

Maoists and the Indian State: Is Peace Possible?

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Breakdown of an Opportunist United Front:

Two former fellow combatants, D. Bandyopadhyay and Sujato Bhadra, have written articles, independently of each other. Bandyopadhyay's article appeared in *The Statesman* on 14th January [1]. He accused the CPI(Maoist) of using force and violence against ordinary people. Rather belatedly, he has now also argued that they had been murdering CPI(M) members because of their objections to the CPI(M). Supporters of the CPI (maoist) as well as those of the TMC, along with many civil societal activists, had been either ignoring this dimension in the past, or simply arguing, some directly, some obliquely, that all those murdered by so-called peoples' courts etc were invariably evil people deserving their fate. His conclusion is clearly a simple one – India has a functioning democracy for over six decades, so parties that do not agree to function within democracy have no space in India. In a remarkable realignment of political voices, Bandyopadhyay, who was rooting for the Trinamul Congress and inveighing against the Left Front till the other day, now finds himself in good company with the Left Front. *Kalantar*, the CPI daily, wrote on the same day, in a news item where the writer could scarcely conceal her/his glee, that the state government was contemplating banning the PCAPA, the Matangini Mahila Samiti, and the USDF, a students' organisation accused of being a front for the CPI(Maoist).

Sujato Bhadra, probably the face most identified with the Association for the Protection of Democratic Rights, regardless of whoever is the General Secretary, was also closely involved with the anti-Left Front campaigns, to the extent that he decided that notwithstanding his widely known identity as a civil rights activist not aligned to any party, he needed to throw in his weight behind the TMC's campaign in 2010-11. In *Mainstream* Annual Number 2011, Bhadra has an essay, 'Peace-talk Process in Junglemahal' [2]. Bhadra still feels, clearly, that the TMC led government has greater commitment to democracy than the previous regime. We thus read, in connection with a reference to the role he and a few others were asked to play, of being mediators: "We had readily agreed to accept the assignment for three reasons: 1) this new government, being sincere to its electoral pledges, has clearly recognised the political nature of the conflict, which is a definite break from the past; 2) repeated insistence on opening of dialogue to end the killings and sufferings of the people of the area and bring peace; 3) we fought against the misdeeds of the Left Front Government to the best of our ability over the years; so, it was our responsibility also to bring peace and help the new government build the infrastructure for development of the area".

Yet Bhadra, for all his contortions, has to now take a stance somewhat different from

Bandyopadhyay, if he wants to retain even a shred of his image and integrity. I begin with Bhadra and Bandyopadhyay, not because they are the principal actors, but because I want to emphasize that unless one recognises the basic issues in the conflict, one is apt to end up as either irrelevant or a fifth wheel in one or other of the principals' cars. The second reason for placing them against each other is to argue that a united front very often begins to unravel at the moment of its victory. The enemy who had brought such disparate forces together is routed, if only for the moment. So the erstwhile allies fall out. But in an opportunist united front, the nature of the alliance is not clearly explained, so its falling apart also comes as a curious process.

Waging a War on its People: The Indian State, Democracy and Capitalist Development

Bourgeois democracy is never what its starry eyed defenders think about it, including those would-be Marxists who believe that there is some ideal bourgeois democracy in which the entire people get plenty of rights, and by which standard they want to condemn existing bourgeois democracies, notably the one in India, as inadequate. The inadequacy is actually built into the very structures of bourgeois democracy.

