called to protest against the arrest and reported rape of adivasi women who had gone to a meeting in Chakulia in Jharkhand. It was a usual PCPA rally, with traditional weapons and led by women as usual. When it neared Dharampur, it was attacked by CPI(M) harmads, targeting the women. The rallyists couldn't resist this attack and dispersed, but then a Maoist squad arrived and started a gun battle with the CPI(M) cadres, which continued till late in the night.

With their superior firepower, the Maoists gunned down at least nine of the CPI(M) attackers. Thereafter, the next day there were multiple rallies called by the PCPA, and the people in these rallies, who were incensed by the CPI(M) attack of the previous day, decided to take over the CPI(M) strongholds of Dharampur, a major operating base for the CPI(M) harmads, and Lalgarh town which was still under the administrative control of the government. The Maoist squad accompanied them, to resist attacks by the CPI(M), and not allow a repetition of the past day's incident.

20,000 Maoists and "frontal organisations"?

What followed has been widely reported, how CPI(M) party offices were burnt down, how the palatial house of Anuj Pandey, the widely hated CPI(M) leader, was broken down, and how some CPI(M) members were killed. It was a spontaneous outburst of pent up fury of the people, people who had been subjected to humiliation and exploitation by these same CPI(M) leaders on a daily basis. They acted out of a sense of deliverance from the hegemony and corruption of the CPI(M).

The Maoists were definitely present, but the 10,000-20,000 people who participated in this uprising were definitely not Maoists, as has been represented by the press. They were common people, and their anger and frustration found expression in this outburst. Although a number of political leaders, including those from the Trinamool Congress and Congress, made statements to this effect, it has completely been glossed over by the mainstream press.

Human shields – a physical protection of liberty and development

In order to reinforce this idea, multiple press reports have tried to represent the human walls set up by the adivasis as "human shields" being used by the Maoists to protect themselves from the police and paramilitary. **It is possibly incomprehensible to the corporate media that these people were standing there not to protect the Maoists, but to protect the freedom that they have enjoyed for the past six months, freedom from daily harassment and humiliation, and to preserve the gains that they had made during that time, like the building of a few roads and digging of a few ponds, meeting the immediate needs of the people, things that Indian state has not provided in the past sixty-two years.**

Teaching adivasis a few lessons along the way

However, as expected, they could not resist the brute force unleashed by the same state that had failed them so miserably. The police and paramilitary dispersed them by teargas and lathicharging, and since then there has been innumerable reports of atrocities being committed by the police. Remarkably, much of these atrocities were

committed in the villages on the way to Lalgarh town, which were not even within the zone that was under the control of the PCPA.

It appears that the state is bent upon teaching the adivasis a lesson for standing up for their dignity, and the Maoists represented a suitable bogey for doing so. The Maoists, according to their stated policy of guerrilla warfare, would not engage in a frontal confrontation with the paramilitary forces. So what have effectively taken place are a few skirmishes between vastly asymmetrical adversaries, and the brave saviours of "law and order" have vented their righteous ire on the unarmed adivasis.

Maoist presence: an old fact and a rehashed bogey

The Maoists have been active in the entire jangalmahal area for a long time, and have been fighting a running battle with the state. The adivasis in the area have long been victimized by the police for this, and it was the police brutalities in the wake of the landmine attack on the West Bengal CM's convoy by the Maoists that triggered this uprising. The Maoists have been with the adivasis of Lalgarh in this uprising against the state, just as members of many other political parties including the Congress, have been with them. What we are witnessing today is that the Indian state is using this as an excuse to delegitimize the just demands and aspirations of the adivasis, which stemmed from a simple demand for the recognition of their dignity. Attacks on indigeneous people are taking place all over the world, whenever they are resisting the state and the corporations attempt to deprive them of their land, water, forests and dignity, as we recently saw in the attacks on the Peruvian indigeneous people in the Amazon area. **All attempts to resist and retaliate are being represented as insurgency and a breakdown of "law and order"**. The corporate press is playing along with this, as we see in the case of Lalgarh, and deliberately glossing over facts and issues, to represent the struggle of the indigeneous people, in which armed struggle is increasingly playing a part, as a loss of sovereign authority by the state, which has to be regained at any cost.

Ground dynamics and civil society

The "civil society" in West Bengal, and all over India, has rightly been very distressed over these incidents and condemned both the atrocities committed by the state and what many think to be the reckless behaviour of the Maoists. **However, it is also to be expected that the civil society cannot decide, or dictate, what course a movement on the ground will take. A movement develops its own dynamics, based on the ground conditions, and always does not follow a linear path to the most desirable end. Therefore, it becomes the duty of civil society to stand up and be counted when common people are at the receiving end of oppression by the state.** We should express our solidarity with the struggle of the adivasis for justice and development, deplore the atrocities being committed on them by the armed forces of the state and demand the immediate withdrawal of the latter from the area as a necessary condition for normalization of the situation and also condemn all the attempts by the state to use this excuse to impinge on the democratic rights of the people. The adivasis had risen up with the demand of a small apology from the police, if what is happening now does not stop, the Indian state will owe them a much bigger one.

Fanshen in Lalgarh: June 5-June 22, 2009

By Amit Bhattacharya. This article also appeared in no2displacement.com

The Lok Sabha elections throughout the country ended on 13 May and results were declared on 16 May, 2009. The phase of struggle in Lalgarh that started from then on was something that was totally unprecedented in the history of our country—in depth, magnitude and significance. The subsequent history can be divided into Phase I and Phase II. Phase I is related to people's movement, while Phase II with the deployment of para-military forces, brutality perpetrated by them and resistance by the people and the Maoists.

Phase I: Movement between June 5 – June 18, 2009

Kolkata police stop demonstration in the city

The West Bengal government refused to give permission to hold a demonstration in Kolkata to be organized jointly by CAVOW (Committee Against Violence on Women) and the women's wing of the People's Committee with traditional weapons on 5 June, as it would be political in nature.

The Kolkata police even threatened the local convenor of CAVOW with arrest if they did not listen. Such a decision was discriminatory. Processions with traditional weapons have always been allowed by the state government to the Muslims at the time of Muharram or to the Sikhs during their religious ceremonies. If the government allows these processions to take place as these were religious in nature, then how would they explain the holding of a procession in November 2007 by the CPI (M) after the recapture of Nandigram with adivasis wielding the same traditional weapons like bows, axes, etc?

The organisers were thus forced to shift the venue to West Medinipur. Traditional weapons are a part of tribal culture and the West Bengal government, acting in this way, actually rejected that very right of the tribal people. Added to it was the fact that when a cultural team went to Chakulia in Jharkhand on the Bengal-Jharkhand border to spread the word among the adivasis there so that they could join the rally on 5 June, many of them were arrested by the Jharkhand police and a number of women were molested and one raped in Chakulia police station. When the Committee went to enter Jharkhand on their way to the Chakulia police station, a huge force was mobilised on the Jharkhand side and they were greeted with tear-gas shells. Chhatradhar Mahato declared that the road from West Bengal to Jharkhand would be blocked to cut off supply lines if the arrested were not released. That resulted in the spread of the movement to new areas also. The administration retaliated with the promulgation of Section 144 of the Cr.PC within 2 kms of the Lalgarh police station.

Meanwhile, the CPI(M) hit back to recover lost ground with 200 armed goons from Keshpur and Garbeta. On 11 June, they fired at PCAPA members such as Mirza Abdul Mannan, Hafiz Abdul Mannan and Omar Sheikh. On 12 June, the goons shot and injured four members of the PCAPA namely, Syed Afsar Ali, Jainal Abedin, Sheikh Kamruddin and Safiur Rahman at Sijua (TOI, 12-6-09). The people retaliated quickly. One CPI (M) leader of a branch of Dharampur was killed.



Fanshen: Turning things upside down

On June 14, 2009, the People's Committee Against Police Atrocities (PCAPA) started from Lalgarh, covered 11 kms and took control of 48 villages including CPM party offices in Dharampur—an apparently invincible CPM citadel used by the CPM hermdads for launching armed attacks on the people. This was preceded by intense firing between the CPM goons and the Maoist fighters for five days in areas such as Dharampur, Jirapara, Hodhodi and Bhaudi. An unspecified number of CPM goons (around 14) died, many people left their homes from the battlefield and the Maoists, according to press reports, seized the weapons left behind by miscreants. Then they attacked Sijua, a CPM stronghold that would allow them easy access to the Jindal's proposed steel plant site at Salboni. So decisive was the power shift in Dharampur that CPM zonal secretary Anuj Pandey, a resident of the village, had to flee out of sheer panic.

Around midnight on 15 June, 320 policemen left their camps in Dharampur, Ramgarh, Belatikuti and Koima. Now thousands of villagers from Lalgarh, where the police had been unable to enter since November 2008, swept into areas known as CPM strongholds. They burnt down the police camps at Ramgarh and Kaima; one party office after another was burnt down by the masses, thereby betraying the pent-up hatred the people nourished towards the CPM leaders.



People with bows and arrows run to block state police in Gooltore

One of the most hated of the despicable lot was Anuj Pandey. When he came to West Medinipur from Jharkhand, he was a person of ordinary means. But gradually through party connections, this fellow minted millions out of the toil and sweat of the people, constructed a palatial building in an area where people have been deprived of the basic necessities of life. He was protected by three bodyguards 24 hours a day and there was a police camp in front of his palace also. It was he who exercised total control over everything in the area, viz, distribution of pattas among the poor in the Dharampu area, clearance of 100 days' work, BPL cards, application for the construction of deep tube-wells—all these and many more were controlled from the Dharampur party office. Votes were looted year after year by intimidation and application of terror.

To suppress the opposition, armed hermdads were sent from Dharampur by this fellow to Khejuri and Gorbeta. Whenever money came for bringing about development of the area, Anuj Pandey pocketed everything and bought arms and ammunition. In the name of giving employment, he robbed the poor of millions of rupees. The money that came through 'Indira Yojana', a rural development programme of the Union Government, could only belong to him. Many of those unfortunate ones who stood against or criticised him were killed by his hired goons. He had the last word there. What happened to that palatial building?

It was broken down by the people. An English daily wrote:

"The hammer rose and fell, the energy of the man behind it rising steadily as the blows gradually brought down chunks of concrete from the roof. On the first floor, three men were tearing down the fancy grills of the iron railing adorning the balcony. A huge crowd gathered below in the area now under Section 144 lustily cheering each

blow that fell on the white two-story house, quite out of place in this land of deprivation under Lalgarh police station. By sundown, the hammers had chopped off the first floor, leaving behind a skeleton of what was a “posh” house in the morning’ (Hindustan Times, 16 June 2009).

Every punch of the hammer was greeted with the sound of the conch-shells made by the standing women (*Sanbad Pratidin*, 16 June 2009). It was like a festival of the masses. For what was being demolished was the symbol of power, the symbol of oppression and domination. The adivasi women remarked that for them it was a social festival like that of Dussera when the effigy of Ravana—the villain of the Ramayana epic was burnt down. The women on that day talked about the inhuman treatment meted out to the people by that fellow and stated that their act of destruction was a spontaneous outburst emanating out of their veins. And then to climax it all, the Maoist leader, Bikash, addressed a press conference and stated their leadership in this movement (*Ananda Bazar Patrika*, 16-06-09). Whatever the role the Maoists might have played here, there is no doubt that this was a people’s movement where the masses played a very significant role. Later on, the Polit Bureau member of CPI (Maoist), Kishanji, in a press conference, also acknowledged the people’s role in unequivocal terms. The history of the role of the Maoists in this historic movement is still unknown and needs to be investigated and that, needless to say, would be an interesting study.

