

Peasants Up Against Another Singur-Type Plot In Bengal

Wednesday 24 September 2008, by [CPI \(ML\) Liberation](#) (Date first published: 23 September 2008).

Report by WB Secretary Partha Ghosh, of a CPI(ML) Delegation's visit to Koshigram

Deposing at a public hearing regarding the state-owned West Bengal Power Development Corporation Limited WBPDC's 1000 megawatt (2 x 500 MW) power project at Koshigram village under Katwa sub-division in Burdwan district, 403 peasants have till date recorded their position. A five-member CPI(ML) Liberation team comprising Comrades Kartick Pal, Biman Biswas, Meena Pal, Sajal Pal and myself, along with Comrade Ashok Chowdhury, a district level leader of the party, visited the village which would be worst affected if the project takes shape, and met with the functionaries of Krishi Jami Krishak o Khetnajor Bachao Committee (Save Agricultural Land, Peasants and Agricultural Labourers' Committee - KJKKBC). Even the day we were there over 60 persons deposed before the public hearing and all but two spoke against the undemocratic acquisition.

When the project implementation took off in August 2005, the WBPDC acquired 650 but now the area, forcibly acquired, has increased to 1030 acres in nine mouzas of not only this village but others under the police station of Mongolkot and Ketugram. The entire region is a fertile multi-crop tract. Apart from three DVC canals, there are nine deep tubewells, 200 submersible pumps and four river lift irrigation arrangements - a distinct impress of a flourishing farming area.

The resentment has been growing since 2005. In the recent panchayat elections, the CPI(M) was completely routed here, with all the six panchayat seats were won by the Congress. Our conversation with the villagers reveals that the winning candidates primarily belong to the KJKKBC rather than the Congress. The Trinamool Congress has very feeble presence there, if at all.

We organized a meeting which was attended by about 500 people. Apart from Comrade Kartick Pal and myself, Tapan Ghosh spoke on behalf of KJKKBC while its secretary Rabindranath Rai took the chair. People came from other villages like Shrikhanda, Bonkapasi, Sitahati, Ban Nagra and Bagdola - all facing eviction threat. Attendance of women in large numbers was notable.

The consensus at the meeting was that there were far less costly

alternatives to the WBPDC's land grab policy, ostensibly for augmenting power production to meet growing demand for electricity.

Raj Bhawan March

Two thousand people had held a march in Kamarkundu on 10th September demanding alternative land and livelihood for the victimised peasants and bargadars. A compensation of a minimum of one lakh rupees as rehabilitation cost along with alternative means of livelihood for the displaced agricultural labourers was also demanded. CPI(ML) also demanded that the deal between the West Bengal state government and Tata Motors be made public. The protesters had also criticised the fact that the CPI(M) is even ignoring the latest talks between government and opposition, which were mediated by the Governor, for the sake of absolute benefit of Tata. Immediate punishment for the killers of Tapasi Mallick and Rajkumar Bhul was also demanded.

On September 19, the West Bengal State Committee of CPI(ML) held a March to the Raj Bhawan, reiterating the above-mentioned demands. A procession, which was joined by scores of people from Singur, marched from College Square to Esplanade where a public meeting was held. The meeting was addressed by CPI(ML) leaders. Subsequently, a delegation comprising of Partho Ghosh, State Secretary, Kartick Pal, PBM, Sajal Adhikary, SCM, Shyamapada Dhara, an agricultural labourer from Singur and Tarapada Koley, an unregistered sharecropper from Singur, met the Governor and submitted a memorandum. Shyamapada Dhara and Tarapada Koley told the Governor about the miserable conditions in which they led their lives after land was acquired for the Tata Motors plant. The delegation urged the Governor to visit Singur and examine first-hand the condition of the affected people.

The delegation also demanded that work under NREGA be started at Singur and urged the Governor to clarify the stand of the state government with regard to the September 7 agreement since it was signed in his presence. The Governor assured the delegation that all demands would be conveyed to the state government and he would sincerely consider visiting Singur.

P.S.

* From ML Update, a CPI(ML) Weekly News Magazine, Vol 11, No.39, 23-29 September 2008.