At least once in the twentieth century there was a serious attempt to consolidate bourgeois democracy and to proceed further forward. It is only by thoroughly distorting the tragic Chilean experience, which confirmed so many previous lessons of history, that so-called communist parties in large parts of the world, including in India, as well as centrist formations and the social democrats, push the strategy according to which the working class movement can fully attain its goals within the framework of bourgeois parliamentary institutions, through reliance on parliamentary elections and gradual conquest of "positions of state power" within these institutions. This has to be energetically opposed and denounced for what it is: it is a cover-up for abandonment of the struggle for the conquest of state power by the proletariat; a cover-up for abandonment of the struggle for the expropriation of the bourgeoisie, for abandonment of a policy of consistent defence of the class interests of working class; a substitution of ever-more systematic class collaboration with the bourgeoisie for the policy of consistent class struggle; a disarming of the proletariat in the face of violence unleashed by the capitalist class; and, consequently, a growing tendency to capitulate to the class interests of the bourgeoisie at moments of decisive economic, political and social crisis. From an initial argument about defending democracy it turns into arguments for defending the most odious attacks of the bourgeoisie on the working class, so long as that might enable the "left" to cling on to ministerial berths. Far from reducing the "costs of social transformation" or from ensuring a peaceful, albeit slower, transition to socialism, this policy, if it should decisively determine the political attitude of the toilers in a period of unavoidable overall class confrontation, can only lead to bloody defeats and mass slaughters of the German, Spanish, Indonesian, and Chilean type (in the German case, additionally caused by the criminal ultra-left "social-fascism" theory and practice of the Comintern).

The Indian state has not been a neutral umpire, nor even merely an abstract entity that either side can tilt in its own direction at will. It has been a key element in the strategy of the Indian capitalist class since the independence of India. In the present essay, we lack the space to examine all of this in detail. However, there is a need to discuss some issues.

From the closing years of the 1960s, the global economy had entered into the declining phase of a long wave that had seen, in the previous years, a spectacular boom. As part of that, the Indian capitalist class had organised its own growth using protectionism, even as it promised some types of state action, however limited, to some sections of the working people. But the downward phase of

the long wave, the collapse of the Bretton Woods agreement about the gold-dollar standard, and the slump of 1974, changed the situation drastically. The initial response of the big capitalist powers to the crisis was to try and administer new doses of Keynesianism. But this proved unviable. Class struggle under these circumstances sharpened everywhere. Between 1967-68 and 1974, working class struggles in many of the imperialist countries was massive and powerful. A miners' strike brought down the conservative government of Edward Heath in Britain. Capitalism too learnt its lessons.

On the economic field, it was Paul Volcker, the Keynesian who was however also a pragmatist, who administered the sharp monetarist shock in his role as chief of the US Federal Reserve. His sustained tight money policy led to the imposition of austerity on a global scale and a sharp recession in the US in 1981-2. He had been preceded by the pilot model in Chile, after General Pinochet took power, and was advised by Friedman and other enthusiasts of economic liberalism. In UK too, Margaret Thatcher came before Volcker. But given the centrality of the US economy it was Volcker's initiative that had a global effect. Austerity was taken up by the IMF and World Bank and became the global slogan. And this was done everywhere, formally under the banner of the free market, but in fact through huge state action. In the USA, Ronald Reagan smashed a major strike by air traffic controllers. Volcker hailed it as the best support given to his effort by the state. He was right. The fear of losing one's job is what weakens unions. The breaking of PATCO (Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization) through firing over 11000 or the thirteen thousand PATCO members, Reagan decisively changed the relationship between capital and labour in the USA.

Volcker's successor as Federal Reserve chairperson, Alan Greenspan, said in 2003: Perhaps the most important, and then highly controversial, domestic initiative was the firing of the air traffic controllers in August 1981. The President invoked the law that striking government employees forfeit their jobs, an action that unsettled those who cynically believed no President would ever uphold that law. President Reagan prevailed, as you know, but far more importantly his action gave weight to the legal right of private employers, previously not fully exercised, to use their own discretion to both hire and discharge workers.