The destruction of the house was followed by the destruction of the CPI (M) party office and the destruction also of another goon, leader of the ruling CPI (M), Dalim Pandey who is the secretary of the Dharampur local committee. That act was equally celebrated by the women with the sound of the conch-shells (*Sanbad Pratidin*, 16 June, 2009). What was the reaction of Bimal Pandey, cousin (brother) of Anuj Pandey whose palace was struck down as a result of people’s pent-up anger and hatred? Their house was by the side of that of Anuj Pandey. Bimal Pandey said: “I have seen oppression and injustice being done before my very eyes. But I did not have the courage to speak out against. Lalgarh became liberated on Monday. Why should I feel sorry?” (*Ekdin*, 17 June, 2009).

That this destruction of symbols of power brought about liberation is the feeling of other residents of Dharampur as well. They claim that Dharampur under the CPI (M) rule was unfree. In one case, before one party office was attacked, photographs of Bhagat Singh, Subhas Chandra Bose and Kshudiram Bose were carefully taken out and placed by a tree trunk and then property kept inside the party office was burnt down. And to cap it all, there was no looting at all. Refuting the charges put forward from some quarters that the PCAPA had only created anarchy and did much harm to the common people, Chhabirani Mahato of Dharampur told a newspaper correspondent:

Although party office (ruling party) buildings and residences of party leaders have been broken, the members of the People’s Committee did not do any harm to the common people. Nothing has been looted from the houses. All the rooms in the village remain the same as before” (*Ekdin*, 23 June 2009).

Events took place in quick succession as if people suppressed for ages were in a great hurry to settle scores with their enemies. They torched police stations and demolished party strongholds. The deliberate show of strength came within hours of the administration pulling forces out of police camps in Belatikri, Dharampur, Ramgarh

and Koima. The first wave of attacks hit the Koima camp around 11 am. PCAPA had called a meeting in the Mohulbani forest nearby, after which, according to a press report, armed supporters and Maoists ransacked the camp and set furniture and building on fire. The committee members had gheraoed the Koima camp over the past few days, leaving the policemen posted there without any food or water. Policemen had moved out through the night.

Others fanned out across a 25-sq km area over the next few hours, with the attacks targeting administrative and CPI (M) party strongholds. Next to fall was the Ramgarh police camp. After that the Dharampur ruling party office was targeted (*TOI, 16 June 2009*). On the next day, the Lalgah party office was targeted. Thousands of men and women carrying axes and tongies joined in celebration as the office along with the papers and furniture were set on fire. Although, section 144 was declared, thousands of people defied and rejected it and met at a huge gathering near the police station. Representatives of the BUPC (Resistance Committee Against Eviction from Land) from Nandigram as also those of Adibasi Bikash Parishad from North Bengal joined that gathering (*Bartaman, 17 June 2009*).

The events at Dharampur and other areas reminds one of the days of earlier peasant rebellions when the rebels attacked the houses of the landlords, kacharies and granaries, destroyed property, killed them if they could, burnt down land deeds whereby the hated landlords fleeced the poor peasants and distributed food among poor which rightfully belonged to them. In the Jangal Mahal also, the rebels of Lalgah attacked the 'new landlords' i.e., the CPI(M) leaders, their houses and the party offices—all of which were symbols of power and exploitation and the cause of their indignity and humiliation. By so doing they not only destroyed the power of the oppressors, they also asserted their own power and authority. To use William Hinton's words, *it was Fanshen i.e., turning things upside down*.

New model of development

The people's struggle in Jangal Mahal has ushered in some development work keeping the basic needs of the people, and there the Maoists had a role to play. The Maoists have already initiated a development model which is opposed to that followed by the Indian state. Unlike the model which opts for dependence on foreign capital and technology—a model followed in India by all central and state governments since 1947—the Maoist model stands for self-reliance, equitable distribution of wealth, all-round development at the grassroots level and opposition to foreign imperialist control and influence. In Dandakaranya, where they have already set up a new society, this new pro-people model of development has been experimented for quite some time. Although details are still not known, some preliminary efforts along this line have been attempted in the West Medinipur district.

This is evident from the following newspaper report captioned 'Welcome to India's newest secret state'. The correspondent, Snigdhendu Bhattacharya writes:

Here across a 1,000 sq.km area bordering Orissa in West Medinipur district, the Maoists over the last 8 months have quietly unleashed new weapons in their battle against the Indian state: drinking water, irrigation, roads and health centres....carefully shielded from the public eye, the Hindustan Times found India's second 'liberated zone', a Maoist-run state within a state where development for more than 2 lakh people is unfolding at a pace not seen in 30 years of 'left front' rule. Apart from taking

over the organs of the state and most notably the executive and the judiciary, the Maoists here have built at least 50 km of gravel paths, dug tube-wells and tanks, rebuilt irrigation canals and are running health centres, with the help of local villagers (HT, 10 June 2009).

Phase II: June 18 - present: Deployment of para-military forces

In the face of people's wrath, the West Bengal government stood idle. They were probably still haunted by the spectre of Nandigram; also, the major ruling party and its front partners had been trying hard to recover from the deep scar that their loss in the last elections had caused. To them, what had been taking place in Lalgarh and adjoining areas was anarchy and so order had to be restored at all costs. The Chief Minister of West Bengal went to meet P.Chidambaram, the Union Home Minister to seek central help to suppress this people's rising (Ananda Bazar Patrika, 12 June 2009). One of the front partners, the CPI—its leader Nandagopal Bhattacharya—even asked Biman Bose, the Left Front chairman, to consider thinking about sending the army to Lalgarh (*Aaj Bikash*, 16-6-09).

The decision to send in central forces was taken by the central Home Minister in no time. What has surprised many is the magnitude of central involvement in what it described as 'Operation Lalgarh'. Besides the state police forces such as the police and the RAF, New Delhi introduced companies of CRPF, EFR, BSF, the notorious CoBra, Straco and Vayusena with Kalaikunda air force base located nearby and with the Greyhounds as stand-by forces. Such a huge mobilization of forces was, with the possible exceptions in Jammu & Kashmir and Chhattisgarh, quite unprecedented in the history of our country. It was nothing but what many people regarded as the declaration of war against the people of Jangal Mahal.

That war against the people began with much fanfare by Buddhadev Bhattacharya under media glare on 18 June. The aim was to 'liberate' areas under 18 police stations which came under the control of the PCAPA (*Ganashakti*, 19 June 2009). The whole operation, thanks to the media coverage, gave the unmistakable impression that an invading army, armed to the teeth, had descended from heaven to take on the Maoist insurgents and to give them a brutal lesson. The media, virtually without any exception, covered front page news of the expedition and nobody bothered to question the validity or the possible impact that it was most likely to have on the people of Jangal Mahal. Some dailies carried front page captions such as "Buddha orders crackdown, Maoists sound war cry" or "Action at last", or "Greyhounds on standby. Cobras crawl in, save venom for final bite".

It was, as if, a holy war was being conducted by the central and state governments against the Maoist infidels. Not a single media house initially raised the voice against the war. One Vayusena helicopter was introduced to drop leaflets in Santhali and Bengali languages making appeals to the people to refrain from mixing with the Maoist 'terrorists'. That reminds one of the way in which Naga Battalion was introduced into Chhattisgarh to suppress the Maoist movement. Actually, it was a psychological war on the part of the state to isolate the Maoists from the people or the 'fish from water'. That attempt, however, as the state home department had to admit reluctantly, did not succeed. Meanwhile, after giving the order for 'Operation Lalgarh', the West Bengal Chief Minister left for New Delhi.

'Operation Lalgarh' and the resistance by the People and the Maoists

The military operation against the people of Lalgarh, despite this massive show of strength, was not at all a smooth affair. It took two days and a half for the forces to reach, by covering about 70 kms, the Lalgarh police station. On the way, they met with people's resistance at different points. Roads were dug, trees were cut down, very heavy stones were placed on the main roads at several points to prevent the advance of the para-military forces. People shot arrows from different sides, women and children tried to obstruct the progress as far as possible. The police used teargas shells and started beating people mercilessly with women falling on the ground and still being beaten. Landmines exploded causing damage to a bridge and a culvert which stalled the advance of the specially trained elite military forces. The battle that everyone expected since the beginning of the operation erupted just as the sun was setting on 19th – the second day. The Maoist fighters fired at central forces in Kuldiha—one of the areas cleared by police the previous day. At Pingboni, some constables rushed forward with lathis, only to scatter themselves soon as arrows were shot at them. Suddenly, a deafening silence ripped through. One of the policemen had apparently tripped a booby trap—an IED rigged to a tree. That was the signal for the Maoists to open fire. Completely taken by surprise, policemen scrambled for cover (*TOI, 21 June 2009*). The blast hit the Domkal sub-divisional police officer's car in Pirakata critically injuring four policemen. A culvert was blown up at Nimtala and around 9 am, heavy gunfire was heard near Lalgarh police station. Rattled by the attack, many constables reportedly refused to carry out any operation without central forces accompanying them (*TOI, 21 June 2009*).

What surprised the police was that all the attacks occurred in areas that security forces had swept through only the previous day. According to one report, it was a classic case of an attacking army moving faster than the generals expected. The forces covered 12 km on Day one, but their lines stretched thin. No force was deployed in the 7-km stretch between Pirakata and Pirakhali, which had been 'sanitized' by the security forces on Day one. There were huge gaps at the rear that the Maoists stealthily moved in to exploit and ambushed the forces from behind. Another contingent of central forces with minesweepers started from the Sarenga end (a forest area between Goaltore and Ranibandh) towards the West Medinipur border. On Day two, they started advancing from Pirakhali and after one hour, covered a distance of only one km and came to a halt at Bhimpur. Minesweepers and detectors were used to locate explosives. But the operation was abruptly suspended and the forces moved into Bhimpur High school where they stayed put for six hours. The para-military officer reportedly wanted police to remove barricades and take on PCAPA, while central forces would battle armed Maoists. A difference of opinion cropped up and nothing moved. While the meeting was on, it was reported that a 100-man Maoists guerrillas had taken up position in the paddy fields of Kuldiha, 14 km from Lalgarh (*TOI, 20 June 2009*). In many places boulders were placed, human barricades were created and broken, then created again. Ultimately, forty-five tense hours after the operation started, security forces entered Lalgarh town and reached the police station kept virtually locked from inside by the policemen. These security forces breathed a sigh of relief and celebrated as if Jaffna had at last fallen to them.

Atrocities by the security forces/hermads

The first obstruction raised by the people was on way to Malida with trees cut down and placed on the road and human shields comprising both men and women with traditional weapons and women in the front. Police announced through the hand-mike to disperse within two minutes. People replied with the slogans: "We would not allow police forces that back CPI (M) hermads to advance". Within a few seconds, police action started; teargas was fired and they rushed towards the crowd with batons and rifles. One group chased the demonstrators to their village Melda and spared not even women, children, teenagers, old men and women. Many of them had been bleeding profusely due to beating. The state armed forces broke into houses and literally dragged people from inside to beat them up in a savage manner (*Bartaman, 19 June 2009*). A fourteen-year old boy had fled from teargas attacks and asked his grandmother to save him from police beating. By then, the police had already started beating up the grandmother. As she writhed in pain, the boy rushed into the room. Buddhadev's sentry, according to a reporter, had still been beating the old granny. When a photographer, Ashutosh Patra of Sanbad Pratidin went to take the photo, he was beaten by the police. Four or five policemen entered the room and within two minutes, came out by dragging the boy by the hair; he was naked with blood scars on all parts of the body. He was taken prisoner. Scenes such as these were enacted in many houses in villages such as Pirakuli, Dhanguri and others. (*Sanbad Pratidin, 19 June 2009*).