What is significant in the Indian case is that the Indian capitalist class followed a closely parallel path. In 1974, working class combativity in India had reached a peak. The number of workdays lost owing to all industrial disputes in India touched 40 million in 1974, more than double that recorded in any single year during the preceding decade. In the Railways, government patronage of the two dominant unions led to two developments that provoked the upsurge of workers in 1974. One, the distance between the officially recognised unions and the rank and file widened because workers no longer saw the unions as representing their interests before the government. Secondly, the government's patronage of the officially recognised unions, at the exclusion of all other voices of the working class, led to a complete blockage of possibilities of the redress of the grievances of ordinary workers. The situation was thus fertile for an explosion of anger from below. Although on paper more than 70 per cent of the 1.4 million rail employees (permanent ones) were members of the two official unions on the eve of the strike, they led the leadership to the strike.

The Railways, although government-owned, remained an island in which the accepted worldwide standard of an eight-hour working day was violated with impunity. In fact, when the crafts unions raised the issue, they demanded a 12-hour working day for loco running staff. Besides this, there were other issues. Pay scales in the Indian Railways had remained stagnant, unlike those in the public sector companies and in departmental undertakings. In February 1974, the National Coordinating Committee for Railwaymen's Struggle (NCRRS) was formed to bring all the railway unions, the central trade unions and political parties in the Opposition together to prepare for the strike to start on May 8, 1974. The workers' resolve was matched by the government's determination to put down the strike with a heavy hand. This was revealed in its obdurate stance on

the demands raised by the workers. Even as negotiations were proceeding, the government queered the pitch by arresting Fernandes at the Lucknow railway station on May 2. Across the country thousands of railway workers were arrested. The draconian provisions of the Defence of India Rules and the Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA) were used against the workers. The Border Security Force (BSF), the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and the Provincial Armed Constabulary were deployed in the labour township. There were also instances of workers forced by terror to work. Instances of train drivers who were shackled in their cabins were reported at the height of the strike. Victimisation of railway workers during the 1974 strike was quite ruthless- 46000 were dismissed, 9000 were suspended, 19000 were arrested and out of over 15 lakhs who participated in strike, 8,63,000 employees suffered from break in service.

The defeat of the railway workers removed or significantly lowered the possibility of a countrywide general strike. Then in 1982 came the long struggle of Bombay textile workers. Once again, disgust with a bureaucratic union, the INTUC affiliated trade union, and the collapse of the old red flag union, led to flocking under the Datta Samant banner. Once again, this was somewhat illusory. It was not Samant who led. Rather, workers in factories and chawls set up committees debated, and made policy. Samant was virtually forced to go along. This democratic unionism was utterly unacceptable to the rulers. That was why, though Samant was considered close to Abdur Rehman Antulay, it was decided to crush his movement.

The defeats of 1974 and 1982-3 broke the working class for a considerable period. These struggles, in bourgeois historiography, when at all mentioned, are treated as pawns of high politics. Thus, the railway strike is seen as part of the attempts by the opposition to weaken Mrs. Gandhi's government, refusing to accord agency to the workers. But it was as a result of these defeats that new forms of capital accumulation became easier. The final years of Indira Gandhi saw the beginning of a turn to economic liberalisation, an impetus strengthened by Rajiv Gandhi. This was the period when computerisation was pushed in a huge way. And, contrary to the traditional perception that the Congress necessarily stood for a more statized economy while it was the Swatantra, Jan Sangh et al who were pro-free market, economic policy underwent a transformation in which Congress and opposition had little difference.

From the mid 1980s, in other words, lagging only slightly behind the major capitalist countries, the Indian capitalist class was therefore orienting to neoliberal policies. The defeats of earlier years, together with the paralysis of the left in the face of the collapse of the bureaucratised workers states and their transformation into capitalism, meant very poor resistance from large sections of the organised blue collar working class.

I mentioned this rather long history for three reasons.

1. To negate the idea that violence and confrontations are restricted to "marginal areas". People like Bandyopadhyay, when they argue that there is ample democratic space and all you need is civil social action to get redress for injustice, are simply forgetting that their civil society excludes the working class. This came out very clearly in a recent incident. In the first working class action after the TMC led government came to power, when Bhadra et al were carrying out their honeymoon period with the "government sincere to its electoral pledges", unorganised sector workers demanded improvements in their conditions through a three day sit in programme at the Metro Channel, Kolkata. Reporting on their programme, The Telegraph, the most important voice of the ruling class when talking to itself and its humble servants, reported "Return of Rally Raj: City Centre Chokes - Citizens Suffer". Workers not getting minimum wages are evidently not citizens. And when workers go beyond merely holding sit ins and deputations, violence is unleashed on them, and if they respond in kind, they alone are held responsible, as in the Manesar plant of Maruti.

2. To argue that Indian capitalism has been transforming itself for a much longer time than the supposed sudden turn under Narasimha Rao and Manmohan Singh in 1991.

3. To stress that capital accumulation in India, however, has a significantly different pattern, in as much as Indian capitalism cannot rely on any colonial exploitation for the primary accumulation of capital. This is where adivasis are slotted in. Relying on the ideological weaknesses of India's working class movement, the adivasis have been successfully delinked from other workers. Exploitation, or rather super-exploitation of the adivasis, is a major factor, along with unequal town country relationship, in ensuring primary accumulation of capital. The in-built two-stage theory of revolution within the bulk of the "Marxist" left, one of the legacies of Stalinism, has meant that adivasis are not seen as doubly exploited as community and as working class, but rather, are simply seen as exploited ethnic groups.

The Indian state has brutalised and exploited adivasis systematically, because, on one hand, as P. Chidambaram stated very bluntly recently, the elite wants to exploit natural resources, and on the other hand, because the adivasis form a significant part of the large source of cheap labour.

The Maoist Bogey and Repression on Adivasis

It is this reality that must be grasped when we talk about the responses of the Indian state to the CPI(Maoist). For many a well meaning Gandhian, political liberal, or civil societarian, it is simply a failure of this or that government, a failure to recognise that certain issues are political and not just law and order issues, that has led to so much bloodshed. If only the issues were duly recognised as political issues, they sigh, there could be a dialogue between people of good faith. This overlooks that all talk of law and order is also, precisely, a political talk. The repression of the CPI(Maoist) is not just a repression of a party. It enables the state to send in huge masses of paramilitary forces, terrorise adivasis, and try to push through the agenda of Indian and international big capital. Hence, for example, the difference between how Chidambaram and his fellow ministers handled Singur and how they handled Lalgarh. In the case of Singur, the central government could afford to have a destabilisation of the provincial government headed by an opponent political group, since the outcome would not destabilise the system as a whole. In the case of Lalgarh, by contrast, Chidambaram went out of his way to cooperate with Buddhadev Bhattacharjee.

We also need to situate this in an all-India context. In Chhattisgarh or Madhya Pradesh, places where the Left are not and have never been in power, the left parties have campaigned in support of adivasis. There, roles have been reversed. What is important is that while reformist ideology, populism, or various factors may have led some parties, some politicians (CPI in Chattisgarh, Mamata Banerjee in West Bengal) to declare seeming support for exploited adivasis, the state has in all cases been forthright in using violence. The long drama over the incarceration of Binayak Sen, the utterly ludicrous charges against him, and the way the state agencies hounded Nandini Sundar when she went on a fact finding mission to Chhattisgarh, all show this. Beyond the well known hounding of reputed individuals, though, are the repressive measures on far greater numbers of people. A statement issued by the Campaign for Survival and Dignity remarked, on this subject: [I am providing only extracts, not a full and continuous quotation]

"The government tells us that this offensive will make it possible for the "state to function" in these areas and fill the "vacuum of governance." This is grossly misleading. The Indian state is very, very active in these areas, often in its most brutal and violent form. A vivid example is the illegal eviction of more than 3,00,000 families by the Forest Departments a few years ago."