The security forces failed to advance more than 7 kms from Goaltore in six hours for fear of landmines. That made them so angry that they attacked old men and women, patients and local sportsmen. They poured their venom on the people as they had boycotted the police in their areas. At Pingboni, Bankura, many people were seriously injured, such as Chandicharan Pal and Ranjit Karak, the latter being an epilepsy patients. Both were residents of Shyampur village under Jaipur police station(*Bartaman, 20 June 2009*).

When on 22 June, some intellectuals from Kolkata went to Malida, gory details of humiliation and torture of a sadistic nature came to light. The correspondent of a Bengali daily gave a vivid description, and here is a free translation into English: "All on a sudden, a woman came and got hold of Saonli Mitra's feet similar to the way a sinking man catches a straw to remain alive. She could not control her tears. 'Didi(Sister), save us. They will not let us go. Police had entered our house and has only kept us alive. Everything else they had robbed. She broke into tears as she spoke". The police broke her house, beat her black and blue. As she writhed in pain, one armed police hit her back with the pointed part of the gun. Her mother-in-law pleaded with them to spare her. "But who will listen to whom? They stripped me. I was totally helpless. Before I could realize what was being done to me, the rifle butt was pressed into my vagina. They held my two hands tight. They were throwing all types of abusive languages and continued beating me with sticks". They did these things as the call for the boycott of police was written on our house. The same was the picture in the villages of Goaltore, Belpahari and Sarenga where the team visited. Even a seven-year old child was not spared by the police force of Buddhadev Bhattacharya. The child was beaten in front of his mother and one of his legs was broken (*Ekdin 22 June 2009*).

That is not all. In some villages, human excreta were thrown into the wells from which drinking water was drawn so as to deprive them of even any source of drinking water at all.

CPI (M) hermits in police uniform operate like vultures in Nandigram style

The PCAPA has accused the CPI (M) hermits of entering Lalgarh in police uniform in collusion with the state police forces and identifying the houses of members of the People's Committee to the police so that they could target them with ease. These goons masquerading as police trailed behind the security forces and started attacking committee members to regain control over so that they could again establish their fascist rule over the people (*Dainik Statesman, 22 June 2009*). The 40 odd houses in Kuldiha village were attacked by the police on the charge giving food and shelter to the Maoists. The victims of police repression from many villages such as Kuldiha, Pyachapara, Jamboni, Mahatapur, Nimtola, Malida, Pukuriashol, Amchor, Salboni, Saboli, Pirrakuli, Dhorashol, Boro Pukuriashol, Korma, Belashol, Pirakata, Boro Kolshibhanga, Sorberia, Dhangouri and Jorka came to Pirakata primary school for shelter and food. The tales are the same. Strip the women, humiliate them in every conceivable manner and make them break down so that they are never able to hold their heads high again. When Usharani Singh, Gitabani Mahato, Alo Mahato and other women were relating tales of their humiliation and molestation, they categorically referred to the presence of CPI (M) goons in new khaki dress with shoes different from that of the police force—similar to that in Nandigram. Many of them were forced to strip in front of these beasts in human figures (*Dainik Statesman, 22 June 2009*).

Human Rights Commission and Amnesty International accuse the governments

Meanwhile, the National Human Rights Commission and the Amnesty International had strongly criticised the Central and West Bengal state governments for torturing adivasi people and warned that unless these were stopped, stern action would be taken against the government (*Sanbad Pratidin, 23 June 2009*).

Cops force people to look for IEDs

The government that has many a time accused the Maoists of forcing people to act as human shields is itself doing the same thing. In fact, state armed forces—terrified of IED explosions—caught hold of local youths and forced them to poke around for hidden mines and explosives. A newspaper carried pictures of this near Dhangori village (*TOI, 22 June 2009*).

Discontent within the joint forces

Discontent within the jawans is growing with every passing day. First, they are critical about complete lack of direction among those in command of joint forces. The senior officials can neither proceed nor get back. At every step, they are sensing the mine trap. Sometimes, they are giving marching orders; then when a wire was seen on the way, they are stopped and requisitioned bomb experts. This indecision on the part of the senior police officials is also affecting the morale of para-military forces. Second, 15 companies of CRPF, EFR, SAP were brought in the Medinipur camp. After the start of the operation, most of them had their permanent address in Bhimpur camp. Earlier, there was no such camp in Bhimpur. In fact, a local school building was

made into such a camp thus putting an end to studies for the school children. Although the school was turned into a camp, it does not have the minimum infrastructure. From the very first day, food could not be supplied on time. The jawans openly vented their grievances. Third, the area is a very dry area, water is scarce. The jawans (soldiers) have to go without any bath for 3 days at a stretch. Then there is the scarcity of drinking water. Fourth, the zone is having around 40 degrees temperature at day time and scorching heat of the summer sky is taking its toll. At the time of search operations at the jungles of Jhitka, one CRPF jawan (soldiers) is reported to have died of sun-stroke, and more and more are falling ill every day.

Similar is the situation in Lalgah police station. Here also the jawans (soldiers) complained that they are not being provided food at the proper time. As Lalgah wears a deserted look, food crisis has also worsened much. In Goaltore also, joint forces are being stationed in the local college. The jawans expressed their discontent in front of the DSP. Fifth, the place where they are being put up did not have sufficient light. One correspondent is anticipating civil war like situation within the joint forces if such things are allowed to continue (Ekdin 23 June 2009).

Relief camps for people

As a result of police atrocities, thousands of people were forced to flee their villages and take shelter in the relief camps being set up in Pirakata and Goaltore by the TMC. Bikash Mohit and Chanchal Mohit described with tearful eyes how people were tortured by the security forces and the police. Poison was dropped into their well as, the police said, the Maoists come to take water from the well. All the villagers were picked up on the mere suspicion of being Maoists (*Bikeler Pratidin, 22 June 2009*).

Maoists speak

One remarkable feature, quite unprecedented in the history of the Maoist movement is that Maoist leaders addressed press conferences or engaged in telephonic interviews with many TV channels or newspapers. At a time when the situation is particularly critical for the Maoists and the hunt is on for their capture or death by encounter, they talked to the media with ease and expressed their views. At a time when the West Bengal administration as also some media declared that top leaders like Kishanji had fled to Jharkhand, Kishanji appeared before the media or got engaged in telephonic interviews with different channels and asserted his presence in Lalgah. He stated that this people's war could never be defeated by armed power, ridiculed Buddhadev Bhattacharjee as a pawn in the hands of the Central Home Minister and also replied to many questions posed by the media. He also appealed to the urban intellectuals to come to Lalgah and see with their own eyes the brutality committed by the security forces. He also stated that the West Bengal government should immediately stop this para-military operation failing which they would encounter a conflagration in the whole Jangal Mahal (*Sanbad Pratidin, 21 June 2009*). This indeed is unprecedented.

Visit by Intellectuals

Many intellectuals from Kolkata such as Aparna Sen, Saonli Mitra, Kaushik Sen, Joy Goswami, Bolan Gangopadhyay and some others visited Lalgah and other places. They condemned the police atrocities in unequivocal terms and made appeals to the government to stop this para-military operation and to the Maoists to cease fire. (HT,

22 June 2009). According to news reports, cases have been registered against them in Lalgarh police station for breaking section 144. This is vindictiveness at its worst.

Looking to the future

The Battle for Lalgarh is going to be a long-drawn affair. At present, the security forces are consolidating their position. There is no news from the Maoist camp. As one newspaper stated, some sort of a psychological war had been going on between the Maoists and the security forces. The seemingly impregnable security forces seem to be still haunted by the landmine spectre. The impact of the two-day bandh in some states of the country called by the Maoists was felt in the three districts of West Bengal.

The last two days had been rather eventless, except the destruction and burning of some CPI (M) party offices. When reports last came in, the security forces have set up check posts on the main road connecting Pirakata and Lalgarh, checking all vehicles and people on bi-cycles and local people thereby debarring outsiders from visiting the 'war zone'. The administration—both central and state—is discouraging people to visit affected places on the plea that protection from supposed armed attacks by the Maoists cannot be provided by them. Actually, what they want to conceal is the barbarity committed by the state police and security forces against the people of the land in the name of taming the Maoists in this totally unequal war from the military point of view. Meanwhile, as the days of the stay of security forces would be prolonged, they would appear as armies of occupation against the wishes of the people.



Security-centric approach cannot resolve Lalgarh conflict

By Sujato Bhadro. *June 28, 2009, The Times of India.*

Unlike Singur-Nandigram, the initial social resistance movement in Lalgarh revolved around police atrocities; with tribal people raising their voice against law enforcing agencies breaking the law of the land. So, this movement is political in nature; a story of demand for the restoration of civil liberties since November 2008. The people of Lalgarh are not concerned about problems of land acquisition, issue of development and displacement; the sole issue is fundamental: the right to life. If we focus on the historical, and oppose the fictional sense of the reality in which the people of Lalgarh live, we will be able to get a proper understanding of the problem.

As usual, the government refused to concede the biggest demand of the people of Lalgarh: that the then SP of West Midnapore tender an apology to the people for the torture and terror inflicted on the people by his forces, which saw the women suffer physically and mentally. A reign of terror was let loose by the police. What made the people furious was the culture of impunity and a police boycott was started.

The problem was further aggravated in February when armed troopers of CPI(Marxist) attacked the protesting villagers in order to break the movement started under leadership of PCPA, resulting in the death of four PCPA members. Even after that, as part of agreement reached at the tripartite meeting held on April 22, election was held smoothly and without any kind of violence. The first post-poll political violence occurred when the gangs of the main ruling party attacked the villagers of Dharampur; admittedly, the Maoist cadres joined openly in retaliatory action.

The question is whether the presence of a few gun-toting Maoist cadres are sufficient, reasonable and proportionate factors for joint military operation in Lalgarh. Are more reinforcements of force and deployment of deadly COBRA jawans going to serve any purpose except more suffering and torture of tribal people? It is a clear case of "*pre-emptive*" military action. As reports reveal that such "*war on terror*" has created "*tyrannicide*" in the affected region. Even the NHRC has expressed deep concern over the violations of international human rights standards by forces of the joint operation. The institutionalised left parties now fiercely argue that the "*world is a better place*" without Maoists and hence eliminate them.

Another question: why did armed oppositional politics gain a social base among the "*wretched of the earth*"? The answer lies in the actual condition of the area where people live in abject poverty. They are deprived of all sorts of civic amenities and simply denied all their entitlements as citizens of this country. If we read parliamentary debates on internal security, if we read left party perspectives on insurgents within the nation, we would find the same discourse.

Crores and crores of allotted money have either not been spent on uplift of the poor adivasis or siphoned off. It is a matter of shame that after 32 years of rule, the self-proclaimed pro-labour government is still announcing fresh schemes for social and economic development of regions like Lalgarh! In addition, all democratic forums for justice are either ineffective or insensitive to demands of the poorest of poor or have simply failed to deliver the public good, for which the government is solely responsible.

Now, the security-centric approach will not resolve the conflict. An Indian research scholar based in Australia in a recent paper argued that community-based interaction is essential to identify the root cause of "terrorism"; anti-terror laws are no longer required to tackle such human violence as has already been shown in countries like Spain and Australia.

Unfortunately, the Left Front government has been pursuing the same traditional repressive policy to contain Maoist activities in three districts of Bengal since 2001. And the chief minister has made a tall claim in 2005 that this policy is paying "dividends". How could we then explain such a presence of an organization even in 2009?

We claim to value life itself. But this military operation values some lives over others. This operation wants to eliminate "bare life" and protect "quality of life" of some people. The government has the power to not only use deadly force but also to justify it with the rhetoric of saving society from "evil forces", humane versus monstrous, and legitimate versus illegitimate.