"This war is not about "national security"; it is about 'securing' the interests of global and Indian

capital and big business. Any government worried about security would send its troops against mining mafias, the forest mafias, violent vigilante groups like the salwa judum and others. Rather than being curbed, these killers are in fact supported by the police. Have the security forces ever been deployed to defend the people struggling to protect themselves, their forests, their livelihoods and their futures? The answer is no. The notion of “security” being advanced by the government clearly has nothing to do with the people.”

“The government knows perfectly well that it cannot destroy the CPI (Maoist), or any people’s struggle, through military action. How can the armed forces identify who is a “Maoist” and who is not? The use of brute military force will result in the slaughter of thousands of people in prolonged, bloody and brutal guerrilla warfare. This has been the result of every “security offensive” in India’s history from Kashmir to Nagaland. So why do this? And why now? Unless the goal has nothing to do with “wiping out the Maoists” and everything to do with having an excuse for the permanent presence of lakhs of troops, arms and equipment in these areas. To protect and serve whom?” [3]

The killing of Azad after initiating Peace talks was evidence that the government is not interested in peace. As the above quoted statement in fact shows, the government does not want peace with the CPI(Maoist). The CPI(Maoist) and its armed forces are the pretext for maintaining huge forces of repression across a big part of India, and forcing toilers to obey rulers including the mafias in the name of law and order. Naïve people, or ex-Marxists who now desperately want to forget the reality of class struggle, can talk about sincerity of governments. The reality is, within bourgeois democracies, working people have won rights only when they have fought for those rights. At the time Azad was killed, there was a complexity. The TMC, though a partner in the central government, was in the opposition in West Bengal. And Ms. Mamata Banerjee had realised, through the experiences of past electoral battles, that neither an alliance with the BJP, nor one with the Congress, were adequate to topple the CPI(M). She had turned her party into a populist party. And she was willing to form alliances with the dissident left and the extreme left as well as with others on the right. It is well known that Kishenji, the CPI(Maoist) leader, had expressed the hope that she would become the Chief Minister of West Bengal and that many of the Sujato Bhadrans had been gung ho about supporting her at all cost.

The TMC and Mamata Banerjee: An Exceptional Case?

The illusion had never been Ms. Banerjee’s. She had on one occasion said she was using the “brains of Naxalites”. It was the dissident and extreme left, or large sections of it, that, as a result of the continued hold of Stalinist ideology, created illusions for itself. It (or sections of it) saw the CPI(M) as “social fascist” (a criminal theory that cast reformists as fascists and let real fascists off the hook, a theory originating with Stalin and resulting in the rejection of a working class united front against Hitler by the Communist Party of Germany). [4] It simultaneously accepted in some form or the other the ideology of popular frontism according to which democratic or progressive bourgeois forces can be allies. The TMC was cast into that role by the SUCI, de facto also by the CPI (Maoist) which for example said in areas where it was strong TMC would be allowed to campaign but not the party of harmads.

In 2006, when the Singur movement started, the picture had been very different. But forces on the radical left, with small exceptions, decided that they were tired of trying to build class struggle currents against the CPI(M). Hatred of the CPI(M), whose reformism had turned into social liberalism, a hatred that in itself was a positive thing, turned into the terrible error of deciding that any force was better than the CPI(M) and should therefore be supported in order to topple it. What this meant was that struggles where a militant class struggle orientation could have been built

through patient work were given up, and these forces ended up accepting the leadership of the TMC. In these days of televised politics, this transformation was easy to see, with so many former ex-radicals publicly taking stances that brought them within microscopic distance of TMC politics. Some ended up joining the TMC, while others were content with being friends and hoped they would remain friends ever after.

But the Maoist bogey was too good to let go. Ms. Bandyopadhyay, who holds the position of not only CM but also Home Minister in her government, took full personal responsibility for what followed. Of course, it was dressed up as a sad but necessary action in view of the obduracy of the CPI(Maoist). But paramilitary action was reintroduced. Even before the murder of Kishenji, the writing on the wall was therefore clear.

What is objectionable (not surprising, since Bhadra is trying to save his own reputation as well) is Sujato Bhadra's argument, even after the killing of Kishenji and the full-blown return to militaristic strategy, that

"2. We have reasons to hold that attempts are on to impose the logic of the war economy forcibly on the newly-born government. The government has to overcome this pressure.

3. The government has also to tackle effectively the potential spoilers—a part of the media which has been manufacturing public consent for declaring war on its own people, and a section of the police and bureaucrats, who stand to gain from the war economy and war mentality. The people of the State know that this section of 'trigger-happy' police and bureaucrats was a part of the state terror during the LF regime. They have no experience of peace talks, and they, we are afraid, are not interested in taking lessons from history."

Have we not met this rhetoric earlier, from soft critics of the left front, that it was not the government that was bad, but the rotten police and bureaucrats, the carryovers of the S.S. Ray era, and the central government? To recollect what Marx once wrote, the second occurrence of this rank pathetic apologia is a low farce. Bhadra is thereby still exonerating the West Bengal government and misleading his readers, using whatever remains of his reputation as a historic fighter for democratic rights. The Maoist bogey is now what is uniting the TMC led government with all other governments. Ruling class needs are more significant here than any so-called goodwill.

What about the CPI (Maoist)?

A peace talk, in order to be serious, requires two sides both willing to be parties to the talk. In the case of the Indian state, I have argued, the CPI(Maoist) is necessary to carry out violence on adivasis. That is why it will not want any peace talk until its real strategic goals are met or until class struggles force its hands. But the CPI(Maoist) is also not in a position to be very serious about peace talks. Built on solidly Stalinist-Maoist lines, it has no idea about socialist democracy.

Stalinist ideology was created as the ideology of the ruling bureaucracy of the USSR and taken over by other ruling bureaucracies, including in the Peoples' Republic of China. This ideology of the bureaucracy - of which the key idea is the rule of the single party acting in the name of the working class - although not always explicitly formulated can be summarised in the following terms:

a) That the "leading party" or even its Central Committee has a monopoly of political consciousness at the highest level, if not a monopoly of knowledge at least at the level of the social sciences, hence the party is always right. One is told to learn from the masses, but the learning is done by that very party leadership and nobody else.

b) That the working class, and even more the toiling masses in general, are too backward politically, too much under the influence of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideology and “imperialist propaganda,” too much inclined to prefer immediate material advantages as against long-term historical interests, for any direct exercise of state power by democratically elected workers’ councils to be tolerable from the point of view of “the interests of socialism.” Genuine workers’ democracy would lead to capitalist restoration or at least damage socialist construction.

c) That therefore the dictatorship of the proletariat can be exercised only by the “leading party of the proletariat,” i.e., that the dictatorship of the proletariat is the dictatorship of the party, either representing an essentially passive working class, or actively basing itself on the “class struggle of the masses,” who are nevertheless considered unworthy, unwilling, or incapable of directly exercising state power through institutionalised organs of power. [5]

d) That since the party, and that party alone, represents the interests of the working class, which are considered homogeneous in all situations and on all issues, the “leading party” itself must be essentially monolithic. Any opposition tendency necessarily reflects alien class pressures and alien class interests in one form or another (the struggle between “two lines” is always a “struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie inside the party,” the Maoists conclude). Monolithic control of all spheres of social life by the single party is the logical outcome of these concepts. Direct party control must be established over all sectors of “civil society.”

e) A further underlying assumption is that of an intensification of the class struggle in the period of building socialism. From that assumption is deduced the increasing danger of restoration of bourgeois power even long after private property in the means of production has been abolished, and irrespective of the level of development of the productive forces. The threat of bourgeois restoration is often portrayed as a mechanical outcome of the victory of bourgeois ideology in this or that social, political, cultural, or even scientific field. In view of the extreme power thereby attributed to bourgeois ideas, the use of repression against those who are said to objectively represent these ideas becomes a corollary of the argument.