If one wants to go beyond philosopher Alian Badiou's quest for neutral readability of terror', one has to understand sources and causes, means and methods, ideologies and structures of Maoist nomadic violence, because such collective violence garners massive representation of the local people. If one looks at R J Rummell's data and does some arithmetical calculations it is shown that **in the last hundred years fully secular states have killed at least forty-five times as many people as non-state actors' violence have killed**. Thus we should sadly acknowledge the costs of democracy : primarily one of the unmitigated , unapologetic violence by the State and also by the misadventure of non-state actors.

What we need today is to build up a new ethic to enhance all potential for non-violent pursuit for the creation of dialogue and articulation of alternate versions of comity as public good.

**Protest at CPI(M) office building,
New Delhi**



Where have the Maoists gone?

Sankar Ray July 23, 2009

The Statesman.

Fables like 1,500 Maoists or 100 specially-trained-in arms-operations Maoists are at Lalgargh or its surroundings, scripted by West Bengal chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee and his condescending subordinates like chief secretary Asoke Mohan Chakraborty and home secretary Ardhendu Sen, are now into the open.

Not a single Maoist is yet in the net of the joint forces. However, the 11,000-strong force has been successful in preventing newsmen from filing reports on torture let loose on subalterns. Small wonder, the CPI-M's central committee member Benoy Konar happily said, rubbing his palms gleefully, "*We are with the chief minister in his application of the Central Act to suppress the Maoists*".

This is in contrast to the decision of the CC and LF neither to apply the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 2008 nor to ban the CPI (Maoist) in the state. Who cares for the CPI-M's editorial posture in People's Democracy (21 December, 2008) warning the UPA government of the possibility of "gross misuse" of three clauses therein?

The first of them, "contained in clause 43D, seeks to amend Section 167 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) to extend the period of detention without bail to 180 days beyond the existing periods ranging from 15 to 60 to 90 days. The maximum 90-day period is now proposed to be increased to 180 days if the courts are satisfied that such extension is required to complete the investigation", the editorial said.

Mr Bhattacharjee, LF chairman Biman Bose ~ both Politburo members ~ and general secretary Prakash Karat resort to a mystic silence over wanton repression on those who couldn't flee their hearth and home, while over 70,000 Adivasis left the place from 300-plus hamlets of Jangalmahal. All of them are languishing in poverty, malnutrition and social deprivation.

The Maoists of Jangalmahal ~ West Midnapore, Bankura and Purulia districts ~ are inexplicably compared to terrorists of Kashmir or some far-flung Northeast region to justify classification of them under the UA(P)A. The comparison is absurd. After all, Maoists are not secessionists like Ulfa, NSCN factions and Kashmiri militants with Al-Qaida connections. Ludicrous as it may seem, bureaucrats, rushed to Lalgargh ostensibly for development, admitted that no economic development had taken place there.

A booklet ~ ***Lalgargh: Paschimbanger Adivasi (Lalgargh ~ Adivasis of West Bengal)***, brought out by the Kolkata-based voluntary social action forum, Nagarik Mancha, reveals the pathetic condition of the inhabitants despite three decades of Left governance. The average number of days of work per household in 2008-09 under the NREGA was 6.02, 6.72 and 8.60 in West Midnapore, Purulia and Bankura, respectively. About 95 per cent of children between six and 35 months suffer from anaemia against the state average of 78.3 per cent. Only nine per cent of villages of West Midnapore district receive piped drinking water, 15 per cent and 14 per cent in Bankura and Purulia, respectively.

Former RSP MP Manoj Bhattacharya admitted: "*Out of Rs 6,700 crore programmed for socio-economic transformation of the western region over a period of five years*

(2007-11) as per recommendations of the IIT-Kharagpur, which was retained by the LF government to draw up the plan, Rs 82 crore was granted by the western regional development board for 2007-09. Out of this, only Rs 14 crore was incurred."

The pathetic performance under the minister for western region development, Susanta Ghosh, the CPI-M's shah-en-shah at Garbeta, is there for all to see. A 16-member experts group was set up by the Planning Commission to go into causes of extremism. It was headed by former revenue secretary D Bandyopadhyay, who conceived the idea of Operation Barga, CPI-M's USP until three years back. In its report, "**Development Issues to deal with the causes of Discontent, Unrest and Extremism**", submitted in 2007, it observed: "There is no denying that what goes in the name of 'Naxalism' is to a large extent a product of collective failure to assure to different segments of society, their basic entitlements under the Constitution and other protective legislation".

Villagers we met at Baropelia, Lalgarh, on 8 May denied there was anarchy under the people's committee. "For over six months, our male members have been sleeping peacefully at night as the nightmare of police torture has vanished for the time being at least. We are all with the Pulisi Santras Birodhi Janaganer Committee," said Meena Tudu (name changed).

The jingoistic rule under the home (police) ministry is evident from the deliberate default in the case of poet Prasun Bhowmik, convenor, Swajan, forum of poets, performing artists, academics etc like Aparna Sen, Saoli Mitra and Kausik Sen. He got repeated threatening phone calls when the Swajan team visited Lalgarh. "I recorded the calls specifically and filed an FIR but I got no response from the administration or police. No action has been taken against the caller".

Lalgarh: Police brutality renders an athlete disabled

Athlete Anup Mandal of *Goaltore* near *Lalgarh* was so severely beaten by police and paramilitary forces that his athletic carrier is at stake. Bone of his left hand is broken; he has been under treatment with severe injuries in his back and waist. On 19 June 2009 when he was returning from one of his friend's home at *Pingboni*, the operation of combined forces was underway. The forces not only tortured him but also broke his bicycle.



Revolution in India: Lalgarh's Hopeful Spark

(This is an excellent overview of the struggle in Lalgarh written by a young revolutionary in the U.S. associated with the Kasama Project.)

By Sam Shell

Introduction

India's forty year old Maoist-communist movement has undergone some remarkable growth in strength and influence over the last few years. This has occurred in part because of the consolidation of previously divided Maoist forces into a single party, the Communist Party of India (Maoist). Beginning in 2003, the Maoists were said to be present in 55 districts in 9 states, but by 2008, mainstream sources estimated they were present in 220 districts in 22 states with around one third of these being directly affected by the people's war, while the others under the influence of varying degrees of political activity. The Maoists now have a noticeable presence in a total of one-third of all of India's districts.



They have set up revolutionary democratic governing structures known as janathana sarkars in areas of Chhattisgarh and Jharkand in eastern India. These governing structures have administrative wings that deal with issues such as culture, education, health, finance, forest protection, public relations, and justice. Armed village militias have been organized as part of a larger people's war. These function as the initial steps towards setting up liberated political base areas—to exist as pockets of dual power—in opposition to the Indian State. In the area of West Bengal mainly populated by adivasis, or tribal peoples, the Maoists have developed a large base of popular support, including the beginnings of revolutionary political power. This work has laid the basis for the political uprising of the adivasis in the Lalgarh area beginning in November 2008.

This party takes as its goal a revolutionary transition of India to socialism and the development of a global communist society. As their more immediate goal, the Maoists seek to overthrow semi-feudal relations in India and the domination of imperialist powers over the country. This first step is called New Democratic revolution in Maoist theory—and they seek this through the development of revolutionary political base areas for a people's war that can defeat the Indian army and overthrow the current state. Central to advancing that process is the agrarian revolution—the uprising of impoverished farmers in India's vast countryside against feudal exploiters, their political cronies and their armed repressive forces.

In the following article I will attempt to discuss the Lalgarh uprising in West Bengal, and its connection with the Maoist movement.

And the riot be the rhyme of the unheard...

- Zack de la Rocha

Background of the Movement

At this moment an incredible event is taking place in the West Midnapore district of West Bengal. Before the eruption, this sleepy area was little known except to its own inhabitants. Now, a people's movement of unprecedented size to West Bengal has risen from the suffering of its adivasi (tribal) inhabitants, galvanizing the region, and shocking greater India. This movement has been popularly termed "the Lalgarh uprising."

Although one could accurately say the point of eruption of this rebellion occurred early in November of 2008, it is necessary to step back further in order to appreciate the context within which these events have unfolded. Lalgarh is an incredibly impoverished area of West Bengal. It contains one well-developed road—built to accommodate police—that is of little use to its indigenous inhabitants to whom even a motorbike is a rarity. Neither clean water nor electricity is available. Police brutality was a regular occurrence where villagers were detained and tortured for little or no reason—some singled out for repeated horrific abuse. (De, 2008) For many years the State promised development in the area, yet little to none was seen.



A Map of Midnapur district

In 2007, the Jindal Steel Group was given rights to set up a Special Economic Zone (SEZ) [see note A] for steel production and was awarded a huge portion of land (different reports claim figures somewhere between 4,500 and 5,000 acres). Large sections of these lands were tribal lands, supposedly protected by law for allocation to the indigenous people through a land-reform program. When the development began, adivasi people were displaced, and due to the specter environmental damage, many of their livelihoods were threatened. For years the system had abandoned these people, leaving them under the boot petty bureaucrats to live as paupers and subjected to every imaginable abuse. Then, in a final act of force, it sought to drive them off of the only land they knew. This callous act was no less that applauded by the ruling powers of the area. After word spread of the land rights being granted to Jindal Steel Group, the region shook choking with outrage. (Bhattacharyya, 2009)

On November 2, 2008, a landmine detonated in Shalbeni in the West Midnapore district when a procession of business and governmental leaders—including the chief minister of West Bengal—returned from the inauguration of the Jindal Steel Works SEZ, having been planted by Maoist guerrillas to target their convoy in opposition to the shameful industrial project. (Ray, 2008) The high-profile attack spurred a massive campaign of police terror in local villages where many of the indigenous population were targeted as suspects or Maoist sympathizers (support for the Communist Party of India (Maoist) is widespread in many areas of the region). Men, women, and children were targeted without regard and were subjected to physical abuse, torture, and rape. (JNU Students, 2009) Particularly polarizing moments were when one woman was struck in the face with a rifle butt resulting in a permanent loss of sight in one

eye, eleven women were severely abused, and three students were arrested and detained (in a manner more resembling a kidnapping than arrest) on suspicion of being Maoists. However, the inhuman treatment of villagers by police extended far beyond these few vicious incidents and was rooted in a long history of such acts. (Kutty, 2009)

Several days later thousands of villagers mobilized. Armed with only traditional weapons such as bows and arrows, and an iron resolve forged on decades of suffering, they dug trenches and laid tree trunks across roads to prevent security personnel from entering. In retribution they descended on police stations, damaged their cars, cut off electricity to the buildings, and demanded that police explain why so many of the adivasi people had been hurt.



Huge mobilizations of this nature went on without pause for more than a month, drawing widespread attention. Police officers became subject to a social boycott, making it difficult for them to acquire the basic necessities of food and sanitary items required to stay in the area. Coupled with a strong Maoist presence, the social boycott made the Lalgarh area almost impregnable for governmental authority figures. (Bhattacharyya, 2009) Since these events, the uprising has spread like a wildfire influencing hundreds of villages in the West Midnapore district and has drawn immense support not just in West Bengal, but also from many areas in India. It has assumed a definite political character.

The Demands

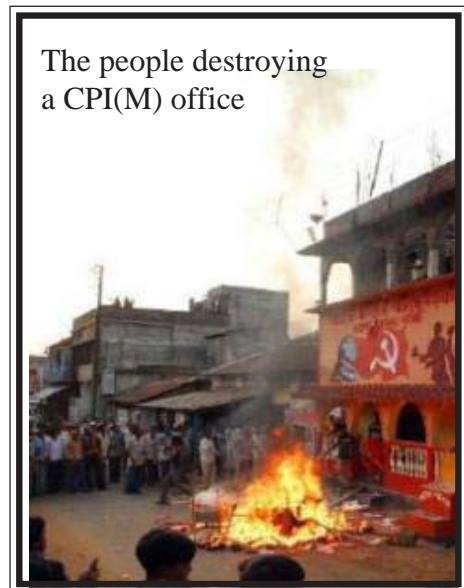
On November 8, 2008, the People's Committee Against Police Atrocities (Pulishi Atyacharer Biruddhe Janaganer Committee, or PCPA) was formed in Dalilpur Chowk. It was composed upon formation of elected representatives from 95 villages. (De, 2008) These numbers have vastly grown its foundation. Its inception bypassed previous organizations of tribal elders and mainstream political parties which had utterly failed in providing relief to the people of the area, and gave an organized and democratic voice to those from oppressed groups. The committee now makes all major decisions at large public meetings which are often attended by more than 10,000 people from hundreds of villages. (Chowdhury, 2008) The committee also put forth a 13-point set of demands as well as the police and administrative boycott—to make clear the adivasi people's grievances.