All these assumptions and dogmas are unscientific from a general Marxist point of view and are untenable in the light of real historical experience of the class struggle during and after the overthrow of capitalist rule in the USSR and other countries. But they had become nearly universally accepted dogmas by the CPs in Stalin’s time and they have never been explicitly and thoroughly criticised and rejected by a CP since then. These concepts continue to linger on, at least partially, in the ideology of many leaders and cadres of the CPs. They continue to constitute a conceptual source for justification of various forms of curtailment of democratic rights of the toiling masses. In the case of the CPI(Maoist) it has used force, not against ruling class elements alone, but against every attempt at independently organising the masses in areas where it is strong. Santosh Rana for example has spoken out publicly against this politics of violence over toiling masses.

Given its ideology, which involves the belief that any struggle other than “armed struggle” (to be precise, struggle through armed combatant groups created by the party, not armed struggle as the result of culmination of mass movements under certain circumstances) is revisionist, a sell out to the rulers, the CPI (Maoist) cannot engage in fruitful peace talks.

I reproduce below, as one example, an extract from a statement issued by the Central Military Commission of the CPI (maoist). [6]

“Beloved workers, peasants, adivasis, toiling masses, women, students, youth and intellectuals! Thousands of people, particularly adivasi peasantry are rallying into struggles with the aim of defeating the ‘War on People’ - OGH which was unleashed by the central and state governments. All

classes and sections of the toiling people must integrate themselves with these struggles. Extend support to the! Rally actively to stop the brutal attacks of the mercenary police who are massacring hundreds of adivasis and looting their properties, dignity and everything dear to them like a pack of wolves attacking a flock of sheep, in the name of fighting terrorism. Maoists are not advocates of violence. In fact, they would be in the forefront among those who wish for peace. Do not believe a word of the vicious propaganda unleashed by the bourgeois media on Maoists! Stand firmly with the revolutionary movement! If we do not defeat this enemy offensive, if we do not defeat the conspiracy to wipe out the revolutionary movement, Maoist party, PLGA, alternate people's power organs and mass organizations, then all the valuable fruits won by the revolutionary movement would be destroyed. So, play your role in isolating and defeating the enemy! Join the PLGA in huge numbers, increase its force manifold and strengthen it! Integrate with the deluge of mass movements rising in several areas in our country with the slogans land-power-democracy-building of people's army and self-reliance! Join hands with them! Stand shoulder to shoulder with the armed resistance struggles of PLGA! There can be no fundamental change without completely destroying the exploiting classes. The reforms thrown by them as bread crumbs are useless and would only destroy the lives of the people further. Let us advance for an alternative new democratic society by declaring that reforms are part of the conspiracy to damage the unity of the people and fight them back! Come! Dare to fight and ultimate victory belongs to the people!"

Readers should note the following:

1. It is issued by a Central Military Commission
2. It is stated, for the record, that Maoists are not advocates of violence. But it is also stated categorically that masses must not just wage class struggle, but join the PLGA in large numbers. Democracy is supposedly being built by the people's army. And where Rosa Luxemburg, for example, had said that while violence could not be ruled out as the ultimate law of class struggle, the struggle for reforms were, when carried out by revolutionaries, struggles that strengthened the proletariat, for the CPI(Maoist) reforms are simply something granted from above, not a byproduct of revolutionary mass struggles.

So is Peace Impossible?

I am not actually arguing that peace is impossible. But I do argue that the meaning of peace has to be redefined, and its contents examined closely. It is impossible to have peace between the Indian state and the CPI (Maoist) as if they alone are the principal players – the idea with which we started this essay, since that is the idea behind the current rhetoric on peace talks. At the same time, we cannot of course exclude these two from any idea of peace talks.