Many demonstrations, blockades, and strikes have been called by the PCPA, and relatively peaceful assaults on police camps and mainstream party offices were organized, initially by adivasi people. In many cases, police have been forced



to withdraw entirely according to their demands. Another significant gain was to win the majority of their 13-point list demands as well as large monetary concessions for development, although these monetary gains were viewed as hoaxes that would never, in the end, benefit the adivasi people. (Kutty, 2009) However, their most important demand—that police go to each village and apologize—had yet to be won. (Indian Express, 2009)

The months after the initial uprising have been characterized by constant forays and negotiations between police, government officials, their respective party cadre, and the people of West Bengal. These conflicts have often taken the form of liberating and losing village territory to government factions. A particularly interesting moment occurred during the weeks prior to the April 2009 Lok Sabha elections. The PCPA put forth a popular demand that no police be allowed into villages during the elections. Although the residents of the areas supported the idea of allowing the polls to occur, they refused to allow them to happen if any police personnel were going to be present. After a long standoff, the villages finally allowed the polls to occur with police presence, but only far outside the villages where the police boycott existed. Any villagers interested in voting were given rides to the designated polling place on buses chartered by the Election Commission. (De, 2009)



An important feature of the uprising has been the oppressive role played by the Communist Party of India (Marxist), known as the CPM—the dominant party in West Bengal’s Left Front government. This “communist” party has been deeply involved with West Bengal’s capitalists for decades and has brutally exploited West Bengal’s large tribal population. In the Lalgarh area, CPM leaders routinely pocket development funds meant for the villagers, and their police forces arrest and torture adivasis suspected of working with the Maoists in the area.

Recent Developments

On June 14, 2009, the PCPA and Maoists conducted a large campaign where they liberated 48 villages and took control of CPI (Marxist) party buildings in Dharampur. They were met with fierce opposition and were involved in furious gun battles for days preceding these events, but, in the end, succeeded in freeing these villages. (Bhattacharyya, 2009)

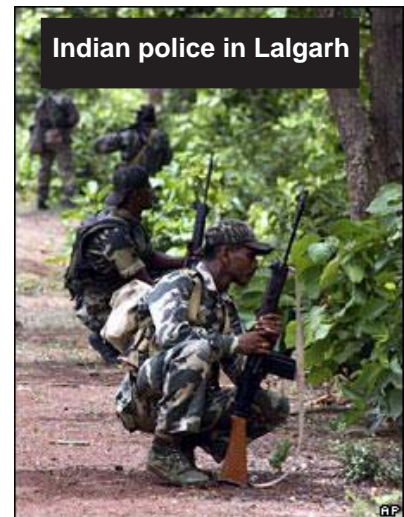
On June 16, 2009, there was another significant uprising in Lalgarh in which a large number of adivasis set numerous police camps on fire, drove security forces and CPI (Marxist) cadre and leaders out of Lalgarh, retaking control of the area. (Rediff, 2009) An especially important moment was the destruction of the palatial building of CPI (Marxist) leader Anuj Pandey, one of the most hated government officials of the region. The destruction of this building was of great symbolic meaning. It had stood as a tower of oppression keeping the adivasi people under its heavy shadow for many years. Its destruction has finally allowed the sunshine to pour in, lifting the spirits of flowers once so heavily choked by weeds. Unfortunately, since this uprising security forces have descended into the area and have carried out murderous repression

campaigns of the same nature that sparked the initial movement. (Sanhati, 2009) We can only hope those facing these campaigns can effectively defend their new found freedom in significant ways.

During at least the past few weeks the United States has been providing technical assistance to the Indian government to quell the rebellion, which has allowed them to monitor the areas of Baroperlia, Kantapahari, Ramgarh, Mahultal, Kadashol, Pingboni, Goaltore, Dhrampur and Jhitka (Rajarshee, 2009) as well as plan assaults. The CPI (Maoist) was officially “banned” throughout India as well in June. Soon after, a spokesperson of the Maoist party, Gour Chakravarthy, was arrested in Kolkata while giving an interview. (Indian Express, 2009) The government has even gone so far as to arrest outsiders who have arrived as neutral observers. A team of intellectuals from Kolkata, including filmmaker Aparna Sen, (General Secretariat of the ILPS, 2009) and a ten-person team of social activists, were arrested and assaulted by police. (MSN News, 2009)

Despite the huge mobilization of military units and support from foreign imperialist countries, the people of West Bengal and the Maoists have been able to hold their own against the Indian paramilitary forces by conducting guerrilla-style battles and by driving police back out of newly-seized areas. The tribal people have often mobilized blockades while the PCPA and Maoists have conducted more military-based struggles. (Bhattacharyya, Lalgarh Update)

Since July 4, 2009, paramilitary forces and the West Bengal State police have been sent to capture Pingboni and Birbhanpur. (One India, 2009) They also have been combing the forests of the Lalgarh area of Kadashole, Salboni, Godamouli, Jhitka, Kantapahari, and Ronja as part of an assault on Maoist forces and tribal people. (Mondal, 2009) Some leaders of the PCPA are also being explicitly targeted for allegedly supporting the Maoists. Sixteen paramilitary groups are operating in the area including COBRA. According to some press reports, the military groups plan to stay in full force until at least the end of July. (The Hindu, 2009)



As of July 8th, mainstream news agencies have reported that Lalgarh was recaptured. However, the Maoists forces stationed there were able to escape relatively unscathed to the jungles of Ayodhya hills in Purulia via Belpahari (Chaudhuri, 2009) and still a number of villages remain liberated (up to date numbers are difficult to ascertain).

Notable Characteristics of the Lalgarh Uprising

From the beginning the Lalgarh uprising has been a progressive force. Since its birth, this movement has had an undeniably organic character, and at its height, drew tens of thousands of villagers out to fight against the corrupt establishment. The movement, clearly born out of the struggles of the noble adivasi peasants, has transcended rural tribal lines in important ways by drawing solidarity and defense from broader sections of the populace including students (Sanhati, 2009), human rights organizations (Amnesty International, 2009), small store owners, and adivasi migrant workers. (Ray, 2009)

Although spontaneous at birth, the movement has quickly taken shape and developed leadership along democratic lines. The first leading mass organization rising out of the struggle was the PCPA. After its formation, committees quickly appeared in multiple villages, often being lead by women. All the major decisions of this organization were decided at mass meetings consisting of up to 10,000 adivasis from hundreds of villages. (Ray, 2009)

Aside from the mass democratic organization the PCPA, embryonic parallel governing structures have begun to emerge as well. These are known as Gram Committees, which were formed in January of 2009 as an alternative to the panchayat system, a tool of the ruling factions of India. Each committee consists of a 10-member elected body—five men and five women—with each body having two delegates for larger area meetings (10 villages). Above those committees are a total of 35 representatives for central committee meetings—at this level the male/female ratio is not required to be equal (with females occupying a minimum of 12 seats)—who play governing roles. Each decision these committees make must be ratified by a general assembly of people and at least 150 of these committees have been formed (although these numbers are rapidly changing). Along with Gram Committees, the villagers also have set up village defense committees—a form of militia—to protect the people from hermad, police, and CPI (Marxist) attacks. (Bhattacharyya, 2009) These committees are quite radical and novel departures from the traditionally patriarchal and authoritarian institutions of the area.



Whenever these organizations meet with representatives from the official government, they demand that the officials sit on woven mats alongside them. This occurs in direct contradiction to the traditional practice of governing officials sitting in a chair while the people sit on the ground around them. (Ray, 2009) These practices have served to shatter the chains wrapped around the inhabitants of the area, elevating them from a subservient childlike position, to one of equality, one of a people no longer subject to the rule of a small elite.

A communal kitchen

Over the course of the struggle, new developmental initiatives have taken place. In Kantapahari, a hospital set up two years ago, but never utilized by the government, was seized by the PCPA and renamed the "People's Hospital." The hospital opened its doors staffed with one physician and six health workers. (Bhattacharyya, 2009) The PCPA has also taken steps to deal with agriculture and water scarcity problems with the instillation of tubewells in multiple villages and irrigation projects such as canal dredging. These initiatives have all taken place solely on the basis of monetary contributions and voluntary labor.



The Maoists have also been playing an important role in developmental projects by encouraging a model of self-sufficiency and sustainability as opposed to projects dominated by foreign capital and a wealthy elite. These projects have included health centers, drinking water and irrigation projects, and road development. Besides helping set up parallel governing structures, the Maoists, alongside the villagers, have built at least 50 kilometers of gravel paths, set up tube wells and water tanks, set up irrigation initiatives, and are running health centers. (Bhattacharyya, 2009)

Exciting developments have occurred explicitly within the women's movement—practices such as fair representation have been won and women's leadership in the general movement has served as an important offensive against traditional patriarchy. An all-women's branch of the PCPA has been formed, which is not only responsible for the fight against police repression and CPI (Marxist) attacks, but also against domestic oppression. One important initiative of this movement has been the seizure of businesses that distribute alcohol. Those who ignore the ban on consumption can be subject to social boycott. [see note B] (Bhattacharyya, 2009)

Concluding Remarks

It is my belief that the facts overwhelmingly demonstrate that the battle occurring for Lalgarh's liberation is a just one. This movement is one of unprecedented size to the area, born from and led by the indigenous inhabitants of the region for an undeniably just cause. Revolutionary people should be watching this movement, learning what we can, and offering whatever support possible. No doubt this struggle will be a long and brutal one, with the people of West Bengal facing many trials and tribulations. This is a uniquely polarizing moment in recent political history, already being called the new Naxalbari, and will most likely prove to be a locus of revolutionary struggle for some time to come.



AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

PRESS RELEASE

INDIA: PROPOSED VEDANTA MINE THREATENS LIVELIHOODS AND CULTURAL IDENTITY OF INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY

9 July 2009

The Indian government should immediately withdraw the clearance granted to a massive mining project that threatens the lives and livelihoods of a protected indigenous community living there, Amnesty International said today.

In April 2009, Indian authorities gave Vedanta Aluminium Limited and the state-owned Orissa Mining Corporation permission to mine bauxite for the next 25 years in the Niyamgiri Hills, in the eastern state of Orissa. The mine falls within the traditional lands of the Dongria Kondh community, an indigenous community with special protection under Indian law.

Members of the Dongria Kondh told an Amnesty International delegation in March 2009 that they fear the mine will destroy their sacred sites, decimate their forests, pollute their water source and cause an influx of traffic and people that would threaten their traditional way of life.

"For centuries the Dongria Kondh community have considered the Niyamgiri Hills sacred; central to their collective identity and religious beliefs. The hills are also essential to their economic and physical survival," said Madhu Malhotra, Amnesty International's Deputy Director for Asia Pacific. "The 8,000 strong Dongria Kondh now face an uncertain future."

The Dongria Kondh have special status under Indian law. Their communities and traditional lands, are protected under the Indian constitution, national laws, and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. "Contrary to international human rights standards, the Indian authorities have failed to obtain the free and informed consent of the Dongria Kondh prior to the approval of this project," said Madhu Malhotra. "Now the very existence of the Dongria Kondh as a distinct Indigenous people hangs in the balance."

Amnesty International is calling on India's authorities to live up to their international human rights obligations by withdrawing the clearance granted for the mine project until measures are taken to ensure that it will not impact negatively on the human rights of the Dongria Kondh and other communities. In addition, the Indian authorities should set up a genuine consultation process with the communities who may be affected.

Notes to Editors:

- Vedanta Aluminium Limited is a subsidiary of the UK-based company, Vedanta.

• The Dongria Kondh are an adivasi (Indigenous community) and were described as 'endangered' by India's Supreme Court-appointed Central Empowered Committee (CEC). They live on and at the base of the Niyamgiri Hills

• In February and March 2003, the Indian authorities held public hearings on the proposed mine. However, the Dongria Kondh communities living in and around the hills were not told about them. No information was presented at public hearings on the potential risks and negative impacts of bauxite mining in the area.

• Amnesty International's Demand Dignity campaign aims to end the human rights violations that drive and deepen global poverty. The campaign will mobilise people all over the world to demand that governments, big corporations and others who have power, listen to the voices of those living in poverty and recognise and protect their rights.

(NOTE: The Vedanta Aluminium Limited has the support of Union Home Minister Chidambaram himself who has been a member of iys Board of Directors. And this traitor calls those who are fighting to save the Niyamgiri Hills and the indigenous people as terrorists.)



{We are publishing below a Commenrary by Sri Sumanta Banerjee in EPW on boycott of elections and a reply by Azad, Spokesperson of the CC, CPI(Maoist)}

The maoists, elections, Boycotts and Violence

Economic & Political Weekly, vol xlv no 18, may 2, 2009

Sumanta Banerjee

The Maoists want a provision in the electoral rules to arm the voter with the right to reject a candidate, but if the voters are granted such a provision, will they allow them to participate in the elections, or still insist on boycotting them? It is high time the Maoists recognise that the vast majority of the Indian electorate, despite their disillusionment with the present political leadership, are not going to boycott elections.

The Lok Sabha elections were inau-gurated with a fanfare of bomb blasts, killing of security personnel and poll officials, burning of polling sta-tions, and a sensational hijacking of a train, where the hostages were served *sattu* and biscuits before being let off after about four hours!

This mixed display of violence and charity was a demonstration of the muscle power of the Communist Party of India (Maoist) [CPI (Maoist)], which had given a call for the boycott of elections. By disrupting the electoral process through such acts, it man-aged to make its presence felt in its pockets of influence in Jharkhand, Bihar, Chhattis-garh, and a few other states. Significantly, its activists and guerrillas physically tar-geted only the candidates and the state's representatives – the security forces, the poll officials – and thankfully refrained from attacking the voters who came in large numbers (often representing 50 to 60% of the electorate in these areas).

The Maoist call for boycotting the elec-tions, the party's attempts to bring this about by large-scale attacks on the electoral machinery, and yet, the willingness of the villagers in their strongholds to queue up to cast their votes, present a peculiar web of complexities. At one level, the boycott call by the Maoist party may make sense if we follow the arguments that it has put forward in its bulletin released on the eve of the elec-tions. Its spokesperson Azad urges us: ...go to grassroots level (where)... you can see the apathy, disillusionment, even hatred and anger against the parliamentary system and the parliamentary parties. Both have lost their credibility as never before...

While analysing the past opportunism of the different contesting parties while they were in power, Azad comments, in particu-lar, on the latest move to forge a Third Front by the parliamentary left, which he de-scribes as "...a congregation of self-seeking discredited opportunists, all of whom had proved themselves to be hypocrites and double-dealers in their respective states..." He recalls the "infamous history" of Chandrababu Naidu, Jaya lalithaa, Mayawati, and Deve Gowda, who had "at one time or the other, shared power with the Hindu chauvinist BJP [Bharatiya J-anata Party] (and who are) being given a clean and secular democratic image by the so-called Left" (10 April 2009, *Maoist I-nformation Bulletin* – No 7).

Azad further observes in the above-men-tioned bulletin: ...the elections this time are the most com-plex, most crisis-ridden and most fragment-ed in the annals of so-called Indian parlia-mentary democracy. Extreme instability and contradictions plague every party and candidate. No party or candidate seems to be certain of the electoral

outcome...Neither the BJP nor the Congress is in a position to hold their respective alliances together and centrifugal tendencies will continue to weaken these further.

Frankly speaking, one is tempted to agree with every word of the above critique – starting from the description of the mood of disillusionment among the voters, to the double-dealing of the leaders of the so-called Third Front, to the crisis within the Congress and BJP. There can also be no disagreement with another proposal made in the Maoist bulletin: "...allowing the voters the minimum democratic right to reject the parties and candidates contesting the election." Incidentally, there is a growing demand among sections of civil society also for some sort of provision that would allow the voter to say no to all the available candidates in a constituency whom he/she may find undesirable. The CPI (Maoist) suspects that the politicians are against this provision since, if given this option, the majority of the Indian electorate "would perhaps vote against every-one and prove in categorical terms the futility of parliamentary democracy".

Right to Reject Candidates

Although one may not go the whole hog with this rather rash assumption about the total collapse of popular faith in parliamentary democracy, there is no harm in including in the electoral rules a provision to arm the voter with the right to reject a candidate. Will our elected representatives in the next Lok Sabha display enough courage to amend the electoral rules by incorporating such a provision? It can be a healthy method of testing public opinion about the nominees put up by the political parties (corrupt politicians, criminal gangsters and power-hungry weathercocks, in favour of whom people often exercise their voting right in the absence of better candidates). Such an officially recorded expression of public rejection can also be of immense help to the various civil society groups (like *Wada Na Todo* and other voluntary agencies) which are playing an important role in the present elections by mobilising the electorate in certain areas to put pressure on political parties to eschew criminals and corrupt people from their lists of candidates, and compel the nominated candidates to adopt in their programmes popular demands for environmental protection, gender equality, and maintenance of communal harmony among other things.

To come back to the CPI (Maoist), if the voters are given what it considers "the minimum democratic right to reject the parties and candidates", will the party allow them to participate in the elections, or still insist on boycotting them? Will the Maoist leaders recognise that even such minor electoral reforms – admittedly falling far short of their final goal of a revolutionary transformation of our society – can empower to some extent our poor and deprived masses to articulate their protests? Will they, in their programme (which jettisons elections altogether) allow some space for dissenters among voters – who may express their dissidence through the parliamentary system? In other words, will they recognise that the vast majority of the Indian electorate, despite their disillusionment with the present political leadership, are not yet ready for boycotting elections?

In fact, on this issue, the Maoist leadership seems to have climbed down a bit from the earlier Naxalite position which was encapsulated in the notorious slogan in Calcutta in the 1970s: *Vote diley, porbey laash!* ("If you cast your vote, you'll end up as a dead body"). The present Maoist leadership claims in the above-mentioned bulletin:

“You cannot show a single instance where the Maoists had resorted to force on the people for having attended election meet-ings or having stopped them from casting their votes”. In a curious paradox, such small mercies by the Maoists have allowed the villagers in their strongholds to cast their votes without fear, instead of heeding to their boycott call. This should be an eye-opener to the CPI (Maoist) leadership.

But although they spare the voters, the Maoists have shown no mercy for the parliamentary political parties and their candidates. “We warn the parties”, the bulletin says, not to venture out into our areas, and when they do not heed our warnings, we stop their campaign, beat them up if they are notorious elements, burn their vehicles, conduct people’s courts where possible and make the party representatives confess the misdeeds of their leaders....

By resorting to such violence to stop campaigns by the candidates in their areas, how do they expect the voters to exercise their “minimum democratic right to reject the parties”, without even allowing them to listen to the various viewpoints of the contending parties? Is there not a basic flaw in their proposition? Further, by its generous gesture of “not stopping them from casting their votes”, the Maoist party has indirectly acknowledged that there are vast numbers of people even within its areas of influence who do not accept its politics of boycotting elections – a fact proved by the moderate to high percentage of polling in Naxalite areas in Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Orissa, Bihar and Jharkhand.

Among other targets of their physical violence are “the police and central forces that are used by the reactionary rulers to enforce elections at gun-point”. But in the course of what they describe as “active boycott”, on 16 April in Chhattisgarh they killed five polling officials – innocent citizens who through no fault of theirs were appointed by the authorities to conduct the polls.

A few days later, the party came out with a press statement apologising to their family members, stating that the jeep that they were travelling in was “mistaken” by the Maoist guerrillas for a security forces’ vehicle (*The Hindu*, 25 April). Little consolation for the families! Such “mistakes” had been committed and admitted to by the Maoists in the past also – the burning of a train in Andhra Pradesh that killed a number on passengers, the derailment of the Howrah-Delhi Rajdhani Express that took a heavy toll on innocent lives some years ago, and the frequent killings of poor villagers by paranoid Maoist guerrillas who suspect them of being police agents. How long will they go on repeating such “mistakes”, and dismissing them as “collateral damages” on their path of revolution?

Right to Boycott elections

Incidentally, it is not only the Maoists who have given the call for boycotting the present elections. The United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) and other militant groups in Assam, and the Hurriyat and several secessionist outfits in Jammu and Kashmir, also urge the electorate in their states to boycott the polls. But instead of leaving the choice to the electorate, in their determination to bring it about at gun-point, like the Maoists, they have also tried to subvert the electoral process itself by killing candidates, targeting the polling booths, destroying the equipment, threatening the poll officials. All these insurgent organisations (including the Maoists) have adopted these tactics in pursuance of their respective political strategies – the goals being different for each organisation.

But in the present elections, there are cases of another type of boycott which springs from a spontaneous groundswell of protests, rather than from coercion by armed cliques of organised political forces from the top in the interest of their selective goals. All over Assam for instance, while almost 65% of the voters rejected the ULFA's call for boycott (thereby refusing to buy their brainchild of a *Swadhin Asom*), in a number of constituencies (Dhubri, L-akhimpr, Dibrugarh and Tezpur) a large number of voters refused to cast their votes – not in response to the ULFA call, but to register their protest against bad roads, and inaction by the government to prevent floods. Similarly, in the Poonch district of Jammu and Kashmir, villagers in some constituencies boycotted the polls (not in response to the Hurriyat's call) in protest against the government's failure to provide them with basic amenities like *bijli*, *sadak* and *pani*. It is these grass roots demands which have been ignored both by the candidates of the political parties who participate in elections and those

anti-parliamentary insurgents who try to enforce their boycott call at gunpoint.

The CPI (Maoist) in particular, which claims to fight for the rights of the poor, has shown a cruel disregard for these basic amenities demanded by the people by disrupting power supply and obstructing road building in the backward districts – purely out of their partisan interest to cut off communication so that the police cannot raid their hideouts. They claim that they do not need such infrastructure from the government, since in their pockets of control they have set up their own parallel centres of governance where they have helped the poor with economic reforms and social justice. But even if we accept their claims, the fact remains that their achievements are confined to a narrow stretch of territory. Their model of development is based on a system of autarky, which can function for a while within an enclosed enclave of self-sustained economy. Apart from occupying a fragile position, threatened as it is by a superior militarily powerful state (which has already destroyed their traditional bases in Andhra Pradesh), the Maoist method of governance in their strongholds still consists of ad hoc responses to immediate local problems rather than a part of a well-thought-out long-term strategy of countering challenges and coping with problems at the national level. Their jungle hideouts in Dandakaranya, Orissa and other areas, are a far cry from the Yenian that their mentor carved out in China, who had a wider vision – which is sadly lacking among the present CPI (Maoist) leadership. They have not yet been able to offer a wide-ranging viable alternative model that appears convincing and acceptable to the various sections of the poor all over India.