As long as the ruling class is strong enough to impose its will without serious contestation, it will try to deepen its primary accumulation of capital, and therefore it will require some kind of systematic violence on adivasis, on whom the CPI(Maoist) in turn hopes to bank for that very reason.

So the first key to challenging the state, to forcing it to rethink its strategy, lies in developing mass workers and toilers struggles – both in those areas and elsewhere – so that the state is compelled to recognise the power of fighting workers and to negotiate with them. Then would it be possible to force the state to move back from its open war against the people – at least for the moment, while the balance of forces is no longer favouring the rulers so blatantly. It is therefore unacceptable when someone claims, as Bhadra does, that

"...we are optimistic. That is because all stakeholders, including the government, seem to have

finally recognised the value of peace. However, we have miles to go before bringing the stakeholders to the negotiating table. We do hope that using the tools of patience and flexibility with unwavering determination the government and Maoists can bring peace and development in Junglemahal. This example will surely inspire other States and peace-loving citizens of India to move forward with the slogan of peace."

We on the other hand are optimistic, because workers across India are forging new instruments of struggle in place of the worn out old instruments. Organisations like the New Trade Union Initiative, the National Forum of Forest People and Forest Workers , the Vangujjar Kalyan Samiti, or others have been replacing, though only in part, older, bureauecratised and co-opted unions and other organisations. It is their struggles, along with those by other similar organisations of the oppressed and exploited, that will compel the state to move in the direction of peace. In the same way, any attempt to develop mass organisations of this kind, mass struggles conducted democratically, should they succeed, will sap the strength of Maoist politics with its commandist, authoritarian model of leading party and "led" masses. To survive in a changed milieu, the CPI(Maoist) too would have to undergo a paradigm shift.

As long as we stick to the assumptiuon, however, that the state and the CPI(Maoist) alone are principals, and the only other factor is a chorus of pious civil social actors, we are condemning ourselves to futility. In its current state, the State wants and needs to use violence, and the CPI (Maoist) believes in only the primacy of armed guerrilla warfare. To preach goodwill to them may be a nice Christmas gesture, given the date of the *Mainstream* number, but little more.

Kunal Chattopadhyay

P.S.

* Kunal Chattopadhyay, Editor, Radical. A slightly edited version has been put up in the website of /frontier Weekly and is slated to be published in a collection of articles around this theme:
<http://www.radicalsociatist.in/articles/national-situation/449-maoists-and-the-indian-state-is-peace-possible>

Footnotes

[1] Mao and the Maoist 'Depredation' A Conscious Deviation,
http://www.thestatesman.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&show=archive&id=396751&catid=38&year=2012&month=01&day=14&Itemid=66 (accessed 15.01.2012).

[2] *Mainstream*, vol.L, no. 1, December 24, 2011,
<http://www.mainstreamweekly.net/article3221.html> (accessed 15.01.2012).

[3] <http://www.forestrightsact.com/statements-and-news/69-a-pretext-for-brutal-repression>
(accessed 15.01.2012).

[4] On this see my article 'The Communist Party of Germany, the Comintern and Hitler's Rise to Power', *History*, Journal of the Department of History, Burdwan University, vol.1, 1997.

[5] For a Marxist understanding of the dictatorship of the proletariat, see Soma Marik, Reinterrogating the Classical Marxist Discourses of Revolutionary Democracy, Aakar Books, Delhi, 2008, chapter 5. See also the document of the Fourth International, adopted in 1985, entitled The Dictatorship of the proletariat and socialist democracy, in <http://www.radicalsocialist.in/articles/marxist-theory/67-1985-workd-congress-of-fourth-international> , on which much of my argument is based

[6] Let us intensify People's War with the aim of defeating "Operation Green Hunt" - War on People ! <http://www.bannedthought.net/India/CPI-Maoist-Docs/index.htm#2011>