Further, the Indian Maoists seem to be lopsided in their choice of priorities. They disperse their armed resources in onslaughts against obscure riff-raff among candidates in the parliamentary poll, but are scared of confronting the better-organised goons of the Sangh parivar – who pose a more dangerous threat to the democratic rights of our people. The Maoist critique of the present electoral system does indeed give voice to the popular misgivings about its efficacy. But till the CPI (Maoist) succeeds in convincing the people about the justifiability of its programme of revolution, and in the meanwhile comes up with an alternative workable system of democratic functioning in its areas of control (where the violent acts of extortion and revenge by its cadres are fast alienating its sympathisers), the electorate have no choice but to continue willy-nilly to participate in the elections. Proud of their democratic right and hopeful of some change through the electoral process, they will cast their votes – though they

are doomed to be betrayed by the victorious candidates. Sumanta Banerjee (*suman5ban@yahoo.com*) is best known for his book *In the Wake of Naxalbari: A History of the Naxalite Movement in India (1980)*.

On the Election Boycott Tactic of the Maoists: Sumantaji's Response at odds with the Ground-Reality **--Reply to Sumanthaji's Commentary by Azad**

In his *Commentary* in the *Economic & Political Weekly*, Issue No 18, Vol 44, dated May 2, 2009, Mr. Sumanta Banerjee, who came into renown for his book *In the Wake of Naxalbari: A History of the Naxalite Movement in India (1980)*, makes an attempt to analyse the boycott call issued by the CPI(Maoist) in the recently-held Lok Sabha elections based on the Interview by Azad, the spokesperson of the Central Committee of CPI(Maoist), which had appeared in its *Maoist Information Bulletin No 7*. Entitled, "***The Maoists, Elections, Boycotts and Violence***", he begins his article analyzing the boycott call of Maoists in the recently-held Lok Sabha elections with the following comment: "*Lok Sabha elections were inau-gurated with a fanfare of bomb blasts, killing of security personnel and poll officials, burning of polling sta-tions, and a sensational hijacking of a train, where the hostages were served sattu and biscuits before being let off after about four hours!*" That even a shrewd political commentator and progressive intellectual like Sumantaji was carried away by the propaganda let loose by sensation-craving media shows the power of the media in moulding and influencing even saner minds who harbour the illusion that they can think and analyse independently. There are two media distortions to which Sumantaji has become a victim which I shall briefly explain.

The first distortion is the so-called hijacking of the train. Either to sensationalise news in order to add some colour to the drab news stories, or with the evil intention of projecting the Naxalites as the biggest threat to internal security and thereby to provoke the rulers to raise and deploy more central forces in Maoist areas, the media intentionally magnified and exaggerated the incident. A mass protest in which a few hundred people stopped the passenger train proceeding from Barkakhana to Moghalsarai at Hehegada railway station in Latehar district of Jharkhand for four hours is made into a sensational hijack! If one news channel starts the lie no channel wants to be left behind and the story goes on and on non-stop for 24, 48 or even more hours depending on the interest it generates among the viewers. Who first started this sensational news is not known but in no time it spread like wild-fire with every news channel and news paper jumping into the fray and turning even independent thinkers like Sumanta into their prey. Even if one gave a little thought to the meaning of the word 'hijacking' one would not become such an easy prey to the media sharks.

Second lie or distortion is regarding the reason for the so-called hijacking by protestors who stopped the train by squatting on the tracks for four hours. It is in no way related to the call for boycott of elections issued by the Central Committee of CPI(Maoist). As made clear by the spokesperson of our Party in Jharkhand soon after the incident, the protest was organized as part of the *bandh* demanding a judicial

enquiry into the brutal cold-blooded murders of five village youth by the CRPF personnel in Badhania village in Latehar district. The five youth were picked up within an hour after a mine blast, triggered by Maoist guerrillas, killed two CRPF men on the morning of April 16. The villagers were shot dead within an hour after the mine-blast. The fake encounter generated wide protests throughout the state for almost a week. The top police brass had to publicly concede that it was a fake encounter and by the end of the month three top police officials were removed from their posts as a direct fall-out of this brutal incident. Thus at least now it should be clear that the train was held up in Hehegada by unarmed protestors only to protest against the fake encounter and not, I repeat, for boycott of polls, which, anyway, had been completed in the entire region by then.

Sumantaji also appears to be quite relieved that the Maoists had "*physically tar-geted only the candidates and the state's representatives – the security forces, the poll officials – and thankfully refrained from attacking the voters who came in large numbers (often representing 50 to 60% of the electorate in these areas).*" For Sumantaji it looks as if this was the first time that the Maoists had spared the voters. The unfortunate attacks on poll officials were an aberration and not a policy of our Party. It was due to mistaken identity that a polling party, instead of the police party, became the victim of a mine blast near Kamkasur village in Rajnandgaon district in Chhattisgarh (Dandakaranya). In fact, our Dandakaranya special zonal committee had tendered an apology immediately after the unfortunate incident and reassured that it will take all precautions that such unfortunate incidents would not occur in future. Our statement was covered in the local media widely. While expressing our condolences to the families of the five polling officials who died in the land-mine explosion, we made it very clear that it is not our policy to harm the polling personnel. In Orissa's Malkangiri, after some lower-level cadre seized mobile phones and some cash from the polling personnel on April 16, they were returned to the district collector with a letter of apology signed by the secretary of the divisional committee of our Party. We reassured that such incidents of attacks on polling personnel will not be repeated. Even after this it is surprising that Sumantaji includes polling officials in the list of our targets.

Question of people's preparedness for boycott

Now let me take up the main questions raised by Sumantaji. He tries to paint a picture of the Maoist Party attempting to enforce poll boycott over an unwilling population. He writes: "*The Maoist call for boycotting the elections, the party's attempts to bring this about by large-scale attacks on the electoral machinery, and yet, the willingness of the villagers in their strongholds to queue up to cast their votes, present a peculiar web of complexities.*"

He also concludes that the "*vast majority of the voters are not ready for boycotting elections*", and that there has been "*moderate to high percentage of polling in Naxalite areas in Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Orissa, Bihar and Jharkhand.*"

He asks the CPI(Maoist) leaders: "*will they recognise that the vast majority of the Indian electorate, despite their disillusionment with the present political leadership, are not yet ready for boycotting elections?*"

On what basis has Sumantaji arrived at the conclusion that the vast majority of people are not ready for boycott? Does Sumantaji know the facts regarding the actual percentage of votes polled in the Maoist strong-hold areas about which he asserts so

authoritatively? Has he toured any of these areas at the time of the elections? Or, has he drawn his conclusions from the concocted stories floated by the police and the media? In the psychological war waged against the Maoist revolutionaries by the reactionary ruling classes, intelligence and police officials, and faithfully represented by their pet media, the most common theme has been the supposed gap between the aspirations of the people and the goal of the Party besides the beaten "*caught-in-the-crossfire*" theory. The actual situation is deliberately distorted to show that the Party is isolated from the people and resorts to force against the people when the latter go against the decisions and goals set by the Party.

Sumantaji's conclusion is subjective and biased, and hence looks ridiculous, particularly after seeing the unprecedented apathy and disillusionment among the voters, and the emergence of boycott as a major trend during the 15th Lok Sabha elections. In fact, never before had boycott become such a potent weapon in the hands of the people as during Election-2009. Hence the reactionary rulers had to spend hundreds of crores of rupees to refurbish the image of the rotten parliamentary system: bollywood and tollywood, cricket stars, industrialists, MNCs, media foundations, NGOs and so on carried out non-stop propaganda about the virtues of democracy, the sanctity of the vote, and so on. There is no end to websites and blogs calling on people to exercise their franchise. To lend an air of credibility to their propaganda they asked the voters to use their wisdom to choose between the good and the bad, to reject the criminals and the corrupt elements, and to elect the virtuous, as if there were any virtuous people left in the Parliamentary pig-sty.

The reactionary rulers have grasped the dangerous trend of boycott emerging throughout the country in the 2009 elections—a trend that Sumantaji has failed to recognize. Hence they were desperate to prove that democracy was the victor. The day the first phase of elections to the Lok Sabha was completed on April 16, the media tried to show how democracy had won against anarchy, how ballot proved to be superior to bullet, how people defied the Maoists and came forth to exercise their franchise braving the bullet, and such endless rhetoric. "***Bullet vs ballot: Voters give mandate on Maoist-hit LS seats***" wrote a paper. "***Maoist warnings fail to deter voters in Red zone***" claimed another pointing to the 45 per cent votes polled in Gaya district. "***Despite red terror 50 % polling in Jharkhand***" crowed another paper. "***Ballot wins against Bullet***" ran another headline. There is no limit to such hollow claims and empty phrases to prove that so-called democracy got the upper-hand in this sham drama. Chief Election Commissioner-designate Navin Chawla howled that "***democracy triumphed over naxalism on April 16.***"

Despite appeals to the voters by all and sundry hardly 50 per cent turned up at the polling booths in most parts of the country. In Mumbai, where the shrill cries of these apologists of parliamentary democracy were the loudest, the percentage of voting was a paltry 43.2 %; in Thane it was even less. The ruling classes were so alarmed by the low turn-out that politicians like LK Advani even came out with the proposal of compulsory voting as a solution. Thus Sumantaji's conclusion is not only at odds with the objective reality but also does not respect the sentiments of the majority who had refused to be drawn to the polling booths even after the hectic campaign by popular actors, NGOs and government officials.

While agreeing that people had indeed used boycott as a form of protest relating it to their local issues, he, however, concludes: "*Proud of their democratic right and hopeful of some change through the electoral process, they will cast their votes – though they are doomed to be betrayed by the victorious candidates.*"

Our Party had never denied the fact that people will be coaxed, cajoled and coerced by the rulers and their armed forces to cast their votes. But to assert that it is because the people are "*proud of their democratic right and hopeful of some change through the electoral process*" as imagined by Sumantaji, is contradictory to ground reality. How much percentage is actually exercising its vote voluntarily with a sense of awareness of the policies of the contestants or with a hope that some change will occur through the electoral process? And how much of it is rigged? How much percentage of the voting population is doing it out of social compulsion, material and other incentives, caste, communal, ethnic, regional and other factors, threats and intimidation by gun-toting khaki goons or local rowdies? If all these are taken into account it is obvious that the actual percentage of voting based on hope for some change through the electoral process would be miserably low.

As regards the conclusion that there has been "*moderate to high percentage of polling in Naxalite areas in Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Orissa, Bihar and Jharkhand*", one wonders from where Sumantaji has obtained his figures? If he goes through the local media in each of these states, instead of relying on the Delhi-centric or Metro-centric media, then he cannot afford to miss the reports of zero to nominal polling in hundreds of booths, and repolling in several centres amidst unheard of security. He cannot afford to miss visuals of empty booths and security forces all around with hardly any civilians in sight. For instance, during the Assembly elections in Chhattisgarh in last November, polling was held thrice in a centre called Gougonda in Konta constituency. In the third repoll, over a thousand policemen and CRPF personnel were deployed but only 10 out of a total of 711 votes were polled. The attempts of the police to terrorise the people and force them to cast their votes simply did not work as elsewhere since people had fled upon seeing the police. We had cited several such instances in our *Bulletin-7*. In Anthagadh constituency, polling personnel did not go to the polling centre in Partap Pur, Chota Pakhanjur, Chote Bethiya, Aakmetta. About a lakh-and-a-half voters in 176 villages spread across 13 Lok Sabha constituencies in the state of Jharkhand boycotted the polls this time. In **Lalgarh**, in West Bengal's West Medinipur district, no votes were cast in several booths. Of the 30,000 voters in Lalgarh, not more than one hundred voted. In **Malkangiri** in Orissa, almost no polling was reported from booths in remote areas like Manyamkonda, Kurmanur, Poplur, Tangurkonda, Bodigeta, Karkatpalli etc. The list of centres which registered zero polling or nominal polling runs long.

The trend of boycott will grow stronger as the revolutionary movement grows stronger, the organs of people's revolutionary power come into being in vast tracts of the country, the armed strength of the people grows and the PLGA makes impressive gains and decisive victories in some areas. Without the consolidation of the Party, people's army and revolutionary mass organisations, organs of people's power, and without gaining an upper-hand over the enemy in a significant area, one cannot imagine people coming out on a big scale to boycott the polls. The emergence of an alternative to the parliamentary institutions will bring about a qualitative change in

the perception, preparedness and approach of the people towards the parliament and contesting political parties.

We welcome any frank and meaningful criticism of our line, policies and practice such as Sumantaji's criticism on the choice of priorities by the Indian Maoists. He says: *"They have not yet been able to offer a wide-ranging viable alternative model that appears convincing and accept-able to the various sections of the poor all over India."* This criticism is partially true. Given the vastness of the country and the weakness of the Maoist movement, the model that is being developed in Dandakaranya and parts of Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa and some other states, is not yet seen as a viable alternative model by the various sections of the poor all over India. Moreover, the problems in the advanced areas, plains, and urban areas are of a different nature and we admit our Party has not been able to address the problems of the poor in these areas. Thus whatever has been achieved in a few pockets of the backward areas does not provide a wide-ranging viable alternative model by itself. Lot more has to be done to make the people convince about a viable alternative model. Our CC and the Party Congress held in early 2007 have also reviewed this weakness and drew up some measures to overcome it.

While such a constructive criticism is to be welcomed one cannot understand the rationale behind some of his unwarranted comments like citing some mistakes on the part of our Party which are of no relevance here. For instance, ridiculing the apology tendered by the Maoists to the unfortunate deaths of five polling personnel in Chhattisgarh on April 16, Sumanta recounts some serious mistakes committed by the Maoists in the past, like the three decades-old Kakatiya train incident, and a few incidents of punishments to police agents, and questions: *How long will they go on repeating such "mistakes", and dismissing them as "collateral damages" on their path of revolution?* There are also comments such as *"the frequent killings of poor villagers by paranoid Maoist guerrillas who suspect them of being police agents"* based on concocted police reports or the biased reports in the media.

The above allegation needs some explanation from the Party. Maoists have never dismissed our mistakes and justified the deaths of innocent civilians as *"collateral damages."* Every such incident is thoroughly reviewed by the concerned Party committee, and where needed, by the higher Party committee, those responsible are censured, lessons are drawn, and measures are initiated to rectify such mistakes and weaknesses. The punishments to police agents should be seen in the correct perspective despite the hue and cry raised by the police, political parties and the media. The police lure poor people into their informer network, create covert agents to work from within the Party and the revolutionary movement, and attempt to cause the maximum damage to the Party and the movement. Our failure to break the back of the intelligence network of the police is one of the main causes for the setback we had suffered in AP. Learning from the lesson we have been more cautious and have succeeded in breaking enemy intelligence network to a considerable extent in Dandakaranya (Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra), Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa and West Bengal which is one of the reasons that we are able to survive in the midst of the severest repression in these pockets. It is not paranoia but sheer necessity that is driving us to smash the enemy network that is dangerously spreading into the areas of struggle. The Kakatiya train incident has been a blot in our Party history and was due to the sheer inexperience of the comrades who were involved in the early years of our Party's life. But one is

surprised by Sumanthaji's reiteration of the white lie floated by the reactionary rulers regarding the derailment of the Howrah-Delhi Rajdhani express which had been clarified several times by our Party in the past. It is really disheartening to see such progressive intellectuals like Sumanthaji reinforcing the bourgeois lies.

Or take another comment of Sumantaji that says: "*The CPI (Maoist) in particular, which claims to fight for the rights of the poor, has shown a cruel disregard for these basic amenities demanded by the people by dis-rupting power supply and obstructing road building in the backward districts – purely out of their partisan interest to cut off communication so that the police can-not raid their hideouts.*"

The reality is the CPI(Maoist) owes its entire existence to its work among the poor and deprived sections of the society. It has been able to build the longest sustained revolutionary movement in the history of India and South Asia, confronted the mighty Indian state for over four decades and had grown from strength to strength despite losing thousands of its cadres precisely because it has its roots firmly entrenched among the masses: it is by solving the burning problems of the people, particularly the problem of land alienation, lack of basic amenities and means of livelihood that our Party has gained the active support of the masses, succeeded in involving a considerable section of the people in militant struggles and in the ongoing people's war. And this is precisely the reason why people continue to extend all kinds of support to the Party even in the midst of the severest state repression. To say that our Party has shown a "*cruel disregard for these basic amenities demanded by the people*" means to play into the hands of the establishment and some so-called civil society groups funded by the big business and imperialist agencies. Alleging that we have been "*disrupting power supply and obstructing road building in the backward districts*" and to attribute it to our "*partisan interest*" is another baseless charge that has been taken out of the police files. The question is: why are the rulers interested in building roads, pucca school buildings and even helipads in a place like Maad (called by outside world as Abhujmad or the unknown land) at the present juncture? The fact is the rulers have a long-term strategy to exploit the natural resources of the region and had arrived at an agreement with the comprador big business houses and the MNCs to loot the natural wealth that are lying unexplored and unexploited in the bosom of these regions. They are planning to exploit the entire natural wealth from Raoghat to Maad and it is for this purpose that road-building is taken up at a hectic pace. As the Maoists are well-perched in these regions it is essential for the reactionary rulers to suppress them first in order to loot the wealth. None other than the Prime Minister himself spoke of how the natural wealth is locked up in these regions under the control of Left-wing Extremists. Thus the so-called Red Corridor is sought to be "liberated" from the Maoists so as to hand it over to the vultures waiting with greedy mouths to prey on these regions. Hence school buildings are required even if there are not enough people to go to schools as they provide fortified shelters to the CRPF and other state's forces in their bloody onslaught against the Maoist revolutionaries. More important, the plan of the rulers is to evict the adivasis from the region and settle them elsewhere permanently. The region is home to one of the oldest surviving tribes in India—the *madia gond*s—and now their very existence is at stake due to the so-called development that Sumantaji is talking about.

We oppose only such development projects that harm the interests of the adivasis, that facilitate the unhindered exploitation of the region's wealth, displace the indigenous

tribes and the inhabitants of the forests from their homes and lands, and destroy their way of living and their culture. It is a misgiving that we are opposed to every kind of road construction or that we disrupt power supply and communication. It is in fact our party that has been in the forefront of people's struggles for basic amenities and we ourselves had taken up some development activity that directly benefits the people in areas where we have our embryonic organs of people's democratic power. Yes, power supply has been disrupted as part of our resistance to the state offensive, fake encounters etc. However, our Party committees had reviewed this and decided to take up such sabotage activities in a selective manner with least inconvenience to the people at large.

Sumantaji says: "*Their jungle hideouts in Dandakaranya, Orissa and other areas, are a far cry from the Yen-an that their mentor carved out in China, who had a wider vision – which is sadly lacking among the present CPI (Mao-ist) leadership.*" There is not an iota of doubt that we are still far from our goal of establishing base areas like that in Yen-an but one should not miss the point that our guerrilla bases and the guerrilla zones are heading in that direction and it is with the support of people all over the country and pro-people intellectuals like Sumantaji that this task can be hastened.

There are some provocative comments such as Maoists are "*scared of confronting the better--organised goons of the Sangh parivar – who pose a more dangerous threat to the democratic rights of our people.*" We understand the spirit and concern behind this observation. The saffron terrorists have become a dangerous threat to the lives and rights of the people at large and minority religious communities in particular. Our Party has taken note of this danger and some steps are being taken to defeat the nefarious designs of the Hindu communal fascists masquerading under various labels and the annihilation of Vishwa Hindu Parishat leader Swamy Laxmananda Saraswati is an instance of this. We shall certainly take into account the concerns of democratic-minded people and deal with the saffron gangs while doing all that is possible to protect the lives and rights of the minority religious communities.

And finally, coming to the key question posed by Sumantaji: "*if the voters are given what it considers "the minimum democratic right to reject the parties and candidates", will the party allow them to participate in the elections, or still insist on boycotting them?"*

Boycott of elections and the minimum democratic right to reject the parties and candidates are complementary to each other. There is no contradiction between these. Just as right to vote is being described as a democratic right, right to boycott is also a democratic right of the voter. But in many instances, the police and reactionary gangs force the voters to cast their votes. In such circumstances provision of the right to rejection of candidates will provide a chance to the voter to reject everyone in the fray. It is a curious logic to substitute this for the general call of boycott which is meant to enhance the awareness of the people regarding the futility and irrelevance of elections to their lives and in solving their basic problems.

Our boycott is taken up in different forms depending upon our strength, people's consciousness and preparedness. In some places it is at the level of propaganda, in some it is done passively in the sense we do not attempt to stop the process of election but mobilize the people to question the parties and candidates and obstruct

their campaigns. And where we are strong enough and have our own organs of people's power and have emerged as an alternative before the people we organize active boycott and do all that is possible to prevent the election from taking place. In a country where the revolutionary movement and the people's consciousness are at various levels of development our form of struggle too takes different forms of expression. Hence stopping or not stopping the people is not the point here. It is the people themselves who have actively stopped the election process in many places either due to their anger against parties for not solving their problems and non-fulfillment of promises, or because they see the futility of the very system of parliamentary democracy and the drama of elections.

To conclude, what exactly Sumantaji has been trying to drive at is not very clear. But from the tone and tenor of his arguments it seems he wants the Maoist Party to participate in the parliamentary elections as the "*vast majority of the voters are not ready for boycotting elections.*" Or, at least, he does not want the Party to issue a call for boycott since that, he feels, is not the aspiration of the people.

After the setback suffered by the Naxalbari uprising in the early 1970s, a certain amount of cynicism and skepticism had overtaken the left-oriented intellectual. The serious mistakes the Party had committed at that time had disillusioned some sections of the middle classes and intelligentsia. This is but natural. Most of the Party leaders of that time such as Kanu Sanyal, Jangal Santhal, Ashim Chatterjee, Nagbhushan Patnaik, later Vinod Mishra and others, turned into apologists of so-called parliamentary democracy. Some defended the parliamentary line by putting forth the argument that people were not yet ready for revolution, that they had illusions on the Parliamentary system, and hence, revolutionaries should take part in the elections. Others argued that a long phase of political propaganda, political, organizational, military preparation is required if we have to confront the mighty Indian state; and hence, participating in Parliament was necessary until the time of completion of these preparations, or, in other words, until the time the people were ready to take up boycott on their own. Some of the Parties that had argued as above have become indistinguishable from the revisionist CPI(M); some have been consigned to the dust-bin of history, while a few are surviving only as namesake ML Parties basking in their past glory.

On the other hand, the erstwhile CPI(ML)[People's War], Maoist Communist Centre of India and CPI(ML)[Party Unity], remained steadfast to the slogan of boycott of elections in a principled way, showed no vacillation whatsoever on advancing armed struggle, and gained wide mass base and support in the course of time. The very fact that these Parties did not go to the people begging for votes once in five years, that they had no selfishness but only an attitude to serve the people, that they lived and ate like them unlike the leaders of the parliamentary parties, had drawn the people at large cutting across Party lines to the side of the revolutionary parties. The boycott call too contributed greatly to enhance the image and prestige of the Naxalites in the eyes of the people. In fact, even those who said they had to vote due to some compulsions insisted that the Party should never think of participating in elections. We hope Sumantaji will rethink based on this ground reality and appreciate the stand of boycott of election pursued by the CPI(Maoist).

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